



News for Immediate Release

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Governor Corbett Recognizes State Troopers, Firefighters and Soldiers

Asks for Moment of Silence in Memory of Penn State Coach Joe Paterno

Harrisburg – Governor Tom Corbett today recognized several special guests attending his budget address in the Pennsylvania House Chamber, including volunteer firefighters, members of the State Police and Pennsylvania Army National Guard.

“Pennsylvanians are people who embrace important qualities. We value service. We value bravery. We value compassion. We saw these virtues on display last year, when floods struck our state,” Corbett said. “Our first responders, our firefighters, our police, our men and women of the National Guard stepped into the breach to prove, once again, that we are a commonwealth and act for the common good.”

Last August, two volunteer firefighters, Robert J. Spitko Jr., of Norristown, Montgomery County, and Rick Russo, of Neshannock, Lawrence County, along with members of their team, successfully rescued a woman swept away by flood waters.

Shortly before midnight on Aug. 28, the firefighters received a report that someone had been swept into the Stony Creek near Norristown. The men, tethered by ropes, heard screams and waded through the swift and rising water to rescue the woman, who was found clinging to a sapling.

In September, two members of the Pennsylvania State Police in Montoursville, Cpl. Brad Eisenhower and Cpl. Larue Stelene, rescued a woman and her two small children who were stranded on the roof of their Lycoming County home.

The troopers found the home was about 200 feet out in the flood water. Other nearby structures had already been washed away, and flooding conditions prevented the use of a conventional rescue boat.

Eisenhower tied a rope around himself and waded into the water, but was swept downstream. Stelene and a volunteer were able to pull him to safety. When a hovercraft arrived, Eisenhower joined the crew, directing them to the house where they were able to help get the woman and her children to safety.

“We saw courage on display for several years as members of our National Guard served overseas in the War on Terror. I want to tell you about two of them. Recently, they were each presented with a heart. It might be close to Valentine’s

Day, but that's not the reason... it is out of love for their country and what it means."

Two members of the Pennsylvania Army National Guard, Sgt. Matthew Keeler, of Delaware County, and Spc. Ryan Petrill, of Luzerne County, both earned Purple Hearts last year when they were deployed overseas.

Last June, Keeler sustained multiple shrapnel injuries during an indirect fire attack at his base in Iraq. Keeler serves with the 109th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment out of Fort Indiantown Gap.

Last September, Petrill was an assistant gunner on a convoy in Afghanistan when his unit was attacked. Petrill, who sustained multiple injuries, is attached to the 131st Transportation Company, 213th Regional Support Group, in Williamstown.

"These six heroes are here today representing the thousands of others in their ranks who came through in our time of need, at home and overseas," Corbett said, asking the men to stand and be recognized by the joint session of the General Assembly.

"We ended last year with accounts of great courage....We began this new one on a note of sadness," Corbett said, asking for a moment of silence in memory of the late Joe Paterno.

Corbett called Paterno "a legendary coach and an ambassador for Pennsylvania in the world of sports."

"His commitment to Penn State and to the futures of the young men he guided can never be doubted," Corbett said, "nor can his place in our history."

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