

U.S. Attorney's Report to the District

In April of each year, we recognize the sacrifices of crime victims during National Crime Victims' Rights Week. Every day, crime victims bravely face the task of reshaping their lives after enduring events that may cause a lifetime of trauma or hardship, including violent crimes, sexual abuse, and financial frauds. As prosecutors, we must never lose sight of the centrality of crime victims to the work we do. We also recognize the victim advocates and criminal justice professionals who devote their careers to helping victims by protecting their rights and securing their participation in the criminal justice process.

Last year during Crime Victims Rights Week, the U.S. Attorney's Office held a ceremony honoring a Fresno area store owner who was shot and wounded during a robbery committed by members of a violent street gang. He testified at the trial of the robbers, who were convicted in U.S. District Court and sentenced to very lengthy prison terms.

In this year's ceremony, we recognized Sergeant David Martin and Deputy David Woginrich of the Lassen County Sheriff's Department. Both were wounded in a 2009 shootout at a marijuana grow on federal land in Lassen County. Sergeant Martin sustained permanent injuries to his hand, arm, and shoulder as a result of the exchange of gunfire, and has undergone multiple surgeries. One suspect was killed in the fire fight. Two other suspects who were armed but did not fire on the officers were taken into custody at the scene. They were prosecuted by this office, convicted, and sentenced to 15 years in prison.

The Crime Victims' Rights Act, enacted in 2004, grants certain rights to victims in federal criminal proceedings. These include the right to be heard at public court proceedings and to receive full restitution. This office has a dedicated Victim Witness Unit that serves federal crime victims across the Eastern District's 34 counties. Members of the unit notify victims of significant case events and accompany victims to court to provide support and guidance during the proceedings. The unit also provides essential services to victims such as making referrals for counseling, securing temporary housing, and assisting them with access to victim compensation funds. In addition, in fiscal year 2010, this office's Financial Litigation Unit collected \$3,302,911 in restitution for victims in federal criminal cases.

While victims are at the heart of the criminal justice system, their importance to the system, their suffering, and often their courage, too often go unrecognized. National Crime Victims' Rights Week is a small step towards correcting that oversight. Further information about National Crime Victims' Rights Week is available at <http://ovc.ncjrs.gov/ncvrw/>.