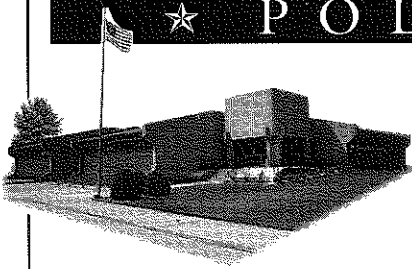


Jack M. Beckwith
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POLICE DEPARTMENT



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Chairman Green, Vice Chair Greenspan, Ranking Member Sheehy, and members of the House Transportation and Public Safety Committee. I come before you in support of House Bill 330, legislation that would designate a portion of State Route 91 in the City of Willoughby as the "Patrolman Jason Gresko Memorial Highway" in honor of the late Jason Gresko, a Willoughby Police Officer. Thank you for hearing my testimony.

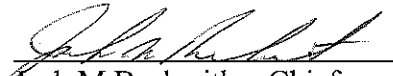
Patrolman Jason Gresko was a part-time police officer with the city of Willoughby and a full time officer for the Cleveland Clinic. Our part time officers are a supplement to our operations and in addition to assisting regular officers, they work many other events both public and private throughout the year. Patrolman Gresko was very active with the patrol division and was a regular presence among the regular patrolmen. He very much enjoyed police work and was very popular with the public he interacted with. At 32 years old he was in the early years of his chosen career and was only more proud of his wife and young daughter. Patrolman Gresko was the third line of duty death recorded on the history of The Willoughby Police Department preceded by Lieutenant Joyce Robin Moore who was killed in 1955, electrocuted by a downed power line.

On Friday September 21, 2012, at 9:35 PM, Patrolman Gresko was responding to assist another officer. He was on a residential street, it was lightly raining, and he was responding with emergency lights when one of two cars that appeared to be stopped, began to turn into his path. Patrolman Gresko swerved to avoid a collision and struck a tree with the driver's front corner of his patrol car. The impact caused injuries that were immediately fatal.

The following days and weeks activities and events were unprecedented for our officers and the local public having been something that has not occurred in our county for a very long time. Local citizens turned out by thousands to join other officers from near and far for funeral services. Fund raising and memorial events were organized by public supporters to assist Patrolman Gresko's family. Locally this tragedy has left a significant mark on our history. At our police station, a fallen officers memorial was built by some of our personnel with donated funds and materials giving tribute to all three of our fallen officers. As you know Patrolman Gresko's employment situation did not allow for his family to receive benefits that a full time officer would. Due to this the initiative was taken to create and pass legislation to better assist the large number of part time officers families should similar situation occur.

State Route 91, locally named SOM Center Rd, is one of the major gateways into Willoughby as it runs north and south, with interchanges on Interstate 90 and State Route 2 which are situated just south and north of Willoughby. Within our agency we fell it an appropriate area for a dedication, being the most heavily travelled route into our city.

Thank for allowing me to testify this morning in support of House Bill 330, and I would be happy to answer any questions from the committee.


Jack M Beckwith – Chief
Willoughby Police Department