

Medals and Memorial Ceremony
Commissioner Annucci's Remarks
June 8, 2023

Good afternoon. It is a pleasure and an honor for me to once again be here at the DOCCS Albany Training Academy and acknowledge the brave and valiant actions of some of our co-workers, as well as pay our respects to fellow employees, who died while in the line of duty, and in fulfillment of their mission to keep all New Yorkers safe.

This ceremony has always been one of the most meaningful Department events for me, since it has served, and continues to serve, as an eternal bridge between the past and the present. Right now, we have this valuable opportunity to slow down for an hour or so, and remember those whom we have lost, and also ponder why we chose Corrections as a career.

As I noted in a column in the latest issue of DOCCS Today, our Department faces many challenges, from a number of different fronts, but we also can be proud of the many triumphs staff are responsible for achieving.

The Department is now heavily focused on staff recruitment, as well as strategies to decrease the violence, that has become such an unfortunate part of the supervision in our correctional facilities, as well as in our communities. Despite the dangers and long hours, great things are still made possible because of the dedication and professionalism of staff.

Last week, I took part in a meeting of the anti-gun group, "Voices from Within" at Sing Sing Correctional Facility. A key goal of the group is to stop the scourge of gun violence in our communities, through their deeply personal stories. The meeting was powerful. You, as well as the entire country, will be able to see an example of the good work in our facilities that is made possible by our staff, since it soon will be featured on NBC's Today Show.

Similar life-saving work is being performed by our Community Supervision staff whose actions in regularly removing guns from our communities has been nothing short of heroic.

Soon we will salute eight co-workers for their bravery and quick actions in assisting someone in danger. In a little while, we will also recognize three individuals who were highlighted by the American Correctional Association, as among the best at what they do in the country. That is exactly what you have heard me say for years, that this Department is one of the finest in the United States, because of our staff. This is evidenced by the number of times we have been asked to make presentations at conferences held by other states, as well as national organizations.

We will also be remembering those we have lost while doing their jobs. Everyone has a bad day from time to time; however, a bad day in Corrections can make history for horrible

reasons. No one understands that more than the individuals who are members of the organization called The Forgotten Victims of Attica. They had their lives forever changed during one of the worst days in Corrections history in the United States -- the Attica prison riot. They are a living, breathing reminder that we can never forget and must continue to do everything humanly possible, to ensure that something as unspeakable as that, can never again be allowed to happen.

On that note, I am deeply grateful for the fact that during my ten-plus years as Commissioner of this Department, we have not had to add a single name to our Memorial here in Albany. Again, that is a credit in large part to the professionalism and hard work of our staff.

Moving forward, we must remain laser-like focused on the mission of the Department, which is to keep our staff and those we supervise safe from harm. That challenge has become increasingly difficult, but I believe that with determination and cooperation between all of us,

and continued collaboration and introspection, we can make things safer. In turn, that will help us to recruit more qualified men and women to join our ranks and help ensure that we continue to operate one of the best corrections and community supervision agencies in the country.

I am proud, honored and humbled to have worked with all of you for the past 38-plus years, and my sincere wish is for you to stay safe, be healthy, take care of each other and be fulfilled in your careers.

Thank you.