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HERE'S TO A HAPPY, HEALTHY YEAR



ART GONZALES
CCSO State President

With the holidays in full swing, I hope every member is having a safe and healthy season. This time of year is filled with celebration and brings us closer to family, but it can bring stress and worry, too. Feeling both is normal for this time of year and for our work.

The great work our members have done throughout 2025 has not gone unnoticed. It's even more impressive considering that budgets are tight across the state, and many of you are asked to do more with less. I know what that looks like on the ground. I see the extra hours, the short staffing and the leadership you give your teams.

If you find yourself struggling, please talk with a friend or a family member, and reach out to

us at CCSO. You have people in your corner. You don't have to carry it alone.

We're proud that 2025 marked 30 years of CCSO sponsoring the annual Medal of Valor ceremony. That tradition matters because courage shows up in big moments and in quiet ones, and our members live that every day. I'm also proud that we rolled out a health care package this year, and many of you enrolled. Please keep using those benefits.

In our line of work, we often hold things in. Give yourself time to breathe, rest and be with the people who matter most.

Additionally, we're pleased to have hosted another sold-out CCSF Golf Tournament in August. This event is always such a great way for our members, law enforcement partners and supporters to come together for a fun day of fellowship while

raising much-needed funds for our Foundation — which, among other things, provides merit scholarships for children of our members. Thank you to everyone who attended, sponsored, volunteered and helped make this tournament a hole in one.

I know many of you have had to balance work and family while dealing with disruptions this year. In our line of work, we often hold things in. Give yourself time to breathe, rest and be with the people who matter most. Asking for help takes strength.

It's been another year of hard work, progress and accomplishment for our members and our organization. We have achieved good things together, and we're confident we'll keep building on our success in the coming year. In 2026, we'll keep checking what works, fixing what doesn't and putting our time and funds where they help members most. On behalf of CCSO, thank you for what you do each day, and we wish you a very happy new year. 

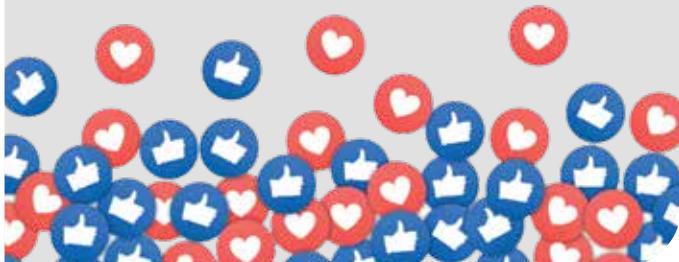
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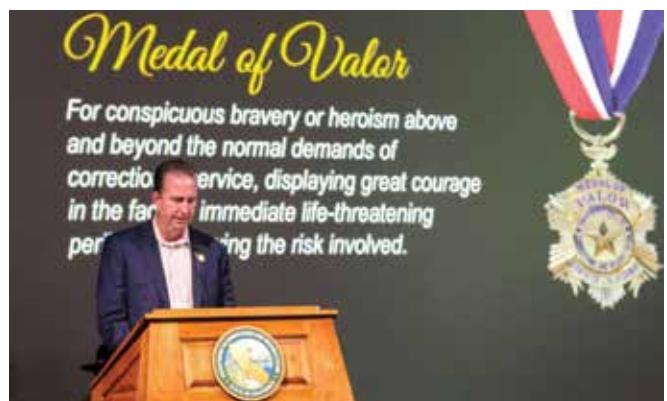
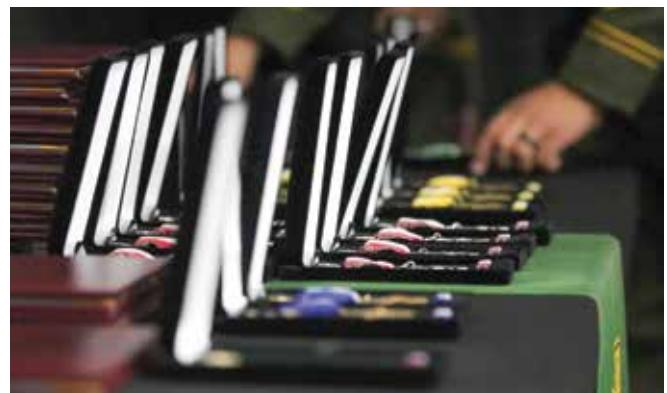
2025 MEDAL OF VALOR CEREMONY



Mary Towe | CCSO Chief Financial Officer/Chief Operating Officer

CCSO was truly honored to sponsor and participate in the 2025 Medal of Valor ceremony, held on September 12 at the Richard A. McGee Correctional Training Center. It was an unforgettable day of reflection, gratitude and celebration of extraordinary courage. President Art Gonzales joined CCSO executives Gilbert Valenzuela, Michael Romero, Art Gonzales Sr., Rhonda Canseco, Nicole Rollins-Player and Mary Towe, along with her daughter, Kaydence Towe, to proudly support this year's Medal of Valor recipients. Each honoree received a gift basket from CCSO as a small token of our immense gratitude for the selfless dedication they show every day, both on and off the job.

This year, the awardees reminded us all of the true meaning of bravery and service. Congratulations to the following CCSO members who were recognized for their outstanding work.



DISTINGUISHED SERVICE MEDAL

This medal is awarded for an employee's work conduct with the Department for a period of months or years, or involvement in a specific assignment of unusual benefit to the Department.



Chief of Mental Health Morgan Elias, Kern Valley State Prison

Dr. Elias has completely transformed veteran services at Kern Valley State Prison over the past two years. Through initiatives like the Veterans Healing Veterans peer mentorship program, specialized therapy groups and expanded access to critical mental health care, she has given incarcerated veterans tools to heal, regain purpose and reintegrate into society. Her tireless leadership and compassionate vision have set a new standard for veteran services, touching countless lives.

BRONZE STAR



The Bronze Star is awarded for saving a life without placing oneself in peril. The employee shall have used proper training and tactics in a professional manner to save, or clearly contribute to saving, the life of another person.



Correctional Counselor James Wilson, Sierra Conservation Center

During an outdoor church service in June 2024, Counselor Wilson witnessed a 97-year-old man collapse. He immediately took charge and performed lifesaving chest compressions until paramedics arrived, ensuring the man's survival with no lasting heart damage. Wilson's readiness to step forward without hesitation is a testament to his dedication and character.



Correctional Sergeant Jor Lee, Central California Women's Facility

At the Sacramento Hmong New Year celebration in December 2024, Sergeant Lee and Officer Teng Thao sprang into action to save a woman who had collapsed. Their decisive teamwork, courage and expertise in administering CPR and using an AED ensured that she survived. Their actions exemplify the profound impact of staying calm, focused and courageous in the face of danger.

Continued on page 8

MEDAL OF VALOR

Continued from page 7

SILVER STAR

The Silver Star is awarded for acts of bravery under extraordinary or unusual circumstances. The employee shall display courage in the face of potential peril while saving or attempting to save the life of another person or distinguish themselves by performing in stressful situations with exceptional tactics or judgment.



Correctional Lieutenant Raymond Siordia, California Men's Colony

On New Year's Day 2024, Lieutenant Siordia rescued two individuals trapped in a dangerous multi-vehicle accident on Highway 101. With fuel leaking and vehicles unstable, he put himself at risk to save lives, demonstrating bravery, quick thinking and unwavering commitment to helping others.



Correctional Lieutenant Robert Smalley, California State Prison, Sacramento

While off duty at a family graduation in June 2024, Lieutenant Smalley witnessed a potentially dangerous confrontation. Without hesitation, he intervened to assist a deputy, subduing a suspect and ensuring the safety of those involved. His courage and sense of duty remind us that heroes can appear in everyday moments.



Correctional Sergeant Jose Navarro, Substance Abuse Treatment Facility

In December 2024, Sergeant Navarro and colleague James Jones came across a severe multi-vehicle accident in dense fog. Despite the imminent dangers, they rescued critically injured individuals and provided aid until emergency responders arrived. Their calm, selfless actions exemplify the very essence of service to others.

This year, we also honored the memory of State Parole Agent Joshua Byrd, who tragically passed in the line of duty on July 17, 2025. CDCR Secretary Jeff Macomber reflected, "This ceremony is about more than one medal. It is about all the honorees who have come forward today. Whether recognized for consistent service, lifesaving aid, or courage under direct threat, each recipient represents the values of this department. Joshua's service and sacrifice will never be forgotten, and his family will always remain part of the CDCR family."

The ceremony also welcomed previous honorees, including Hector Villarreal, whose heroism in protecting citizens from a serial shooter in Kerman earned him the 2019 Medal of Valor.

From the stirring presentation of colors to the heartfelt keynote by Secretary Macomber, the Medal of Valor ceremony is a powerful reminder of the extraordinary courage, selflessness and commitment of CDCR employees and community members. CCSO is humbled and honored to support these heroes whose actions inspire us all. 



2025 CCSF ANNUAL GOLF TOURNAMENT

A DAY OF SUNSHINE, SPORTSMANSHIP AND SUPPORT



Rudy Marquez | CCSF Deputy Director

There's something special about CCSO's annual golf tournament benefiting our California Correctional Supervisors Foundation (CCSF). It's more than a day on the greens; it's a celebration of camaraderie, laughter and shared purpose. The 2025 tournament, held on Monday, August 25, at the beautiful Oakdale Golf & Country Club, was no exception.

Under clear blue skies and perfect playing conditions, the event sold out for the second year in a row — an incredible milestone that reflects the enthusiasm and support of our members and sponsors.

A heartfelt thank-you goes to our top sponsors, Foundation Financial and A-1 Tow, whose generosity helped make this event possible. Friendly competition filled the fairways as teams battled for the top spots. Frank Behill's team took home first place honors,

followed by Rudy Marquez's team in second and Buddy Rhodes' team in third.

Adding a fun twist to the day, Launch for Charity brought their crowd-favorite golf ball launcher — creating plenty of smiles and unforgettable moments. Players also enjoyed delicious food and an exciting raffle featuring amazing prizes, including two 75-inch TVs, two 36-inch Blackstone grills, themed gift baskets, and wine and spirits packages. The biggest cheer of the afternoon came when Mickey Maguire drove away with the grand prize, an EZGO golf cart!

From the first tee-off to the final raffle ticket, the 2025 CCSF Golf Tournament was a tremendous success. We're deeply grateful to everyone who played, volunteered and sponsored this event. Together, we continue to make a difference — one swing at a time. 





PINK PATCHES, POWERFUL IMPACT

Ed Burns Photography

Editor's note: This article is adapted with permission from the October 2025 issue of PORAC Law Enforcement News, the official publication of the Peace Officers Research Association of California.

According to the Breast Cancer Research Foundation, an estimated 316,950 women will be diagnosed with breast cancer in the U.S. this year, making it the most common cancer in American women.

For the law enforcement community, October represents a chance to unite through the Pink Patch Project (PPP) — a campaign that has become one of the most visible and inspiring efforts across the profession.

The PPP has grown to include more than 1,000 agencies across the nation and around the world, including police, sheriff's, corrections, fire, EMS and other first responder organizations. "I believe that shows what a testament law enforcement has — that we are able to unite for a cause that raises not only awareness, but funds to support research and education," says Amy McDaniel of the El Segundo, California, Police Department, who helps run the program. "The project humanizes law enforcement, shows our solidarity with those who are fighting and bridges law enforcement and the public through shared values and a collective effort for such a meaningful cause."

In just over a decade, PPP has evolved from a handful of Southern California agencies wearing pink patches during October to a global symbol of law enforcement solidarity with breast cancer survivors and their families. The growth is striking not just in scale but in impact. To date, PPP has raised \$2 million for City of Hope, one of the largest and

most advanced cancer research and treatment organizations in the U.S.

"Raising \$100,000 was a huge milestone for us — but to see that we have reached more than \$2 million now is incredible!" McDaniel shares. "I believe that this just speaks to the power of community partnerships and the commitment that law enforcement has that we are able to touch so many lives. It is real people supporting real people. For many in law enforcement, this effort is personal. Officers, staff and their families have faced these battles firsthand, and every dollar raised is able to contribute to being that much closer to a cure. Reaching \$2 million shows what is possible when agencies come together for a common cause. It is extremely inspiring!"

Supporting Families Directly

For McDaniel, some of the most meaningful moments come when PPP is able to help individual law enforcement families in need. In 2024, that mission took center stage when the project rallied behind Detective Jackie Sipaque of the Inglewood Police Department.

"Jackie was bravely battling breast cancer at the time and was the sole provider of her two young children. We all recognized the immense support she and her family needed," McDaniel recalls.

To provide that support, PPP and the Inglewood Police Officers Association hosted a fundraiser at a local comedy and magic club in Hermosa Beach, with proceeds donated directly to Jackie and her children. The effort expanded with help from community partners like Camp Xcel in South Gate, California, and Xcellent Nutrition Meal Prep, which hosted a workout session in her honor.



Amy McDaniel

"Thanks to the overwhelming generosity of the community, Jackie was able to focus on her treatment and recovery without the added burden of financial stress," McDaniel says. "She is currently receiving active treatment and awaiting a future surgery. Despite her ongoing treatments, Jackie remains hopeful about returning to duty. She continues to actively participate in Pink Patch Project events, demonstrating her dedication to the cause and her deep gratitude for the love and generosity she has received. The PPP is proud to stand with Jackie and her family."

Much of PPP's success, McDaniel emphasizes, can be traced to the vision of South Gate Police Chief Darren Arakawa, who will retire later this year.

"Chief Arakawa understood early on that this project could be more than just a symbolic gesture — it could be a national movement," McDaniel explains. "He has guided the project to what it is today, and I believe this speaks to how he is not only as a leader, but as a person. His leadership has been the backbone of the Pink Patch Project's success and he will be truly missed as he retires."

Looking Ahead and Getting Involved

As the program looks to the future, McDaniel says the mission remains focused and deeply personal. "My goal has always been to continue to advocate for early detection," McDaniel says. "One in eight women will be diagnosed with breast cancer. If law enforcement can continue to fundraise and raise awareness, we get that much closer to a cure. The goal has not been to just grow bigger, but to get deeper and more effective in the fight against breast cancer while continuing to strengthen the bond between law enforcement and the communities we serve."

Participation continues to expand nationwide, with some states leading the way. "California is the leading state with the most agency participation for Pink Patches! Second up

is the state of Massachusetts!" McDaniel notes. Each new agency that joins adds momentum and helps spread the message further.

She encourages agencies not yet involved to take the leap. "What are you waiting for? Joining the Pink Patch Project gives your agency an opportunity to be a part of something bigger than the uniform. It is a powerful way to show your community that you stand for hope. The PPP starts conversations. It opens the door to talk about how we care about the same struggles and that we can fight the same fight against cancer. We honor the survivors, support those fighting and remember those who were lost."

Participation is simple: agencies can begin by producing a pink version of their patch and selling it to raise funds, or by hosting local events, fitness fundraisers and merchandise sales. Communities love to engage, McDaniel stresses, and every new agency adds strength to the movement. "This isn't a trend — it's a movement — one that shows your agency's compassion and is something you can be proud of for years to come."

The Pink Patch Project resonates so deeply because it speaks to something universal: breast cancer touches everyone. Officers, dispatchers, family members, friends and neighbors alike have faced this fight, and nearly everyone knows someone impacted. That shared reality makes the project not just a fundraiser, but a unifying cause that connects law enforcement with the communities they serve.

"If the project can give someone even an inkling of hope — we have done what we set out to do," McDaniel says. "The Pink Patch Project shows a different side of our profession — one of empathy and a shared purpose. Wearing pink patches on our uniforms shows a clear message of support; it starts conversations, raises awareness and shows a shared mission." 

IRONWOOD HOSTS MASS CASUALTY INCIDENT TRAINING



Lieutenant C. Whalen

Ironwood State Prison recently hosted a mass casualty incident training involving multiple outside agencies to enhance emergency preparedness and coordinated response capabilities.

The training included participation from Ironwood's custody staff, management, California Health Care Services Staff (CCHCS) and Crisis Response Team, along with local and regional partners such as:

- Blythe Police Department
- California Highway Patrol



- Riverside County Sheriff's Department
- American Medical Response

CCHCS staff actively participated in emergency medical response, identifying various injuries and performing patient triage based on the severity of conditions.

Participants engaged in multiple active shooter scenarios conducted in a reality-based training environment, designed to simulate high-stress conditions and strengthen interagency coordination, communication and tactical response.

This collaborative effort emphasizes Ironwood's commitment to maintaining the highest standards of safety, preparedness and professionalism in emergency response operations. 



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HEALTH & WELLNESS

MEDITATION IS HARD BECAUSE IT'S NOT WHAT YOU THINK



**Dr. Joy VerPlanck
and Dr. Ryan Curl**

Editor's note: This article is reprinted by permission from the September 2025 issue of American Police Beat.

For most cops, being told to meditate lands somewhere between laughable and frustrating. You're trained to stay alert, watch your surroundings and never let your guard down — not sit quietly with your eyes closed while someone tells you to "breathe into your belly." Meanwhile, your mind is trying to juggle intrusive thoughts, plan dinner or figure out why your back hurts so much every time you sit still. The stress builds. Sleep suffers. Your fuse shortens. People throw the word "meditation" around a lot, and we all want to feel better, but most of us were never taught what it really means.

What Meditation Actually Is

Meditation is just a way to train your attention. That's it. If something helps you focus, stay calm or manage how you react

when things get intense — it probably counts. It doesn't have to look a certain way. You don't need special music or to sit on the floor like you're in a yoga class. You just need a moment where your mind gets a break from the constant noise.

Researchers describe meditation as a spectrum, with methods ranging from concentration to mindfulness.¹ Some practices involve locking your focus onto one thing, like your breath or a sound. Others are more open — you let thoughts or feelings come and go without grabbing onto them. A lot of methods use a mix of both. What matters is whether it helps you reset and stay steady.

There's no single version that works for everyone. Some tools are a better fit for your body, your stress level and the kind of work you do. Once you find something that fits, it gets easier to stick with it and use it when it counts.

Why It's Worth Doing

Once you understand what meditation actually is, it's easier to see why it matters. These quick resets help

keep your system from running too hot for too long. Like grabbing a sip of water before stepping back into the heat, a reset gives your brain a moment to recover.

Without meditative breaks, stress starts to pile up. The body wears down. You lose focus. You start zoning out during paperwork, forgetting what you were saying mid-scene or staring at your screen with nothing landing. Researchers call this mind blanking — a moment where your brain checks out, even if you're technically awake.²

Mind blanking happens when the brain's background system, the default mode network, takes over. It switches on more often when you're tired or overwhelmed. The brain is built to protect itself from overload, but when that system kicks in at the wrong time — on a call, in an interview or while writing a report — it can get in the way.

The default mode network isn't a bad thing. It plays a key role in helping us reflect, recover and plan ahead. But there's a time and place for that kind of mental activity, and you're better off being able to choose. Meditation helps you build the ability to notice when your attention has drifted and redirect it back to the task at hand.

Planning short, intentional resets throughout the day gives your brain space to recover before the default mode kicks in, making you more likely to stay sharp when it matters most.

If You Hate Meditating, You're Not Alone

Traditional meditation wasn't built for high-alert roles like policing. Stepping away from your surroundings or closing your eyes doesn't match the way most of us are trained to operate. When your job depends on staying aware and ready to respond, stillness can feel uncomfortable — or even unsafe.

Everyone responds to stress differently. Your brain and body have their own patterns under strain, and certain strategies will work better than others. The tools below can help you reset without pushing against how you're naturally wired.

Tactical Alternatives, Based on How You Respond to Stress

If stillness makes you crawl out of your skin: Movement can help regulate your system without forcing you to sit still. Walk slowly and count your steps. Put on music and sway or stretch. Even 60 seconds of focused movement while breathing in rhythm can bring you back into balance.

If quiet time makes you feel lazy or guilty: You may be wired for teamwork and a strong sense of duty. Sitting alone can feel unproductive, like you should be doing something more useful. Try placing a hand on your chest, taking three steady breaths and mentally thanking someone you work with. Gratitude plus connection gives your brain what it needs — without requiring isolation.

If you obsess about doing it "right": Perfectionism is common in high-responsibility roles. If vague meditation instructions frustrate you, stick to a short, structured routine.

You may have heard of box breathing, (inhale, hold, exhale, hold, each for a count of four) but five minutes of cyclic breathing — longer inhalations and shorter exhalations — might be more effective.³ Use the same sequence at the same time each day, like after roll call or before a shift. Predictability and structure help settle the mind.

If silence floods you with emotion: Sound and movement can help hold your attention in safer ways. Try humming. Listen to steady background noise, like a fan or a rain track. Draw with one hand while breathing with the other. Keeping part of your attention engaged gives your system something to hold on to.

If you need to feel like it's useful: Some individuals regulate best when the practice has a clear goal. Breathe in for four seconds and picture a meaningful success — resolving a tough call, making it home safe, helping a teammate or teaching your kid something. Let each breath link to something that matters. Connecting your attention to a mission or outcome helps the reset feel like part of the work.

Meditation Is About Maintaining Control

Meditation helps build control over how you respond under pressure. It doesn't have to look any particular way. Some people sit still. Others regulate best through movement or sensory input. A 30-second breath check while scanning your surroundings, standing with your back against a solid wall or humming while walking a perimeter: these actions help the nervous system reset and keep the mind steady. Control comes from consistent regulation, not from the form the practice takes. 

Dr. Joy VerPlanck is a learning and development consultant serving organizations of all sizes in the public and private sectors. She is a former military police officer and chair of the cognitive advisory board at MILO training solutions. Joy holds a doctorate in educational technology, a Master of Science in organizational leadership and training, and a certificate in the foundations of neuroleadership.

Dr. Ryan Curl is the AI governance lead at Upstate Medical University Hospital, where he ensures that AI policies and implementations support innovation while maintaining ethical and regulatory integrity across health care, research and academic domains. With a strong foundation in neuroscience (M.S.) and cognitive psychology (Ph.D.), he brings a unique blend of behavioral science, data expertise and business consulting experience to AI governance.

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MAKING A DIFFERENCE CCSO GIVES BACK

As we continue our mission of supporting our chapters in their efforts to make a meaningful and lasting difference in their communities and institutions, here's a look at some of the events and organizations CCSO has recently contributed to and participated in.

CCI Trunk or Treat



KVSP Promotional Ceremony



KVSP's 20th Anniversary Staff Appreciation Day





ISP Staff Appreciation Day



CCI, ASP, KVSP and WSP Health Fairs



SATF Harvest Fest and STB Drive



CIW Turkey Donation Drive



FINDING BALANCE IN THE CHAOS



Mary Towe | CCSO Chief Financial Officer/Chief Operating Officer

If there's one thing I've learned over the years, it's that balance doesn't always mean perfect harmony — it often means finding peace in the middle of the noise. Between overseeing operations and financials and supporting our members, life can feel like a marathon with no finish line. Add to that being a wife and a mom to two kids — my 21-year-old son, David, and my 15-year-old daughter, Kaydence — and the word "balance" can sometimes feel like a moving target.

Kaydence has a rare autoimmune condition that requires ongoing care from multiple specialists. We've spent countless hours in hospitals and doctors' offices, learning medical terms I never expected to know and navigating the ups and downs that come with it. But in those moments, I've discovered the real definition of strength — the kind that comes not from control, but from faith, patience and love.

And then there's my son: young, independent and

recently the proud owner of his first motorcycle. Every time I see him ride off, I say a quick prayer and remind myself that letting go is part of parenting, too. Watching him chase his freedom keeps me both on the edge of my seat and full of pride. It's a different kind of balance, trusting that the lessons we've instilled will guide him safely on his own path.

I've learned to appreciate the quiet moments: a family movie night, a laugh over dinner or simply a few minutes of stillness before the day begins. Those small things fill my cup and remind me that even when work is busy or life feels heavy, joy can live in the ordinary.

As correctional supervisors and managers, you all carry the weight of responsibility, both on the job and at home. The truth is, we can't pour from an empty cup. Taking a breath, stepping outside for five minutes, saying "no" when we need to or laughing when things get tough isn't selfish; it's survival. Even in your hardest moments, remember: it's OK to not be OK. Growth often begins in the struggle.

So, as we move through the season of gratitude, I encourage you to give yourself grace. Be proud of what you juggle, and find comfort in knowing that "balance" doesn't mean having it all together. It means showing up with heart, no matter what the day brings.

After all, family isn't just who we go home to — it's who keeps us grounded while we serve others. 



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GARY G. GOYETTE IS:

- ▶ An attorney who has represented CCSO members for over 20 years!
- ▶ ***The*** attorney who helped achieve the historic \$155 million settlement with CDCR for pre- and post-shift overtime pay for sergeants and lieutenants — ***which led to CDCR paying them 30 minutes of extra time per workday going forward*** for the pre- and post-shift tasks.
- ▶ A detailed attorney with an engineering background who assesses, organizes and uses ***facts*** — as ***applied*** to the ***law*** — in your favor.
- ▶ An attorney who ***actually*** answers his phone (or calls right back)!

**Ask CCSO To Assign Your Case,
Issue Or Question To Gary.**

HE WILL GO TO BAT FOR YOU!



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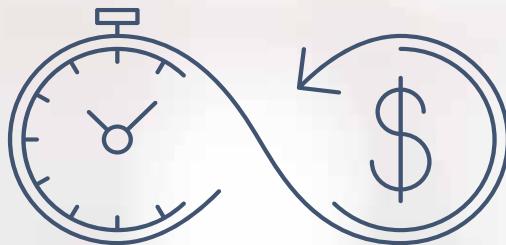
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California Correctional Supervisors Organization

ANNUAL SUPERVISORY TIME BANK

CCSO has partnered with CDCR to establish a recurring Supervisory Time Bank (STB). CCSO representatives will be soliciting annual donations on their upcoming tours. STB donations provide executive officers, chapter presidents and members the ability to attend the annual conference, workshops, board meetings, meet-and-confers, trainings and many other important events. Your contribution is appreciated and ensures that supervisors have more opportunities to participate and learn.

Please contact CCSO at (800) 449-2940 for annual donation forms or more information about the Annual Supervisory Time Bank.



WE NEED YOUR HELP