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**BILL SPONSORED BY THE RETIRED PUBLIC EMPLOYEES' ASSOCIATION  
IS SIGNED INTO LAW, RECOGNIZING MODERN FAMILIES  
FOR FALLEN PEACE OFFICERS**

September 20, 2022 – Governor Newsom signed Senate Bill 850 into law to ensure families of fallen officers receive their full survival benefits regardless of family structure. This bill was authored by Senator John Laird and sponsored by the Retired Public Employees' Association of California (RPEA).

Sen. Laird introduced the bill in honor of fallen Santa Cruz County Sheriff's Deputy Sgt. Damon Gutzwiller. Calling out the circumstances where Gutzwiller's children with longtime partner were not eligible for benefits because their parents had not married. The law retroactively benefits non-traditional families of California peace officers lost in the line-of-duty since 2013.

"Until now, state law only ensured that surviving spouses of public safety officers killed in the line of duty would qualify for an additional benefit for the officer's children. However, if the officer had not been married, no benefits were available to the officer's children," says Rosemary Knox, president of the Retired Public Employees' Association of California.

The new legislation allows the benefit to be paid to the person in custody of the deceased individual's children, should no surviving spouse exist.

"Families come in all forms. Children of fallen first responders will now finally receive equal benefits regardless of their parents' marital status. We are proud that RPEA played a role in ensuring the families of fallen officers receive the benefits they deserve in this time of need," added Knox.

(more)

## **ABOUT RPEA of CA**

Retired Public Employees' Association Of California (RPEA) is a non-profit association of retirees and active employees who are members of the California Public Retirement System (CalPERS). RPEA's mission is to:

- Represent all public employees - classified schools, public agencies, and state.
- Be a liaison between retirees and CalPERS.
- Protect beneficiaries of CalPERS.
- Fight to maintain current pension and health care benefits and improve these benefits every year.

RPEA has over 24,000 members; with 75 active chapters in California, Arizona, Nevada, New Mexico, and Oregon. RPEA was founded in 1958 as an association to protect and enhance retirement benefits for all Public Employees who receive their pension or health benefits from the California Public Employees' Retirement System (CalPERS). RPEA is the only statewide association representing all PERS Retirees: State, Classified School and Public Agency. To learn more, visit [www.rpea.com](http://www.rpea.com)

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