



[U.S. Senator Chris Coons of Delaware](#)

News Releases

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Lt. Joe Szczerba honored posthumously with Congressional Badge of Bravery

New Castle County police officer was killed in the line of duty in September 2011

NEW CASTLE, Del. – U.S. Senators Tom Carper and Chris Coons, U.S. Congressman John Carney, and U.S. Attorney Charles M. Oberly, III, presented the family of fallen Officer Joseph L. Szczerba with the Congressional Badge of Bravery Award during a ceremony at the New Castle County public safety building Monday. They were joined at the event by Attorney General Beau Biden, New Castle County Chief Administrative Officer David Grimaldi, and New Castle County Police Chief E. M. Setting, as well as officers from the New Castle County Police Department.

"Born and raised in Delaware, Lt. Szczerba answered the call to protect the community he called home his entire life," **Senator Carper** said. "The Congressional Badge of Bravery honors exceptional acts of bravery in the line of duty by a federal, state or local law enforcement officer. I can think of no better person to receive this honor today than Lt. Szczerba."

"There really is no way to fully express our gratitude for Joe's service and sacrifice," **Senator Coons** said. "Congress created the Congressional Badge of Bravery to honor law enforcement officers who distinguish themselves for exceptional acts of bravery in the line of duty, and I can think of no more distinguished, no more exceptional act of bravery than what Joe Szczerba showed that night. This award is one way we keep our promise to remember Joe's sacrifice and protect his legacy."

"Any time an officer is killed in the line of duty, it shakes the entire community. It is a heartbreaking reminder of the sacrifices made by brave men and women everyday to selflessly protect our lives with their own," **Congressman Carney** said. "Lt. Szczerba was a model officer, as well as a loving husband, caring son, and loyal friend. I feel privileged today to present his family with the Congressional Badge of Bravery in honor of his service to our community and ensure that generations to come remember the sacrifice he made for all of us."

Then-Sgt. Szczerba was killed in the line of duty shortly after midnight on September 16, 2011, as he attempted to take a suspect into custody in Penn Acres Park in New Castle. Despite being mortally wounded, Sgt. Szczerba remained engaged with the suspect, detaining him until additional officers arrived on the scene. His actions likely prevented other officers from sustaining knife-inflicted injuries and led to the apprehension of his murderer. Sgt. Szczerba, who had served on the New Castle County force for 18 years, was posthumously promoted to the rank of Lieutenant.

"Lt. Szczerba served Delaware bravely and honorably without pause, even in the midst of imminent danger," **Governor Markell** said. "He is a hero and deserves fitting recognition of that title. This honor serves to remember his courage, his strength and his conviction while protecting Delaware's citizens."

"Today's historic ceremony fittingly honors the ultimate sacrifice of Lieutenant Szczerba and also his family who allowed him to put on his uniform and put the public's safety before his own," **Attorney General Biden** said. "His family and our entire community continue to deeply feel the pain of his loss every day."

"We honor Lt. Joe Szczerba, a fallen member of our great New Castle County Police Department," **New Castle County Executive Tom Gordon** said. "Today the rest of the nation knows what we all have known. Joe is a true hero. It is tragic to lose an officer, but Joe's spirit lives on. He will be an inspiration to all future generations of our officers as they enter the Police Academy named in Lt. Szczerba's honor. On behalf of NCC residents, I thank Lt. Szczerba for his service and thank his wife, mother, and family members for sharing this great man with all of us. He made the ultimate sacrifice for the safety of others. I am proud to be his brethren. On this day and each day, we thank all those who serve in uniform, as well as their families, for their commitment to New Castle County communities."

"We are proud to be recognizing Joe as a hero," **Colonel Setting** said.

To honor law enforcement officers' acts of bravery, Congress created the Federal Law Enforcement Congressional Badge of Bravery and the State and Local Law Enforcement Congressional Badge of Bravery. A member of Congress may present a Law Enforcement Congressional Badge of Bravery to federal, state, local, and tribal law enforcement officers who are recommended by either the Federal or the State and Local Law Enforcement Congressional Badge of Bravery Board.

Lt. Szczerba is only the 23rd officer, nationwide, to be honored with the Congressional Badge of Bravery.

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