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## *House of Representatives*

### **The Justice For Public Safety Officers Act**

**HON. DAVID DREIER**  
OF CALIFORNIA  
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 2007

**Mr. DREIER.** Madam Speaker, on January 9, 2007, Armando Garcia, the primary suspect in the murder of Los Angeles County Sheriffs Deputy David March, was extradited to the United States. It was four years, eight months, and ten days that the family and colleagues of Deputy March were forced to wait for his killer to face extradition.

We know that when our public safety officers perform their duties every day, whether patrolling their neighborhoods, protecting the courts, riding in an ambulance, or fighting a fire, they are working to ensure the protection of all of us. Because they are constantly putting their lives on the line, we must do everything we can to ensure that criminals who harm or threaten those who protect the public receive a punishment that matches the seriousness of the crimes they commit.

Madam Speaker, it is with these dedicated public safety officers in mind that I am proud to introduce the Justice for Public Safety Officers Act with my friend from Pasadena, Congressman Adam Schiff. This bill, which is based upon legislation that Mr. Schiff and I introduced in the last Congress, sends a clear message that justice will no longer be abused by fleeing murderers.

As we know, under Federal law, it is a crime to kill a Federal, State, or local public safety officer if they are engaged in a Federal investigation. It is also a Federal crime to flee to another country to avoid prosecution. However, the crime of fleeing is punishable by no more than five years in prison, and as little as merely paying a fine. The Justice for Public Safety Officers Act takes an important step toward establishing stiffer penalties by imposing a mandatory minimum of 30 years in prison for murdering a public safety officer and an additional mandatory minimum of 10 years for traveling between States or countries with the intent to avoid prosecution.

When Deputy March was brutally slain execution-style during a routine traffic stop, Armando Garcia, an illegal immigrant, fled to Mexico within hours of Deputy March's murder to avoid prosecution by U.S. authorities.

At the time of the murder, Mexico refused to extradite individuals who may face the death penalty or life imprisonment, therefore hindering efforts to bring Armando Garcia back to the United States to face prosecution for his crime. The same border that Garcia illegally crossed to enter our country served as a wall of protection for almost 5 years.

I joined many of my colleagues and Los Angeles County Sheriff Lee Baca in efforts to see that Armando Garcia and other fugitives accused in killings on our soil are returned to the United States to face justice. We met with officials from the Department of Justice and the State Department. We urged President Bush to call for aggressive action to change Mexico's extradition policy. I met with then President Vicente Fox and other high officials of the Mexican government, including their Supreme Court, in an effort to impress upon our neighbor that its extradition policy is intolerable.

We reached a critical turning point in 2005 when the Mexican Supreme Court issued a decision that allowed consecutive prison terms for certain murders. This decision ultimately paved the way for Armando Garcia's arrest in Tonalá, Jalisco, Mexico, on February 23, 2006 and his extradition to the United States on January 9.

For those of us who were involved with this case, January 9 will always have conflicting emotions. On the one hand, we know that this day marked a victory for the rule of law, sending a clear message that no one should be allowed to commit an act of murder and flee to another country to avoid prosecution. And yet, it also stands as a painful reminder of the loss of Deputy March and the danger that all public safety officers face on a daily basis.

Madam Speaker, the handcuffs that hung from Deputy March's belt the day he was killed were shackled to Armando Garcia as he was brought into U.S. custody last month. I am encouraged that Deputy March's killer has finally been extradited to the United States. But we must continue to work to ensure that the service performed by this Nation's public safety officers is honored by making certain that those who wish to do them harm face stiff penalties for their actions. Passage of this bill will guarantee that perpetrators of heinous crimes against public safety officers will be brought to justice.