

Lawmakers approve construction of memorial for fallen officers

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HONOLULU (HawaiiNewsNow) -

State lawmakers recently approved funds to finally start the construction of a memorial for fallen law enforcement officers. Hawaii is the only state without one.

Barbara Favela and her children traveled to Washington, D.C. last fall to see her husband's name etched on a wall at the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial. Officer Steve Favela died in 2006 after his motorcycle crashed while escorting a presidential motorcade at Hickam Air Force Base. His wife was glad to hear that state lawmakers designated \$608,000 in capital improvement funds last week.

"It means a lot to the families. Maybe others don't understand, but it's been eight and a half years since Steve passed away and we are always visiting him at the grave," said Barbara Favela.

"It's such a difficult trek for families here who have lost someone who has worn the uniform and carried the badge to go all the way to Washington, D.C.," said Thomas Aiu, a board member of the Hawaii Law Enforcement Memorial Foundation.

Aiu's late wife, Joan Gribbin-Aiu, spearheaded the campaign to build a memorial. The effort to create the monument honoring Hawaii's 64 fallen law enforcement officers started in 2010 with the creation of the foundation. The following year, then-Governor Neil Abercrombie signed a bill setting aside land next to the Kalanimoku Building. Then the project stalled.

"We couldn't put together the amount of money that we needed to actually build it. What we got was tremendous support and money in terms of what we needed for the permitting process, the actual further design process," explained Aiu.

Volunteers like FBI agent Ed Ignacio helped to keep the dream alive. He raised \$15,000 by competing in triathlons wearing nearly 40 pounds of tactical gear during the run. The foundation also held other fundraisers.

"It's important for the families to have somewhere to go to see their loved one's name on the wall," said Favela.

Once the governor signs off on the funding, construction is expected to last roughly four months.

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