

**Business, Transportation & Housing Agency
Acting Secretary Brian Kelly
Caltrans Workers Memorial
Thursday, May 2, 2013 11:00 a.m.
State Capitol West Steps
Remarks As Prepared**

Thank you for inviting me here today. I welcome the opportunity to express my tremendous respect for every Caltrans worker who practices his or her craft in our communities, on our highways, making California a safer and better place. This is a real honor for me to join with you on this occasion to recognize the great sacrifices Caltrans workers are making every day in service to the public.

There are many families here who have suffered great loss. I am here to express my heartfelt condolences to you, to honor the work of your loved one, to honor you and tell you how much I appreciate you being here today. Thank you.

I also want to express my condolences to the families of Caltrans Yreka crewmembers Shawn Baker and Robert Jones, who died last week in a rock-slide in Siskiyou County. These men were out there, on the highway, working to make our lives better and the public safer. We are forever grateful for their service.

I have spent nearly 20 years of my life working in the public sector. In the legislature, I enjoyed wrestling with the challenges of trying to craft better policies and new law, of trying to solve problems. Today, I work with departments to implement laws, policies and programs to protect the public's health and safety and to keep California moving. In both capacities, I have enjoyed working with people who have chosen to dedicate their lives to public service.

I honor and respect public service and the men and women of this state who choose to serve. I continue to be inspired by that service and by all of you. In this vein, I'd like to spend a moment acknowledging the tremendous work done by Caltrans workers every day:

- Highway construction and maintenance is one of the most dangerous jobs in America.
- Caltrans workers are out there each day on California's 50,000 miles of highway fixing roads and securing our infrastructure, doing everything they can to keep people

safe. They toil along roadways with vehicles flying by just feet—or inches—away.

- They keep our highways free of debris and work in the dead of night and in trying circumstances to make our roads better. This is just a small fraction of what Caltrans workers do day in and day out.

In today's political climate, gratitude can be hard to come by for government workers. There is a real tendency in hard times to forget and to dismiss public service as "bureaucracy." But I look at the men and women of Caltrans—and your public service—and see a far different and inspiring reality.

Over the years, Caltrans has had its periods of great challenge. The department is going through such a period right now. But the challenges pale compared to the determination of dedicated public servants committed to solving problems. That is what you all do. That is what they did. That commitment is what will carry the department through today's challenges and those in the future.

Recently, the pundit, actor and comedian, Ben Stein, had something very positive to say about public service. His words caught my ear and stayed with me, because my almost 20 years in state service say that his words are right. Stein said:

- “Government employees include cops and firefighters, who do some of the most dangerous and vital work in the society. Government employees include prosecutors and prison guards, who do work that is often extremely dangerous and deeply necessary.
- Government employees are the doctors and nurses at VA hospitals. They are the teachers who try to teach our kids. They are the men and women who keep track of our economic health and statistics, without which we cannot measure progress or failure. ...
- **...These people are the muscle and bone of the nation.”**

That’s the way I see it, too. Public service literally paves the way for new innovation, new business and industry. Public service helps provide for the common good. Public service makes our communities safer. It saves lives and helps ensure the wellbeing of our state.

That's why we are here today: to recognize and appreciate this work and to express our gratitude and thanks for the dedication and sacrifice of those committed to public service. You all sacrifice something for the greater good. Today, we honor those who sacrificed all for all of us.

I honor and appreciate their example. Thank you.