

Paying Attention! (prestando attencione!) with Tom Duggan



Admit It... You Really Don't Care

I approached several of the Merrimack Valley's state representatives, state senators, local mayors and other elected officials recently to find out why, in light of the fact that Deval Patrick fought to free a cop killer, they would publicly support him for a job that entails appointing judges to our criminal justice system.

"Well ... my understanding of that whole thing is that Deval was *really* defending the process, not necessarily the killer," one Lawrence representative said, informing me that the *real* issue was about the way this was being "exploited."

REALLY? I am sure the wife of Officer Ronald Smith would be comforted to hear that.

"Come on, he was just doing his job," a state senator told me in a dismissive tone as he eyed the buffet line and scanned the room for someone more "comfortable" to talk to.

One valley mayor responded with, "That whole thing is being blown way out of proportion. Deval's my guy! Besides, it was a long time ago."

When I reminded another official that Patrick's efforts have now resulted in the family of a slain cop testifying before a parole board every three years to ensure that the man who killed their loved one remains in jail, he responded with, "Abe Lincoln was a defense lawyer," and that he had defended many unpleasant characters.

It was an answer you would expect from a former defense lawyer (which he was), yet I doubt Abe Lincoln ever fought for the release of an admitted and convicted cop killer who committed his crime the very last time he was free (he escaped).

I was puzzled. How could these people stand by Deval Patrick? How could they publicly tell the voters that this guy would be a great pick to appoint judges for our criminal court system? These were the

Background: Deval Patrick Fought to Free Cop Killer

Upon learning that Deval Patrick had fought to free admitted cop killer Carl Roy Songer, I, like many of you, was outraged that this man was a finalist for the top seat at the State House in Massachusetts.

Songer pumped five bullets into Florida State Trooper Ronald Smith after escaping from prison. Two hunters witnessed the shooting, shot, captured and held Songer until police arrived. There was never any doubt about Songer's guilt from the moment of the shooting.

After being convicted and admitting to his crime, Songer was sentenced to die. Only after all this did Deval Patrick as an ACLU lawyer step in to have the sentence of Carl Roy Songer reduced to include parole. Because of Deval Patrick, every three years family members of Trooper Smith must now relive the nightmare (in public) of how Carl Roy Songer gunned down the man they loved, the man who

movers and shakers in the Merrimack Valley. They were the people in charge of police departments (mayors), people who are in charge of passing our criminal laws and the sentencing guidelines criminals will face. These are the very people who campaign year after year, talking tough on crime, and appearing with police officers in campaign ads and press conferences.

Yet, every single one of them had an excuse for Deval Patrick's long record of empathizing with vicious criminals instead of defending victims of crime and standing with police. Each of them found a way to dismiss Patrick's ACLU efforts to raise false accusations of racism in an effort to free a hardened, violent criminal onto our streets to jeopardize the safety of you, me, and everyone we love.

Not even one could bring himself (even privately) to acknowledge that Patrick's behavior and philosophy on coddling

stopped on the side of the road to HELP him.

And there is no guarantee in any given year that the trooper's family will succeed in denying Songer parole status. There is a real possibility that some day in the near future, the man who shot a police officer five times the LAST time he was free, may be out there lurking in their neighborhoods once again.

If Patrick had been retained to defend the cop killer *before* Songer's guilt was established, before he admitted to his crime, before eyewitness accounts were made in court against him, you might be able to brush it off and say, "Hey, Patrick was doing his job and everyone is innocent until proven guilty." But that's not what happened. Patrick willingly took on a case to free a convicted and admitted cop killer, Carl Ray Songer it is an "issue" that some of us cannot, and will not overlook.

vicious criminals was something they disagreed with.

The more excuses I heard, the more I began to realize that their excuses were really lies, and that their defense of Patrick was really a defense of themselves and their own values - or lack thereof. Each of them was saying in his own way of political double-speak: "Look, I just don't care! Deval is my guy and nothing (not even freeing a cop killer) is going to change that."

To these confused elites in the Merrimack Valley, cop killing, rape, parole, and early release of prisoners are just political "issues" to explain away at election time as they climb the ladder of political opportunity. What they *really* care about most is advancing in party politics and being on the "winning team," because that's far more important than keeping *real* cop killers in *real* jails, more important than a *real* rape victim who was *really* beaten over a period

of hours by a man whom Patrick himself has described as "thoughtful and humane."

As for the horror these victims and their families continue to go through every day as the result of people like Deval Patrick, they simply do not care. And they are not *going* to care. I only wish they would be honest about it, spare us the excuses, put away the talking points and just say the words, "I *really* don't care!"

But, they won't, because they don't want the public to see how detached they are from the *real* world of *real* criminals and *real* victims. They don't want us to see that part of their humanity has died, along with their ability to empathize with the people who *really* have to bury a loved one and then sit before a *real* parole board to keep a dangerous killer from *really* roaming free.

Here's the kicker. Each of the politicians I spoke with knew that my father had been a police officer killed in the line of duty. They each knew that my father's killers (Willie Rodriguez and Doris Ortiz) got off on a technicality after admitting to (and bragging about) their crimes. Yet each of them found a way to dismiss and dehumanize the family of Trooper Smith while defending their political bread-and-butter candidate, Deval Patrick.

Saddest of all, these valley "politicians" will continue to be in charge of police departments and passing laws which determine when criminals get released to victimize your family and mine yet again. All the while keeping up the public pretense that they "really care!" about victims of crime.

The sad and lonely truth for *real* victims of *real* crimes is ... they *really* don't ...and neither do the voters!

Tom Duggan is the president of Valley Patriot, Inc., a former Lawrence School Committeeman, and hosts the Paying Attention! Radio Program on WCAP, 980AM, every Saturday afternoon from noon-2pm. His father was a Lawrence police officer killed in the line of duty in 1990. You can email your comments to Tdugjr@aol.com.

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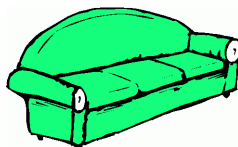
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