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## **Media Release**

### **Several NHP Employees to be Acknowledged for Years of Service and Two Troopers will be Recognized for Their Heroic and Decisive Actions in Last Weekend's Fatality Crash Involving a Wrong-Way Driver near Fernley**

On Thursday afternoon, December 6<sup>th</sup>, 2012, several Nevada Highway Patrol employees will be recognized for their continuous years of service to the citizens and visitors of Nevada. Reno-based Troopers Steve Moore and Greg Moore (no relationship) will each be receiving a certificate for their 20 years of service while David Squire, a civilian employee assigned to the organization's fleet maintenance and repair facility, along with Trooper Dave Gibson, who is assigned to the Fernley area, will each be recognized for their five years of service.

Additionally, Trooper Gibson and off-duty Trooper Rob Conely will be recognized and thanked for their quick and heroic actions displayed prior to, and immediately after, the fatal collision involving a wrong-way driver on Interstate 80 near Fernley this past weekend.

Trooper Gibson was the trooper who was initially dispatched to locate the errant driver, 41-year-old Tonya Babashoff, on Interstate 80 Saturday evening and tried several times to prevent her 2003 Honda Civic from continuing to travel west in the eastbound lanes. After his final attempt to disable her vehicle near Wadsworth with the use of the portable road spikes or "stop sticks", and realizing the portable device was not effective in deflating all four tires, he immediately began driving his emergency vehicle west in the westbound lanes with emergency lights and sirens activated.

By staying ahead of the errant driver on the opposing side of the freeway, Trooper Gibson continued to shine his vehicle's bright spotlight at approaching eastbound motorists in an effort to pre-warn them of an impending hazard. One of those motorists who saw the erratic spotlight being illuminated was off duty Trooper Conely and his wife Jackie. Trooper Conely, who was the sitting in the right passenger seat, told his wife who was driving to move over into the right lane and slow down as something wasn't right. Moments later Babashoff's silver Honda passed the Conely's vehicle in the lane they had just previously occupied. Had this lane change not occurred, the Conely's would have most likely been the victims of a direct head-on motor vehicle collision.

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The vehicle following the Conely's is believed to be the black 2002 Ford F-150 towing a boat trailer that was driven by Richard Vogel, 21 of Mariposa, California; the first of three vehicles that were ultimately hit by the errant driver. Richard escaped injury as he was able to make a last-second lane change to miss a direct hit; however, the Honda did strike the left rear portion of his boat trailer, which subsequently helped to reduce the speed of the wrong-way vehicle. Richard's older brother Justin, who was following directly behind in a 1998 Dodge pickup, was not so fortunate and was struck head-on. Justin received moderate injuries in the event and was airlifted to Renown Regional Medical Center in Reno by Care Flight. He has since been discharged from the hospital. The fourth vehicle involved was the 2005 Chevrolet Silverado pickup that was driven by Barry Strickler of Elko. Mr. Strickler escaped injury and he is also the father-in-law of Trooper Conely.

Moments after this horrific event, which was partially witnessed by Jackie Conely in her rearview mirror, and also fearing that her father was also involved, she pulled the vehicle over to the right shoulder and stopped. Her husband Rob ran back to the scene to check on those involved. He noticed a lot of smoke emitting from the Honda and feared it would catch fire. He assisted in removing the lifeless body of Ms. Babashoff from her sedan fearing she would potentially burn inside her vehicle. Although CPR was immediately performed, her injuries were far too serious to survive the tragedy.

At the event tomorrow, Jackie Conely is planning on reading an emotionally charged letter thanking not only Trooper Gibson for pre-warning her and her husband of a possible head-on collision, but to also praise her husband publicly for his quick thinking in directing her to safety by changing lanes very quickly, and for his calmness and professionalism at the horrific crash scene.

**What:** Ceremony to recognize several NHP employees with continuing years of service and to honor and thank two Troopers for their actions displayed Saturday evening involving a wrong-way driver and subsequent fatality crash.

**When:** Thursday, December 6<sup>th</sup>, 2012

**Where:** NHP-Northern Command West

**Address:** 357 Hammill Lane, Reno, Nevada 89511

**Time:** 1:30 pm (note: the ceremony should last no more than 20 minutes)

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