

CHAPTER 09

17 IN THIS VOLUME

Receiving the Officials.

DIGNITARIES & VIPS COORDINATOR

The mayor, the governor, members of Congress, attorneys general, foreign consular officials, visiting chiefs – every one of them is the family's guest, not the department's audience.

The Dignitaries & VIPs Coordinator manages RSVPs, reserved seating, security coordination, protocol on who speaks and in what order, and the family's preferences on which visits they will accept and which they will decline.

Done well, the family feels honored and the officials feel welcomed. Done poorly, the family feels imposed upon and a governor is seated behind a photographer. Protocol exists to protect the family, not to flatter the visitors.

PRACTICAL GUIDANCE – FROM AGENCIES WHO HAVE DONE THIS

- 01 Protocol exists to protect the family, not to flatter the visitors.** Every decision is filtered through one question: does the family want this, and is it a comfort or a burden?
- 02 The family's "no" is a full sentence.** If the widow does not want to meet the governor, the governor does not meet the widow.
- 03 Seat by relationship, not by rank.** The officer's oldest partner from their first beat sits ahead of the visiting chief.
- 04 Build a 5% cushion into every seating count.** Unannounced dignitaries arrive. Holding the cushion is far easier than moving people.
- 05 Never let a dignitary wait alone.** A uniformed escort from the car door to the seat — and back — is the standard.
- 06 Coordinate protective details 48 hours out.** Secret Service, state details, consular security all require advance work.
- 07 Acknowledge afterward.** A handwritten note, signed by the family and Chief, to every attending dignitary within 30 days.

MODERN CONSIDERATIONS • 2026

- **Secure RSVP form.** Online form or invitation-management tool; confidentiality verified.
- **Digital credentialing.** QR-code pass for VIP and protective-detail check-in.
- **Pre-service coordination calls.** With every protective detail 48 hours out; shared venue maps and exit plans.
- **Translation / interpretation.** Programs in additional languages; ASL interpreter visible.
- **Cyber protocol.** VIP contacts and home addresses never circulated in unencrypted email.

TURN THE PAGE FOR THE CHECKLIST →

CHECKLIST 09 • HONORING THE FALLEN

Dignitaries & VIPs Coordinator checklist.

A working one-page reference. Begin at first assignment; complete through service close.

INVITATIONS & PLANNING

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| ☐ Receive scope of invitation list from Chief. | ☐ Coordinate with PIO on announcement timing and invitation protocol. |
| ☐ Establish single secure RSVP channel. | ☐ Confirm with Family Liaison which dignitaries family wishes to receive privately. |
| ☐ Coordinate with protective details (Secret Service, state, consular). | ☐ Coordinate with Traffic on reserved parking and motorcade positioning. |
| ☐ Build dignitaries roster and priority seating chart. | |

SEATING, USHERING, PRIVATE VISITS

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| ☐ Priority seating chart finalized with Funeral Coordinator and Chief. | ☐ Seating signs printed and placed. |
| ☐ Ushers assigned to entrance for escort duty. | ☐ Protocol script for ushers (names, titles, rows). |
| ☐ ADA seating within VIP section. | ☐ Translator / interpreter needs identified. |
| ☐ Private visit details (who, where, when) approved. | ☐ Gifts / proclamations and handoff scripts prepared. |

SERVICE INVOLVEMENT & EXIT

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| ☐ Dignitary remarks pre-read by Chief and clergy. | ☐ Time allotted; order in program confirmed. |
| ☐ Motorcade positions for dignitaries. | ☐ Interment parking plan and seating. |
| ☐ Escorts assigned at graveside. | ☐ Exit plan and motorcade release order. |
| ☐ Acknowledgment letters drafted for family signature within 30 days. | |