Judge William B. Matthews confirmed for *School Transportation News* that he mailed a letter to President Obama asking that Charles "Chuck" Poland, Jr., be awarded that nation's highest civilian honor for giving his life in protection of 20 students on board his school bus last month.

"This fella saved 20 kids' lives, no question," said Matthews, a municipal court judge for Midland City, Ala., for the past 27 years and a local attorney for nearly 32 years.

Jimmy Lee Dykes boarded the Dale County Board of Education school bus on Jan. 29, shot and killed Poland and kidnapped then 5-year-old Ethan and held him captive for six days in a home-made, under-ground bunker. When negotiations broke down on Monday, a team a FBI Special Forces raided the bunker, killed Dykes and rescued Ethan, who turned 6 this week. Matthews mailed his letter to President Obama the next day.

Matthews wrote that Poland was only doing his job when he was gunned down by Dykes but that he treated the children on the bus as they were his own, and he died as a result.

"I know you get a lot of letters from ordinary citizens during your day-to-day job as being our President," Matthews closed. "I would hope you take this one to heart."

Since local reports of Matthews' nomination of Poland, he has been featured on CNN (towards the end of a segment on how Poland bought time for 20 students to evacuate through the rear of the bus while trying to talk down Dykes for more than four minutes) and said he has seen his Facebook page swell to more than 4,300 friends at this report. One of the new friends he has made, Matthews added, is Poland's son. Matthews added that he had already known Poland's niece for many years.

In related news, the Alabama Senate on Wednesday unanimously passed a joint resolution to rename a quarter-mile stretch of Highway 231 near the location of the shooting and abduction as the Charles "Chuck" Poland Memorial Highway. The Legislature also opened its session on

Feb. 4 with a statement on Poland's heroism:

"While grieving the death of Mr. Charles Albert Poland, Jr., we are grateful for his precious life, and we offer this resolution in highest tribute to his inspiring legacy of love and faith, as well as in heartfelt sympathy to his family and friends," the resolution states.