



Richard Gordon

A Message From the President of the **CPO Chapter**

Insight Into Probation

Probation and Parole is considered an alternative to incarceration and a means to relieve prison overcrowding. The roles of the correctional probation officer in Florida have changed over the last two decades due to professionalism, officer certification and changes in laws such as the Jessica Lunsford Act, Anti-Murder Act and changes over the years to F.S 948 and sex offender registration, and the ever increasing violent nature of offenders being placed on supervision.

Probation Officers can be seen as the Silent Guardians—they have a low profile image since they use their own unmarked vehicles and wear no uniform. They usually work alone in the field, many times at night in high crime areas doing surveillance, residence checks and curfew checks, as well as arresting offenders for a warrant or probable cause for violating supervision. Their first priority is public safety and enforcement of court-imposed conditions as well as ensuring collection of restitution and court-imposed costs.

Probation Officers supervise anyone placed on supervision for a felony offense or released from prison. The types of supervision are: pre-trial intervention (a State Attorney program), probation (mainstream), Drug Court Probation,

Drug Offender Probation, Community Control, Sex Offender Probation. Early release supervisions are: Parole, Conditional Release and Addiction Recovery Supervision. Each type of supervision has general conditions of supervision and special statutory conditions as well as special conditions the Court or Florida Parole Commission impose as well. Each type of supervision has different contact requirements based on risk and the type of supervision.

Correctional Probation officers' duties are diverse—they counsel, make referrals to treatment, assistance programs in the community, investigate violation, and prepare reports for the court, searches and arrests. Due to policy and procedure and Florida Administrative Code, they do not transport offenders after an arrest and they purchase their own firearm and equipment if they carry a firearm while on duty.

Florida Correctional Probation officers are hard working, dedicated public servants and I am proud to be one of them.

It is our hope that, as the Legislature and public become educated on the job we do, they realize that tools, equipment and a competitive pay package are needed to retain officers to continue to protect the citizens of Florida. ■



Cecil Pendergrass

A Message From the President of the **Gulf Coast Chapter**

Happy 2008 To All Of Our Members!

The Gulf Coast Chapter has recently been leading a crusade that should be of interest to all law enforcement agencies. A small group of activists joined the ACLU in an attempt to persuade the City of Fort Myers to create a citizens review board to monitor police activity. Implementation of a citizens review board in Fort Myers would not only affect its officers, but can set precedence for other agencies, and I have been working hard to counteract this group's efforts. My plan of attack has been straightforward—much vocal opposition!

I vocalized the PBA's opposition directly to the citizens by responding in writing to the petition, which I explained was initiated under false pretense. We also held several press conferences with the news media (see article below) indicating that we would go door to door if we had to, which generated interest from national news media

including *St. Petersburg Times*, *New York Times*, and the *Today Show*.

On behalf of our members, I have been in constant contact with Fort Myers' Mayor, City Manager, and City Council Members to communicate the PBA's opposition and met with the Disabled Veterans of America, fire and teachers unions, and several neighborhood watch groups in addition to other business leaders who are willing to support our efforts and provide financial assistance, if needed.

It appears that at this stage, we have made progress, as I recently received word that no further petition signatures have been collected and that the activists' efforts have diminished. We intend to monitor their actions and will continue to fight for the benefit of ALL law enforcement agencies.

To our fellow officers around the state: be alert. This can happen to you! ■

ABC CHANNEL 7 LEE COUNTY

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FORT MYERS — A petition is circulating in Fort Myers calling for a citizen review board to monitor Fort Myers police officers' actions. But the head of the police union says people are tricked into signing that form.

Cecil Pendergrass, President of the Police Benevolent Association, says that police officers are being wrongfully accused of crimes. He says Citizens for a Better Fort Myers Government are calling cops "murderers" and accusing them of beating people.

"The citizen's review board would separate the officers from the community," said **Pendergrass**.

Pendergrass says voters are being lied to. "Oh definitely they are being misled. We already have a complaint filed in Tallahassee about this," said **Pendergrass**.

In their letter, officials with the police union say the Citizens for a Better Fort Myers Government group is

"attempting to create a citizen's review board under false pretense."

They accuse the group of "broadcasting fabricated information." It specifically surrounds the case of Ernest Weston, who was gunned down by police officers in February.

Those officers involved were later cleared of any wrongdoing.

"They were taking facts in that case and misleading the voters, trying to get a petition signed saying officers acted improperly," said **Pendergrass**.

The union also quotes a citizen's letter saying the police "gunned down an unarmed black male and shot him in the back of the head while lying on the ground face down."

But community activist Anthony Thomas defends Citizens for a Better Fort Myers Government.

"I have asked the Fort Myers Police Department to

provide evidence to show allegations that we have made are incorrect," said Thomas.

Thomas says hundreds have signed the petition saying they want a review board. He believes the police are just trying to stop that from ever happening.

"There are going to be people who don't like democracy. They don't want to hear the voters be heard," said Thomas.

Pendergrass says they have filed a complaint with the State Elections Office and says the police association plans to go door-to-door to tell residents what he calls the truth.

Though the president of the Fort Myers ACLU says those tactics are intimidating, Pendergrass says the association is allowed to do it.

The Fort Myers City Council voted down the idea of creating a citizens review board.

[NOTE: Bold type and italics added by PBA]