

TALLAHASSEE DEMOCRAT GOVERNOR CRIST APPOINTS MICHAEL McHALE TO THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE STANDARDS AND TRAINING COMMISSION

May 1, 2007 — By Erin Isaac

TALLAHASSEE - Governor Charlie Crist today appointed Michael "Mick" McHale of Sarasota to the Criminal Justice Standards and Training Commission.

"Sergeant McHale is a 16-year veteran of the law enforcement community," said Governor Crist. "I am confident his training and experience will be a vital asset to the commission as the members work to set and maintain standards for Florida's finest public servants."

McHale, 47, is a sergeant for the city of Sarasota Police Department. He served as vice president of the Florida Police Benevolent Association and as president of the Southwest Florida Police Benevolent Association. Sergeant McHale also served as executive secretary of the National Association of Police Organizations and is a certified K-9 Handler.

"Law enforcement officers are the backbone of a safe society," said Sergeant McHale. "I understand that the safety and security of the people of Florida is a paramount concern for Governor Crist, and I am grateful to be entrusted with this responsibility."

The Gainesville Sun

Anti-murder bill may easily become law

February 07, 2007

TALLAHASSEE - Gov. Charlie Crist's "anti-murder" bill may be the first bill passed by the Florida Senate this year when lawmakers meet in their annual session next month.

"It should be first bill up and first bill out," Senate Majority Leader Daniel Webster, R-Orlando, said Tuesday.

Webster's comments came just before the Senate Criminal Justice Committee unanimously voted for the measure (SB 146), which will crack down on violent felons who violate their probation. The House—which voted 115-0 for the bill last year—is considering a similar proposal (HB 29).

As attorney general, Crist couldn't get the bill out of the Legislature the past few years. But as a governor who seems to be working well with legislative leaders, it looks like his bill is a sure thing this year.

Law enforcement officials, including the state's prosecuting attorneys and the Florida Police Benevolent Association, which represents the probation officers, spoke in favor of the bill. "This will prevent a lot of dangerous felonies from occurring—period," said David Murrell, a PBA lobbyist. "It will save lives."

St. Petersburg Times

Florida's Best Newspaper

In ironic twist, Sheriff confronts union issue

©March 09, 2007 • By THOMAS LAKE

Seven years ago, the powers behind a massive labor union conspired to help unseat a Pasco County sheriff.

They wanted Lee Cannon out. They had a replacement in mind. He was a sergeant for the state Division of Alcoholic Beverages and Tobacco, and he had fought for years in Tallahassee to make sure his fellow union members weren't abused by their superiors. His name was Bob White.

White was a board member for the Florida Police Benevolent Association, but he had little experience in political campaigns. The PBA brought in a consultant to help him plot strategy. It paid for fliers maligning Cannon and extolling White. Its political action committees donated more than \$5,000 to White's campaign, or about \$1 of every \$15 he raised.

"He was one of us," recalled David Murrell, the PBA's executive director. "We thought he would be good to look out for the deputies."

White won that election, as well as the next one. Then, last year, his deputies voted to unionize. Now he finds himself in a new role: that of a top commander with a union fight on his hands.

Last month, he gave patrol deputies and their supervisors what he said was his final contract offer. They rejected it by a combined vote of 168-3. They want retirement-gap health coverage, use of agency mailboxes for union communication and the right to appeal to an outside arbitrator when they've been disciplined.

In a telephone interview Thursday, a reporter told Murrell about White's standoff with the union. Murrell laughed.

"Quite often," he said, "when people get elected sheriff, they get a bit of amnesia."

White must respond to the deputies today or risk a formal impasse, one of the first in the state. Experts say he might be able to impose a contract on his own terms—but that could damage the deputies' trust in him.

His strategy remains a secret. But when confronted about his union ties on Thursday afternoon, White broke his long silence on the labor dispute.

"You're right," he said by speakerphone in a conversation that was monitored by one of his spokesmen. "The PBA did help me in 2000. And they said they wanted somebody who would be for the deputies in the Sheriff's Office. And I think my record shows that I've been pro-employees."

"They're my deputies," he said. "I'm in their corner. I'm always in their corner."

He would not say why he has not granted their benefit requests.

"This is between my deputies and I," he said. "Just because we've disagreed on a few issues doesn't mean we've had a falling-out."

White enforced state alcohol and tobacco laws for nearly 17 years. A spokesman for the Division of Alcoholic Beverages and Tobacco said agents don't get comprehensive gap coverage when they retire, but they can appeal discipline to an outside arbitrator.

"He's basically wanting to deny them," Murrell said, "what he himself enjoyed."

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