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John Rivera

A Message From Your President

Without Honor

Every time I hear **Port Orange Chief Gerald Monahan**, also President of the Florida Police Chief's Association, lecture the audiences about integrity and truthfulness on the Criminal Justice Standards and Training Commission, I can't help but laugh.

When I hear sheriffs testify before legislative committees about holding deputies to tougher ethical standards, I crack up. Although, understanding some of them through their southern twang and pack of nasty chew some store in their jaws, is a bit of an undertaking, I do manage to decipher the gist of the crap that spews from their mouths from time to time. I have to tell you, this year's legislative session was no exception. In fact, they reached heights of unscrupulous behavior never before seen in the halls of our Capitol—and that, my friends, is saying a lot! The Sheriff's Association and the Chief's Association, including the Dade Chief's Association, are all so full of sh*t, they can't even see straight. I have to mention that there are two, maybe three, that are okay and don't agree with the game playing, but I have to speak in generalities because if you don't speak up, then you're lumped in with the masses, like it or not.

As I see it, these administrators have lied to the legislators, they've lied to the public, they've lied to the media and then they have the unmitigated gall to claim that they are ethical law enforcement servants watching out for the community. Please! Spare me!

This year, the PBA fought hard to pass the changes to the Law Enforcement Officer's Bill of Rights via SB 624 and HB 1107. Look, in a perfect world the Bill of Rights wouldn't even be necessary. Unfortunately, some administrators make it crucial. Law enforcement officers are continuously being asked to do more with less and are held to levels of accountability not seen in any other profession. This law doesn't change that. And, it shouldn't. What it does do, though, is protect our heroes from overzealous, unscrupulous investigators and administrators who care

very little about the truth and are only interested in furthering their own careers or some other agenda... like, I don't know, maybe revenge, maybe pay-back, maybe something as basic as "I don't like you." Not that any administrator I know would ever take a course of action that was not pure and self-serving! Yeah, right! Touting the Bill of Rights as the "bad cop" law is nothing short of moronic. Anyone who buys into that hasn't read the law, doesn't understand the law, or is just plain stupid.

The Bill has nothing to do with letting "guilty" officers go free; it is about treating employees fairly. Again, we are talking about purely administrative allegations, not criminal actions. It is about keeping up with technology and allowing officers a fair opportunity to respond to the allegations. In fact, the Bill makes so much sense that even the sheriffs and chiefs supported it. They supported it in writing, they testified in support of it in committees, they even met with us on numerous occasions to iron out the language. Then, at the last moment, the Chief's Association and the Sheriff's Association reneged on their word and their agreement and opposed the bill. Wow! Talk about honor, ethics and decency... I wonder what any of these administrators would have done if one of their subordinates had done the same

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thing. In fact, Monahan recently stated that he didn't lie, he just changed his mind. It is exactly these types of administrators from whom the rank and file need protection. I would be remiss, however, if I didn't mention Sheriff John Rutherford, who has since resigned his position as the Legislative Director for the Florida Sheriff's Association in protest of the actions taken by his fellow sheriffs. At least he took an ethical stance and recognized the value of giving one's word.

The Bill is on its way to the Governor for his signature... once it passes and becomes law, maybe in the spirit of goodwill, the PBA will set up a remedial class to explain it to the chiefs and the sheriffs. I have a feeling they'll need extra tutoring. ■

Editor's Note: Please see related Tampa Tribune editorial on "Bad Cops" followed by rebuttals by John Rivera and Senator Mike Fasano on page 14.

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