

A Message From the President of the CPO Chapter



Mark
Altieri

PBA Working Hard For You

As we all are aware, the first five months of 2009 has been quite a tumultuous and stressful period for all of us. First, we had to carry out a massive statewide caseload redistribution in a very short period of time that was chaotic and confusing. I immediately secured a meeting with **Mr. Grant** and **Ms. Nimer** within days of this directive, and **Gil Fortner** and I travelled to Tallahassee to outline our concerns as expressed to us by officers around the state. We argued strongly against geographical boundaries and statutory caseload caps not being adhered to as in the past, as this new directive was causing extreme hardship to officers in every part of the state. Mr. Grant gave us a commitment that he would do everything he could to remedy the negative fallout of the caseload transfer, and to his credit, he and Ms. Nimer have continued to work on the specific issues brought to their attention by the PBA. Also, at the conclusion of this meeting, I requested that the PBA be consulted before any new major policy decisions are made in Community Corrections, and Mr. Grant has honored the commitment he gave to us to do so.

On March 18, 2009, Gil Fortner and I again travelled to Tallahassee to meet with Mr. Grant and Ms. Nimer to bring forth important issues faced by probation officers. These issues included the following: the PP 89 Exceptions Report still being used as forced policy by certain supervisors around the state and not as a general guide in supervising cases; that officers will not be penalized in reference to re-entry appraisal standards if their caseload reflects a high number of violation reports and subsequent revocations; and that the Department immediately needs to formulate a priority list of CPO job functions as well as a uniform statewide policy for after 5pm GPS on-call. Again, Mr. Grant stated that he would work closely with Regional Directors on dealing with these issues.

If all of the above were not enough to deal with, the Legislative Session commenced during the first week in March. From the start, the PBA had to deal with every sort of rumor flying around about what was going to happen to state workers, from layoffs and furloughs to paycuts and closing of state offices. What I can say to all of our probation officers is that for almost every week in March and April, one of your CPO Board of Directors was in Tallahassee arguing strongly against any officer cuts or salary reductions. This was in addition to the weekly meetings that **PBA Executive Director David Murrell**, **Deputy Executive Director Matt Puckett**, and lobbyists **Gary Bradford** and **Ken Kopczyński** held with Senators and Representatives to reinforce the call to hold probation officers, correctional officers, and all state law enforcement officers harmless from the budget ax. We emerged from the session fight battered and bloodied, with over 300 position reductions in the Department and a 2% pay cut for state

workers making \$45,000 or more, but we were not defeated. The PBA secured budget language that officers were to be given priority over management and administrative positions, and **Secretary McNeil** has stated firmly that the position reductions will be absorbed by vacancies and attrition, and that no officers will lose their jobs. The PBA is also working with Mr. McNeil to try to attempt to locate savings within the Department so that SES and administrative positions can be stabilized in the hope that these positions will not be eliminated.

Finally, on the legislative front, PBA Executive Director David Murrell met with **Governor Crist** to formally request he veto the 2% salary reduction for state workers, and thankfully, on May 27, 2009, the Governor did the right thing, and vetoed the salary reduction.

On May 15, 2009, **Southwest Regional Vice President Fred Vasconi** and I met with Mr. Grant and Ms. Nimer about upcoming issues within the Department that Mr. Grant had notified us about. The most important issue will be the establishment of four Regional Working Groups that will conduct a review of what the most critical functions are in each region; what classes and how many officers in each class are needed in a region; and that supervisors, officers, and support staff will be included in each group for their input. The Regional Director will appoint his or her members to their respective groups and the PBA will have a CPO Board Member on each group, as agreed to by Mr. Grant. Also, the long awaited revised caseload/investigation point total was released on May 27, 2009. How this revised point total will translate into CPO and CPSO caseload size remains to be seen, but rest assured, your Board will closely monitor this and take appropriate action if caseloads explode for these officers.

As I began above, the first five months of this year have been extremely stressful and tumultuous, as we had to endure a statewide caseload redistribution; increasing workload and data entry demands; attempts to eliminate probation officer positions; and the humiliation of a 2% pay cut. Through it all, probation officers continually get the job done inside the office at the computer and outside the office by protecting the public with effective offender supervision. I believe we have made the Department acutely aware that our representative, the Florida PBA, is not going away when internal matters arise and that we will also not be ignored when new policy decisions are being considered. Every member on the CPO Board of Directors is committed to fight on your behalf, and if you think we are not doing enough, you must let us know. It is only by standing united, by staying active in your union, and by communicating with your Board that we will defeat future threats to our ranks.

As always, if I can help any officer with any matter, please don't hesitate to contact me at the Gainesville West Office or by calling me at 352-281-6223. 🍀

The Caring Millionaire

One afternoon, a millionaire was riding in his limousine when he saw two men along the roadside eating grass.

Disturbed, he ordered his driver to stop and he got out to investigate.

He asked one man, "Why are you eating grass?"

"We don't have any money for food," the poor man replied.

"We have to eat grass."

"Well, then, you can come with me to my house and I'll feed you," the millionaire said.

"But sir, I have a wife and two children with me. They are over there, under that tree."

"Bring them along," the lawyer replied.

Turning to the other poor man he stated, "You come with us, also."

The second man, in a pitiful voice, then said, "But sir, I also have a wife and three children with me!"

"Bring them all, as well," the millionaire answered.

They all entered the car, which was no easy task, even for a car as large as the limousine was.

Once underway, one of the poor fellows turned to the millionaire and said, "Sir, you are too kind."

"Thank you for taking all of us with you."

The millionaire replied, "Glad to do it. You'll really love my place. The grass is almost a foot high!"

Photo Highlights From The "Officer Down" Memorial and State Law Enforcement Officers Rally On March 9 & 10

(See additional photos on next page.)



Department of Corrections Secretary Walt McNeil visits with correctional officers from around the state at the "Officer Down" Memorial on March 9th at the Capitol.



Just some of the hundreds of state law enforcement, FHP, FDLE, correctional, and correctional probation officers who attended the rally on March 10th at the Capitol.