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John Rivera

A Message From Your President

Greetings everyone, I hope all of you and your families are doing well. I'm going to lead off by answering the question that is probably on most everyone's mind – what should we all make of **Governor Charlie Crist's** switch from the Republican Party to No Party Affiliate as he seeks Florida's open United States Senate seat? I can tell you unequivocally this is how the Florida PBA views it, how I personally view it, and, I hope, how you all will come to view it if you don't feel this way already – Charlie Crist, the man, has earned our support, my support, and quite frankly your support in his bid for the United States Senate. Whether he's a Republican, a Democrat, a No Party, a Whig, or something else, Charlie Crist is first and foremost on your and your family's side. His veto of that garbage language gutting the DROP which was thrown into HB 5607 by a last minute amendment is just the latest example of his commitment to you.

By the way, the Governor did not just veto this bill, because he was concerned he would lose our support, or endorsement. That endorsement and the PBA's support were never in jeopardy. He vetoed it, because, as he said, it was the right thing to do. This Governor has been in charge of a state that was one of the first to enter into the recession and looks to be one of the last to recover. If ever there was a Governor who could have allowed that cut to the DROP benefit or the salary cut from last year to become a law, this Governor could have done so. He has had to deal with one of the worst economies in modern history and his former political party urging him to reduce state employee benefits. That combined was enough to provide the cover necessary to allow these bad ideas to become law. But Charlie Crist is better than that. He chose you over the powerful members in his former party. People say he doesn't make the tough choices... I strongly disagree. He makes the tough choices and he makes the right choices. (See **Stephanie Womble's** article on page 8.)

Speaking of tough choices. We have made our endorsements for statewide offices and, before you read about those decisions (*see endorsements on page 7*), I'll address a subject for you I'm sure you'll hear about. People have always labeled the PBA as a Pro-Republican Labor Organization. Really that label has always been a misnomer, but because of our support for **Jeb Bush**, Charlie Crist, and other Republicans for the big statewide races, this label was attached to us. Now, after our 2010 endorsements for statewide office, people are going to say that we either switched sides or that we were always Democrats, but we kept it hidden. I am here to tell you that neither label is accurate. The Florida PBA is a nonpartisan labor organization. We support those who support our membership. Don't allow this type of labeling to cloud your judgment about the PBA. We stand with those who stand with us – Republican or Democrat or No Party.

You will soon read about the difficulties of this year's

legislative session and a lot of people will ask, "Is the PBA going to hold Legislators accountable for their actions?" The answer is absolutely YES. Bad legislation is the number one issue an incumbent will have to address when seeking our endorsement at the PBA screening committees. Again, we support those who support our membership.

On a much brighter note, we have finally broken through the glass ceiling on the Criminal Justice Standards and Training Commission (CJSTC). Our very own **President Emeritus Ernie George** was selected as the new chairman of the Commission in May. It was a unanimous vote by the way. Who among us would have believed such a thing could have happened say five years ago? Well me, but few others. Look, I serve on the commission with Chairman George so I know how much of himself he gives to the commission and I think you all know he is a passionate advocate for rank and file officers. He truly deserves this chairmanship. Ernie has always

wanted what is best for the law enforcement and corrections professions and he demands that *everyone* be treated equally and fairly. We are especially proud of him and we know he will be a fantastic chairman. Congratulations, Ernie!

Finally, I want to share a story with you that really just epitomizes why officers join organizations like the PBA and fight for what is right in our profession. People often get so caught up in fighting for the

benefits that they forget that we are part of a brotherhood/sisterhood. Our collective goodwill was on full display a few weeks ago and I think it is, as people are fond of saying now, "a teachable moment." One of our Homestead Police Officers, **Danny Avedano**, had a brother who was very ill. Officer Avedano had been invited on a church group fishing trip up on the Peace River, but he was not planning on going, because he wanted to be there if something happened to his brother. His brother learned about that choice and basically demanded that Danny go on the trip. Unfortunately, his brother passed away while Officer Avedano was fishing. The family contacted the PBA and asked if we could help them find him somewhere on the Peace River. Our PBA representatives reached out to **SLEO President Matt Tyre** who worked with **FWC Officers Jordan Hilliard** and **Andy Taylor** to locate Officer Avedano and coordinate getting him back to Homestead in record time. This type of commitment, my friends, is what we should always be about with our fellow officers. It would have been so easy to do nothing in this case, but the right choice was to act and help. We must always take care of each other. Regardless of whether we are Democrat, Independent, or Republican, we are foremost officers and we must treat each other as family.

I'm going to close with this same sentiment. People are angry right now about a whole host of things, but we cannot allow ourselves to be angry, selfish and uncaring with each other. At the end of the day, we are part of a giant family of officers. We have to stick together. ■

"[Charlie Crist] chose you over the powerful members in his former party."

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