

Organizational Update



Jim Wiggins

Director of Organizational Services

Please encourage non-members to join the 35,000 officers throughout Florida who receive the benefits of belonging to the Florida PBA!

Legislation Enhances Officers' Rights

The Florida PBA works hard every day to improve the pay and working conditions for the men and women of Florida's law enforcement community. I know that all of our statewide collective bargaining units are upset with the \$1,000 bonus the legislature appropriated as a pay raise this year—and rightfully so! I can assure you that we have already begun the work necessary to ensure that this won't happen again next year. That being said, let's look at a couple of pieces of legislation that are near and dear to the staff working in the Florida PBA's Organizational Services Division. When an officer becomes the focus of an investigation, we dispatch one of our staff representatives who are well versed in the Law Enforcement Officers' and Correctional Officers' Bill of Rights, and the various collective bargaining agreements around the state. So it goes without saying that we were ecstatic when the Florida PBA lobby team was able to pass two pieces of legislation that vastly improves an officer's rights when they're called to internal affairs.

The first piece of legislation basically says that the officer (under normal conditions) will now have the right to be interviewed last, assuring that they will have the opportunity to review all the evidence and statements gathered during the

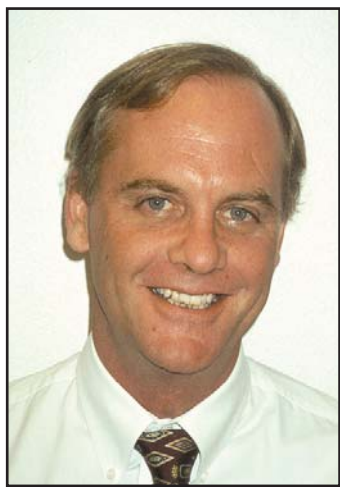
investigation prior to giving their own statement. Secondly, the investigator will have to affirm in writing that the officer was afforded every right and opportunity in accordance with the Law Enforcement Officers' and Correctional Officers' Bill of Rights. Now, I know that most officers think that they will never do anything wrong or have a citizen make a complaint against them. However, the reality is the Florida PBA

represents thousands of officers every year in internal affairs investigations. So while the pay raise this year was an aberration for our statewide bargaining units, the lobbyists at the Florida PBA were able to put a silver lining around that dark cloud by passing significant legislation protecting the rights of every officer in the State of Florida.

In closing, I'd like to remind every member, if you're called to Internal Affairs, invoke your right to have your PBA

representative present prior to beginning the interview. Let us provide the knowledge and experience we have gained from doing these investigations every day, throughout the state. We know the investigators, we know the system, and we know what your rights are. Membership has its privileges—don't leave home without them. The Florida PBA... "Serving Florida's Finest." ■

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Jim Spearing

PBA In Action With Your Political Consultant

Session 2007: A Long, Hard Slog - Successes and Bitter Disappointment

Believe it or not, the recently concluded session was, under any other circumstances, a successful one for PBA and law enforcement. We passed legislation to keep I.A. Investigators honest, a bill to allow us to focus on the specific needs of our state law enforcement officers and a joint PBA/FOP effort to streamline non-criminal investigations that will have lasting effects on the fairness meted out to our members.

But we got stiffed, along with every other state employee, on a pay raise. This bitter disappointment clouded an otherwise solid lobbying effort. I'm telling our legislative friends that we will be back next year seeking this year's pay raise as well as next. It will be an election year, so maybe we'll get a better reception.

Speaking of solid efforts, I would be remiss to not share with you the sparkling performance of our newly promoted Deputy Executive Director Matt Puckett. You see, our esteemed president, Big John "Pass the bill or you die" Rivera is

legendary for concocting grand ideas in the waning hours of the session and demanding that we somehow find a way to amend an existing bill to make his dark dreams a reality.

When given such an assignment by Iron John, failure is worse than the threat of imminent death; that would be getting off too easy.

So was the fate of Matt Puckett on his maiden journey as Deputy Director (see photo page 5). He rose brilliantly to the occasion, found a bill to amend John's language onto and fought off, literally, every state agency and special interest that tried to derail the bill. He secured friends in high places in the House of Representatives and his tenacity paid off with final passage. I have, on several

occasions, been the victim of John's wrath when his pet project hit the rocks. Have you ever seen someone beat a dog whose eyes are too close together? It isn't pretty.

So, my hat is off to Matt and we should all be proud to know that the future leadership of our association gave his all.

Till next time, stay safe out there. ■

"[Matt Puckett] secured friends in high places in the House of Representatives and his tenacity paid off with final passage."



"I feel strange saying this, but... don't try anything funny."