

The new statewide standard set by this law will require that an officer only deploy a dart firing stun gun when a person who is under arrest or a custodial situation has reached the point of active physical resistance set by *FDLE's Use of Force Matrix*. The person must be a physical threat to the officer, a threat to him or herself, a threat to others, or he or she is attempting to flee or escape. Every officer issued a stun gun will undergo a minimum of four hours basic training in the use of the dart firing stun gun, but only if that officer is employed by an agency using the weapon. Officers at agencies using the weapon are required to take a one hour annual refresher course.

Special thanks to our sponsors, Senator Stephen Wise and Representative Dick Kravitz. Senate Bill 214 was signed into law by Governor Bush on June 26th. (See page 1.)

Internal Affairs Legislation

PBA President Ernie George proposed at the June 2005 board meeting that the next few years provided the best opportunity to achieve some real reform to the Officer's Bill of Rights. PBA's 2006 internal affairs bill was our first attempt at making reform a reality. Unfortunately, we came up just short in this year's session.

Our bill had three main objectives: tell the truth, follow the law and take responsibility for your actions. An investigator would be required to sign an affidavit swearing that he or she did not violate the officer's rights while conducting the investigation and that the investigative report he or she prepared is the truth to the best of his or her knowledge and belief.

This is a good government idea that will soon see its time come.



Representative Trey Traviesa and PBA give a thumbs up!

Kudos to our sponsors, Senator Mike Haridopolos and Representative Trey Traviesa.



Florida PBA President Ernie George with Mathew Bahl, recipient of PBA's Legislative Assistant of the Year Award.

Congratulations to Mathew Bahl, Legislative Aide to Representative Trey Traviesa, who earned our Legislative Assistant of the Year Award for his work on this legislation.

Academy Time Credit

This legislation permits an officer who did not receive special risk credit during his or her academy training time, as required by statute, to purchase a special risk credit upgrade. During 1978 to 1984, some employers did not classify their officers in training academy as special risk employees. As a result, many officers in the affected counties are learning that they will be required to work an additional four to six months in order to fulfill the 25 years of required special risk service prior to retirement.

We believe one issue is holding this legislation up, a subsidy included in the costs that puts the state on the hook for roughly a million dollars. If we can address the subsidy issue by changing the interest paid to purchase the upgrade this legislation should pass next year.

Many thanks to our sponsors, Senator Rudy Garcia and Representative Mike Davis.

Reemployment of Retired Law Enforcement Officers

This was the most contentious bill we had all session. This bill is designed to discourage a revolving door that exists at certain agencies. As it stands today, an officer can perform 25 or more years of service, enter into five years of DROP (Deferred Retirement Option Program), retire, wait 30 days, come back to his or her same employer in the same position, and pick up right back where he or she left off... 30 days ago. The DROP was never intended to be a bonus program for continued service, but without our bill, it is becoming one.

This legislation would require any agency re-employing a retired member, who is also a former employee of that same agency, to bring that person back at square one (lowest rank and pay) for a period of three years immediately following retirement. After the three years, the agency can hire the person back at any position.

Special thanks to our sponsors, Senator Bill Posey and Representative Pat Patterson.

Representative Pat Patterson won our 2006 Lawrence E. Hoffman Award, which is given to the person who fights like a "bulldog" for an issue. Representative Patterson was met with dogged opposition at every committee stop by our friends from the Sheriff's and Chief's Associations, even FDLE joined the fray once or twice. At his first committee meeting, one of Rep. Patterson's close friends, **Sheriff Johnson** from Volusia County, testified in opposition to the bill. But, Rep. Patterson never flinched and that's why he received our award.

Workers' Compensation

Representative Sandy Adams has fought for this legislation since becoming a member of the Florida Legislature. This past year she came real close. Led by the Florida Professional Firefighters Association, with help from the PBA and FOP, the workers' compensation legislation came very close to full approval.

The legislation addresses several serious issues related to Workers' Compensation claims for first responders. Two specific issues are loosening the compensability standard of proof caused by occupational disease or toxic exposure. As it stands, a first responder would have to pinpoint the exact location he or she came into contact with a toxic substance, and permitting first responders employed by municipalities not participating in social security to receive permanent total disability compensation after age 62.

The sticking point is funding.

Our gratitude goes to the sponsors, Senator JD Alexander and Representative Sandy Adams.

Representative Adams won PBA's first ever Law Enforcement Officers' Champion Award for her expertise and consistent advocacy of the rank and file officer.

Health Insurance Subsidy

Retiree healthcare is an important issue facing Florida and the nation right now. We all know the cost of healthcare is soaring. Our retirees are on fixed incomes with many facing health insurance costs more expensive than their monthly retirement benefit.

Currently in the Florida Retirement System, an employee will receive \$5.00 as health insurance subsidized payment for every year of state employment (maximum of \$150 per month). The bill increases the subsidy to \$7.00 per year of employment for a maximum of \$210 per month in retirement. It's no panacea to the larger issue of soaring healthcare costs, but it would provide some much needed relief to our retirees.

Special thanks to the sponsors, Senator Al Lawson and Representative Bob Allen.



Representative Pat Patterson presented with the "Lawrence E. 'Ed' Hoffman Legislative Champion Award" by PBA's own Ed Hoffman.



Representative Sandy Adams with the Central Florida Chapter after winning the Law Enforcement Officers' Champion Award at the June Florida PBA Board Meeting.



Congratulations to Matt and Julie Puckett as they celebrate the arrival of their first child, Gracie, at the end of June.

~David Murrell