

Discussing Career Issues from Your PBA General Counsel



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In These Tough Times, It Is Important To...

As I watch the disciplinary cases and criminal cases roll across my desk, I am reminded about how perilous times have become for law enforcement and correctional officers. Times have certainly changed. In the “good ol’ days,” minor indiscretions were overlooked or corrected by the “proverbial” slap-on-the-hand. That is not true anymore. Good example: recently a department charged an officer criminally for walking out on a \$6.00 meal at a restaurant in order to respond to a dispatch call. That is ridiculous, but it is true!

In light of the tough times, I am going to give you some advice. Part of it is legal and part is personal. Part may make sense and part you can disregard. But here goes:

In these tough times, it is important... to remember that you have a job. You may be frustrated and may consider yourself overworked and underpaid, but you have a job, a good pension and good health care benefits. While it may be hard to believe, let me assure you that there are lots of people out there who envy you!

In these tough times, it is important... to do your work and do it properly. This is part legal advice and part personal advice. I can’t tell you how many disciplinary cases have come across my desk that involve minor or petty infractions where the officer didn’t follow normal procedures, didn’t do a timely count, didn’t prepare an incident report or detained someone and didn’t prepare the necessary paperwork. Almost uniformly, when we speak to these officers about the cases, their explanation for the error falls into two categories: 1) “I was too busy with other stuff,” or 2) “everybody else does it.” While this is understandable, my

simple advice is to do your job, do it on time, and prepare your paperwork. I fully understand it is “a pain” at times, but it beats being disciplined or unemployed.

In these tough times, it is important... to be honest if you are under investigation and are questioned. If it means you are going to be disciplined, so be it. Take the disciplinary hit and move on. In these times, an agency will almost uniformly dismiss you if it determines that you have been untruthful and the CJSTC will certainly look into your case. If you are a disciplinary “target,” be honest and don’t turn a minor charge into a major charge.

In these tough times, it is important... to keep up your PBA membership. Okay, I have heard the grumbling: no pay raises, etc. But, in the past two years, the PBA has seen disciplinary appeals grow by 30% in each of the years and criminal charges against officers nearly double in that same time period. I recognize sometimes the easy answer when you’re depressed or financially strapped is “drop my PBA dues.” The simple truth is that, in the tough times, being a PBA member and

having the protections it affords is absolutely necessary! So keep up your PBA membership.

Finally, in these tough times, it is important... to remember your faith (whatever form that might take), your family and your friends. No matter how “tough” the times get, these three items will help to sustain you through the roughest of them.

Thanks for listening. Stay safe, and be sure to call our legal staff if you have questions. ■

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A police officer in a small town stopped a motorist who was speeding down Main Street. “Officer,” the man began, “I can explain.”

“No explanation needed!” snapped the officer. “I’m going to let you cool your heels in jail until the chief gets back.”

“But, officer, I have to tell you something.” The man tried again.

“Just keep quiet! You’re going to jail and I’m not interested in what you have to say!” the officer barked.

A few hours later the officer looked in on his prisoner and said, “Lucky for you that the chief is at his daughter’s wedding. He’ll be in a good mood when he gets back.”

“Don’t count on it,” answered the fellow in the cell. “I’m the groom.”

Larry woke up at home with a huge hangover. He forced himself to open his eyes, and the first thing he saw was a couple of aspirins and a glass of water on the side table.

He sat up and saw his clothing in front of him, all clean and pressed. Larry looked around the room and saw that it was in perfect order, spotless, clean.

So was the rest of the house. He took the aspirins and noticed a note on the table: “Honey, breakfast is on the stove, I left early to go shopping. Love you.”

So he went to the kitchen, and sure enough there was a hot breakfast and the morning newspaper.

His son was also at the table, eating.

Larry asked, “Son, what happened last night?”

His son said, “Well, you came home after 3 a.m., drunk and delirious, broke some furniture, puked in the hallway, and gave yourself a black eye when you stumbled into the door.”

Confused, Larry asked, “So, why is everything in order and so clean, and breakfast is on the table waiting for me?”

His son replied, “Oh, that! Mom dragged you to the bedroom, and when she tried to take your pants off, you yelled, ‘Lady, leave me alone, I’m married!’”

From Your Membership Secretaries...



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