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300 East Brevard St.  
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1-800-733-3722

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**Publications Specialist**  
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**Proofreader**  
Marcia Eggers

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*John Rivera*

# A Message From Your President

## It's On Now!

First off, I want to commend each and every one of you for the service you provide to your communities, our state, and our nation. I do this, because lately you are not receiving the respect you deserve from our elected officials. I do this, because most of us are staring at crippling layoffs, cutbacks, and reductions that will take generations to recover from. Apparently, your selflessness and sacrifices are no longer enough for our elected officials. They believe causing more hardship for you and your family is warranted in the name of a new found fiscal restraint. Well I ask, just where was this restraint prior to them leading us into this hole? Aren't these the same people that got us into this mess? Why then, are we relying on their judgment to get us out?

For months, many of us have endured biased media editors and cowardly elected officials ranting and raving that our greed is driving them to financial ruin. To them, the housing bubble had nothing to do with this financial meltdown... it was your pay and benefits. You've heard the routine:

"Police pensions are too expensive."

"Correctional and Correctional Probation Officers benefits are not warranted in this economy."

"Police salaries are too high."

"Law enforcement officers should be treated like the private sector and make sacrifices."

How much more of a sacrifice does an officer have to make beyond offering his or her life? Unless you wear the badge, don't preach to us about sacrifice.

There was a time in this country when we honored the men and women who were brave enough to serve with guarantees of financial stability and retirement security. Protect us from the bad guys and we'll take care of you. It was a time when we all actually believed that if you were willing to handle the demands of this profession and the strain it places on your loved ones, then you should earn a decent paycheck and a pension. No longer.

This belief has been replaced by selfish politics and legacy shrines. Why else would our leaders act in such foolish ways?

**"Apparently, your selflessness and sacrifices are no longer enough for our elected officials."**

Is a dome on top of a city hall already referred to as the Taj Mahal worth police officer layoffs? In some cities it is. Are baseball stadiums more important to economic growth than public safety officers? Some elected officials think so.

Each of you should check your agency's questionnaire requesting federal dollars if you have not done so already. We have uncovered requests for federal money from departments where an answer of "NO" was given to the question about the agency's existing financial need. Officers are losing their livelihood and these officials are saying that no financial need exists. Why would they respond this way? Bond ratings. If they answered "YES" to the question about an existing financial need, then the city, or county bond rating could drop. Cities and counties are turning on their police officers in favor of their bond ratings. Well guess what? Murder rates have traumatic effects on bond ratings and poll ratings.

I have said it before and I'll say it again - Right now is a great time to be a criminal. They're winning. Our elected officials are not providing you with the resources and manpower necessary to fight crime. The Preamble of our Constitution calls for the government to "ensure domestic tranquility," but with each cut to a law enforcement officer, a correctional officer, or a probation officer in favor of a ball park, or a golden dome, they turn their backs on their constitutional obligation.

I am committed to doing everything in my power to make sure that dying or being injured in the line of duty is not treated as commonplace, or part of the officer's job. And, I am equally committed to making sure that those who have the power to provide the necessary resources to our law enforcement, correctional, and correctional probation officers remember that it is their responsibility to do just that.

I know many of you are hurting out there right now. You feel beaten down by people who pretended to be your friends when times were good. Don't allow them to fill you with doubt about your worth, or your future. You do a job that few are willing to do. Don't ever forget that. You ARE different than others and you deserve to be treated with honor and respect. These are going to be tough times, but make no mistake about it—we are going to fight and fight and fight. And fight some more. ●

## From Your Membership Secretaries...



*Sherry Hannon*  
Ext. 400



*Marcia Eggers*  
Ext. 411



*Liz Mixson*  
Ext. 412



*Laura Spraker*  
Ext. 413

### **Is the information in your PBA account current?**

**Your employing agency does not notify PBA when you change your address, move to another agency, or retire.** Please help us to better serve you by making a simple phone call, 1-800-733-3722, to your secretary notifying her of your changes, or send the information to Florida PBA, 300 E. Brevard Street, Tallahassee, FL 32301. **Thanks for helping us keep you informed!** ●