

News from Around the State

Organizational Update



Jim Wiggins
 Director of Organizational Services

Please encourage non-members to join the 36,000 officers throughout Florida who belong to the Florida PBA!

Employers: No Public Safety Cuts!

For the last two years, employers have been telling us at the negotiation table that things have never been worse. Well imagine our surprise when, during this round of negotiations, they're trying to roll back wages and benefits while attempting to gut our hard earned pensions—all while forecasting that FY 2011 will be worse yet.

Can you see the trend developing here? Groups like the League of Cities and Counties are seizing on these difficult financial times to justify wiping out all of the gains it has taken us decades to accumulate. Forgotten by the employers is the fact that, even in the best of times, we have had to fight tooth and nail for every wage increase or new benefit we've gotten.

So, it comes as somewhat of a shock to them when we're not prepared to just take them at their word and believe that they're in the dire financial straits they claim—especially when you consider how we got to where we are today. Instead of rolling back the millage rate when real estate values were sky rocketing, these governmental entities continued to spend money as if there were an endless supply of it. Some of them were even regularly placing referendums on the ballots for sales tax increases to fund pet projects. Can anyone say “out of control government spending”?

You would think, after Amendment One (homestead exemption increase) was placed on the ballot, that common sense would prevail and these elected officials would curb spending to lessen the impact, should the amendment pass. Unfortunately, that didn't happen. Amendment One passed overwhelmingly, followed quickly by the economic downturn, creating the perfect storm.

The solution to the problem seems obvious. Everyone needs to share in the downsizing of government; across the board reductions in budgets became the motto of the budget process. Public safety endured it the last two cycles. You can imagine our surprise when they came back this year asking for more of the same. Our response was: Enough is enough! We had to re-teach junior high civics to these elected officials about public safety being the core

function of government—that the dog parks and jogging paths would have to wait for the economic recovery.

Some employers were so adamant that they were on the proverbial financial ropes that we had to look into their financial records. What we found, in most cases, was that some elected officials wanted to continue to fund their pet projects at the cost of public safety. Many employers have large financial reserves that they don't want to spend on public safety. Worst of all, we found that many upper level managers were getting pay raises and giving the same to their staffs. How these individuals could keep a straight face when saying “these are tough times and we all need to do our part to get through this” is beyond me.

That being said, the PBA realizes that these are difficult times that require sacrifices from all public employees. We are willing to do our part to get through this. We are not, however, going to stand idly by while bureaucrats attempt to balance their budgets on the backs of public safety. We're going to fight for what is right.

In closing, I would like to ask each of you to get involved! The PBA needs each of you now more than ever. When asked to fill a city or county commission chamber, be the first to step up and say “you can count on me.” Work to get others involved; the more we show solidarity during these difficult times by putting a face on the men and women who protect and serve, the harder it is to blindly cut our wage's and benefits. During the election season, get involved in helping our candidates get elected. The more law enforcement friendly candidates we can get elected helps each of us minimize the negative impact on the law enforcement community during the budget process. Remember, “working together means winning together!”

As always, if your group wants to have us come and talk to you about the collective bargaining process, please give us a call at 1-800-733-3722 so we can arrange a meeting for you. If you're not interested in bargaining, but would like to hear about our legal and political programs, we can arrange a meeting for that as well. Call today so we can start building a better tomorrow, today. ●



The University of Florida P.D. Bargaining Team.



Standing: Jim Wiggins and North Central Chapter President Brandon Kutner meet with Lake City P.D. members (after they voted in collective bargaining with PBA) to discuss what happens next.



Florida PBA's Field Service Supervisor Eddie Reynolds (standing left photo), along with PBA Rep David Ham and PBA ABT Rep Betty Adazzio (not shown), meet with ABT Officers in Tampa, including recently appointed ABT Director John Powell.



“The successful networkers I know, the ones receiving tons of referrals and feeling truly happy about themselves, continually put the other person's needs ahead of their own.”

~ Bob Burg