

INSIGHT

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WHERE DO WE STAND

by George P. Christie, President

Over the past fifteen years I have attended conferences presented by the American Probation and Parole Association (APPA). Early on it was evident Probation Officers in New Jersey were among the lowest paid in the nation. The leaders of PANJ saw there was much room for improvement in that area and we concentrated our efforts to make that happen. Now, New Jersey Probation Officers are among the highest paid in the country. We are currently in the process of negotiations which, when concluded, may bring the maximum salary of a Senior Probation Officer to \$83,000 and the Court Services Supervisor to approximately \$95,000.

Our active lobbying efforts over the past 10 years set PANJ apart from all other probation associations in the country. We contracted with Princeton Public Affairs, one of the best lobbying firms in the state. Together we have successfully had three bills signed into law. We currently have **A-3045** pending which would transfer all Probation Officers, other case related professionals and all professional supervisors to the Executive branch of government. We have had a legislation enacted into law which provides for weapons training and use of weapons by certain Probation Officers. This law has been challenged by the Judiciary, and we, along with the support of New Jersey's Attorney General, are together seeking enforcement of the law into court. We also have pending **H.R. 4982** which was introduced in the House of

Representatives in Washington at our request. It calls for the formation of a Federal Probation and Parole Officer Safety Task Force headed by the US Attorney General. Probation and parole officers have not been treated fairly around the nation and we are hopeful the Task Force includes all of us in the Law Enforcement Community.

We offer one of the finest training conferences in the country for our members every November in Atlantic City, New Jersey. This conference did not have the support of the Judiciary after PANJ declared itself as a labor organization. There were several years without a conference but in 1991 we developed a substantive training program and proved to the Judiciary that PANJ can be a labor organization as well as a professional association. Today the conference is widely accepted by the Judiciary training up to 700 people each year. It is also included in the PANJ contracts providing time off with pay to the attendees. Please make every effort to attend the Conference this year at Trump Plaza Hotel and Casino in Atlantic City from November 21st to November 23rd.

Our Finance Committee, consisting of a number of our coworkers around the state, is responsible for planning, expending, and auditing the organization's income. The committee prepares an annual budget and sees to it that the various committees only spend within that budget. Not a cent of your dues is spent without the approval of the Executive Board which includes as many as 65 votes.

What I am most proud of is the services we deliver to our individual members when they have a problem. We never turn our back on or ignore any Probation Officer or supervisor if they have a need that can be addressed by our organization. Aside from the hundreds of grievances we file there are many people subject to disciplinary actions. We provide counsel from one of (To page two)

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

by Brad Fairchild, Southern Regional Vice
President, Supervisors Unit

PANJ has pushed an aggressive legislative agenda at the Statehouse for many years. Our efforts have now expanded to the national level. Representative William Pascrell, Democrat from Paterson, recently introduced in the US House of Representatives HR 4982, The Probation and Parole Officer Safety Task Force of 2004. The Task Force would be established within the US Department of Justice. PANJ President George Christie conferred with Congressman Pascrell this summer and discussed the potential benefits of this landmark legislation for Probation Officers in New Jersey.

Attacks upon Probation Officers have increased in many areas of the country. This legislation could authorize a centralized process of accounting for incidents of violence and threatened violence against Probation Officers. Such documentation would be extremely educational for all staff and would help prevent future attacks. The lack of a centralized accounting process and review of critical incidents continues to be a glaring problem in New Jersey.

Federal legislation could also assist our efforts improve Probation Officer training, especially in the areas of self-defense and relevant law enforcement techniques.

PANJ has also launched an ambitious agenda in Trenton. Earlier this year Assemblyman Frank Blee of Atlantic County introduced A 3045, which would transfer all Probation Officers and Supervisors to the Department of Corrections. PANJ strongly believes this critical legislation would provide New Jersey's Probation Officers with dramatically improved training and equipment. It is PANJ's position that providing Probation Officers law enforcement training and equipment is in the best interests of all residents of the Garden State. Community protection will be enhanced by such training, which will shield individual citizens from potential attacks by criminal offenders who commit repeated and violent offenses.

A significant benefit of the transfer legislation to all the members in all Judiciary Divisions would be a personnel system that is truly for advancement, protections against the arbitrary and retaliatory removal of supervisors, and commitment to the concept that employees should be objectively monitored and justly compensated. Recently PANJ President George Christie and members of the Legislative Committee met with the McGreevey Administration to discuss the transfer. The bill has been posted for hearings in the Assembly Judiciary Committee this Fall and will soon be introduced in the State Senate.

In the interests of improving representation PANJ is also supporting S 1336. This bill authorizes paid and unpaid leaves of absence for service with public employee unions and allows full cost purchase of PERS credit for the period of the leave. This legislation would enable PANJ to have some executive officers serve full time without sacrificing pension credits. The bill is cosponsored by Senator Steve Sweeney of Gloucester County and Barbara Buono from Middlesex.

Future updates of national and state legislation will be provided. PANJ members seeking additional information should contact President George Christie at the PANJ office in Brielle.

(From page one) several lawyers or labor consultants, and we have saved many jobs with excellent representation.

The question for the membership is "Are you better off today being represented by PANJ than you were 11 years ago when we were represented by various unions throughout the state?" My answer without question is yes. In my opinion, PANJ is the best labor organization in New Jersey and definitely the most cost-effective. The PANJ leaders who spend countless hours working for our common benefit deserve the credit.

You will be hearing from me on the status of our separate negotiations for the PANJ Supervisors and PANJ Case Related Professionals (Line Staff). Our negotiating committees and the Judiciary are working on a new contract almost weekly.

Portrait of a Professional

By Bradley J. Fairchild, President
Cumberland County PANJ Local 200

This article is part of a continuing series dedicated to local and state PANJ leaders and members who consistently demonstrate the highest levels of commitment and dedication to this organization and to the Probation Profession.

"We should not let our fears hold us back from pursuing our hopes" John F. Kennedy

The streets of Paterson can be a tough place where hope is a valued but limited commodity. Dedicated believers like longtime Passaic County Probation Professional Victor Urgo, however, have sustained a determined battle since 1998 that has put Probation in the forefront of positive change and provided hope for the embattled families of this proud city.

By the mid 1990's juvenile crime had become a serious issue. Under the leadership of Vicinage Chief Probation Officer John Krieger and Paterson Police Chief Larry Spagnola an innovative collaborative approach was designed that revolutionized Probation's relationship to the Paterson community.

The new approach was the Passaic County Police/Probation partnership that became known as the "Village Initiative." Victor was directed to implement the "Field Operations" component of this activist new program. At 5PM several nights a week Victor, a team of Passaic Probation Officers, and Paterson Police Officers meet to discuss 25-35 high impact cases involving chronic delinquency, poverty, truancy, school violence, unemployment. By utilizing this aggressive form of supervision Probation can recognize problems quickly, put programs into place immediately, and when necessary, administer consequences that include detention and executing warrants.

A hallmark of the Paterson Partnership is a relentless desire to be creative in improving the quality of life for the families Probation services each day. On some nights a Doctor from St. Josephs Medical Center rides with a partnership team and examines the state of health of each juvenile and members of their household. Victor explains that many of these families only receive

health care at local emergency rooms when life itself may hang in the balance. The Partnership Doctor can aggressively implement preventive care and save families from emergent and sometimes lengthy medical care.

Involvement in such a demanding new campaign has been a natural reflex for this 23-year Probation veteran. Victor describes himself as a "student of the 1960's" who believes that Probation is "a calling" that requires a continuous quest for believing that people and communities can make positive and productive changes.

After graduating from William Paterson College with a BA in Sociology (1975) Victor was hired by the Passaic County Detention Center as a Youth Aide and later became a Detention Center Supervisor. Victor eventually received a Masters in Sociology from Ball State University and accepted a position with the Passaic Youth Services Bureau.

In September of 1982 Mr. Urgo was appointed as a Probation Officer in the Special Services Unit of the Adult Probation Department. In 1991 Victor was promoted to Senior Probation Officer and was transferred to Juvenile Probation. In 1998 Victor was promoted to Master PO and 10 months ago was promoted again to Court Services Supervisor II.

Life away from Probation involves spending quality time with his four children and wife Patricia. Service to others runs deep in the Urgo household as Patricia is a School Psychologist in the Bergen County community of Lodi. In order to keep pace with all his personal and professional responsibilities Victor works out regularly and believes that physical fitness is a valuable asset in a profession that can take a heavy emotional toll.

Victor's fierce inner drive to serve his community and his creative spirit is an inspiration to his Passaic co-workers and Probation Professionals across New Jersey. We salute his accomplishments and view his example as representing the very best of our Probation profession.

SUPERVISOR'S CORNER

by Neil Elsasser
Vice President Supervisor Unit

Your Negotiation Team has been working hard and has held over 12 sessions with the AOC in order to finalize our next Contract. We are about 75% finished and hope to meet agreement on the last remaining Articles soon. The money package looks good for all our members. For example CSS2 maximum will be approaching \$95000 by the end of the new Contract. The Article 9.8 issues, possible promotion to CSS3, hours of work, special project pay, and compensation have been addressed. Mr. David Fox, your PANJ attorney, Mr. George Christie, PANJ President, and I had an informal meeting with Mr. Jack P. McCarthy, Esq. Director of Trial Court Services at which time the 9.8 issue was discussed and additional meetings will take place. Ratification meetings will be scheduled once everything has been finalized at which time a summarization of all changes will be presented. Special thanks should be made to all those Negotiation Team members who have given their time and have actively worked together in attempting to get the best Contract for our members!!!

Mr. Joseph Orlando, Chief of Human Relations Unit in Trenton, recently advised all Vicinages that the Supervisors will continue to have a choice to either attend the PANJ Conference or Judicial College. If you desire to attend the PANJ Conference and run into difficulty, we need to know ASAP in order to address this with management. If you elect not to attend the PANJ Conference you maybe required to attend the Judicial College. I hope to see many of you at the PANJ Conference!!!

Finally, dues paying membership is up!!! I would like to encourage those who are not members to join with us. Dues are reasonable and the Union is stronger by your active participation!! In addition you will be able to vote on the proposed Contract, attend the PANJ Conference at a reduced rate, vote in the upcoming State election for your representatives, and receive a reduced tuition rate for our Masters program at Seton Hall University. PANJ also awards (3) scholarships each year at our conference for those seeking further education.

PANJ STATE ELECTIONS

by John Morton, Business Manager

PANJ will conduct elections for state-wide and regional offices in both professional and supervisory units. The American Arbitration Association will assist in the production, mailing and counting of ballots. PANJ members should receive your ballots in your mailbox at home during the first week of November, 2004. If you are a full dues paying member and have not received one by then, contact the PANJ office. Make sure you leave us your current address.

Each of the candidates has been asked to submit a short statement to be included with the ballots. Many state-wide elections for other organizations are conducted in this fashion.

Remember that this mailing will be from the American Arbitration Association and PANJ will not be prominently displayed on the outside envelope.

CORRECTIONS

Northern Regional Vice-President Dottie Robinson apologizes to Somerset County PANJ Local for leaving them out of her article in the last *INSIGHT*. Somerset gave a gift basket to the 2003 raffle and they have been consistent supporters of the PANJ-EF fund-raisers.

Crystal Brown-EI from Atlantic County Family Division earned her Master of Arts degree from Seton Hall University on May 10, 2004. Her name was omitted from the July 2004 *INSIGHT*.

Reminders to Members

If you change address or name, please call the PANJ office at 732-223-1799 and let us know. Also, if any PANJ locals change officers or addresses, please inform the PANJ office and the Treasurer.

Professional Case-Related Negotiations

By Peter A. Tortoreto, First Vice President

The contract negotiations between the Line Staff and representatives of the AOC reached a new level on September 16, 2004. At that time PANJ top officials met with representatives of the AOC's highest levels. The PANJ representatives consisting of both Professional Supervisors and Professional Case Related Regional Vice Presidents along with President Christie and General Counsel David I. Fox met in Trenton with Assistant Director Jack McCarthy Esq., Christine Higgins, and others to discuss some of the primary stumbling blocks to a new contractual agreement.

The top issue on the agenda was the movement from Senior PO to either a new title known as "Service Master PO or Master PO". PANJ is aware of many Trial Court Administrators and Vicinage Chief Probation Officers who strongly support the concept of additional Master PO's. This has been a career path situation and will not discourage individuals from seeking to move to supervisory ranks. However the career path is extremely important because there is a feeling of a "dead end" after individuals reach Senior PO, particularly since Team Leaders and Supervisory PO's are being selected from outside the ranks. In Essex, for example, two of four recently appointed Team Leaders were appointed from outside the bargaining unit and from the outside of the State Judiciary. Parole has also started to promote from its list and among the appointments were over 15 Officers statewide including a Local President from Hunterdon County. Although PANJ is saddened to see these officers leave we can understand their decision based on better salaries resulting from more room for advancement on a career path including classified positions both at the non-supervisory and supervisory levels as well as a better pension system. PANJ believes there is an overlap between the proposals of the two different units, since they are both based on career opportunities, primarily in the probation series of titles. PANJ believes that the need for additional Master PO's is vital to an acceptable settlement. We have and continue to demonstrate a need for these additional positions.

Another vital area is the lack of compensation for beeper duty in which includes time on call on weekday nights and weekends for little or no compensation. Many of our officers primarily in the Family Court are required by law to stand by for the period of time during the week when they may not be working (as many as 16 hours) and on weekends receive no payment for standing by, even though their personal lives are changed in this regard because they must be available to respond to telephone calls. They are only paid if they receive a call and have to spend time doing this.

Parking and secured parking has become a major issue in several vicinages, primarily Camden and Hudson where parking is not paid for. While there have been discussions during the negotiations about the possibility of payment by the Judiciary towards the parking fees in each vicinage, a long range solution needs to be addressed. In Camden the Officers are forced to pay as much as \$600.00 per year or more. This is supposed to be a uniform Judiciary in which we get equal pay for equal work. A final settlement cannot be reached in good conscience without these basic fundamental concepts.

Security is a major issue in need of constant attention and bona fide training for the protection of our officers who are out in the community. This security extends to the conditions existing in the office as well. Many of these outstanding issues are being addressed not only through contract negotiations but also through outside agencies like the Public Employment Relations Commission and through independent arbitrators who are not employed by the Judiciary.

As we progress through these contract negotiations all terms and conditions will remain in place including the 4.15% increment to be paid out this January. PANJ and its top leaders have vowed to continue to fight and to fight hard for the best possible settlement which includes the basic **Respect** and **Dignity** deserved by our valued professional members.