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Probation Association of New Jersey

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An affiliate of the American Probation and Parole Association

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PROBATION OFFICERS FILE SAFETY GRIEVANCES IN ALL COUNTIES OPPOSING ENACTMENT OF COMMUNITY SUPERVISION RULES

Current Procedures Threaten Health, Safety of Officers

Trenton, NJ — Probation officers in all 21 counties moved this week to stop the Judiciary from further implementing Directive #14-06 which established protocols to revamp community supervision of probationers and safety standards for officers working with offenders. Despite on-going discussions between PANJ and Judiciary Management, the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) began rolling out new protocols around January 25, 2007.

“Not only was PANJ not notified that the Directive was about to be implemented, there is now no statewide level of rules and procedures. Rather, we are moving further and further into a fragmented system that allows for the uneven supervision and treatment of probationers in New Jersey,” said George Christie, president of PANJ.

Directive #14-06, which was crafted in August 2006, lacks a statewide plan to provide adequate training and fails to provide equipment necessary to carry-out the proposed standards. Moreover, it failed to detail the probation-police partnership critical in ensuring that probationers are arrested, if necessary, and overseen appropriately. The Directive also stripped probation officers of any authority to arrest probationers who have a pending warrant for their arrest thereby placing the burden of probationer search and arrest and contraband seizure solely on the state’s police force.

“Since August, we have fought to stop the Judiciary from putting into place a plan that is not adequately suited to deal with the real world scenarios facing probation officers every day,” Christie said. “It is dangerous for these standards to be put in place without proper planning as well as disingenuous to the probation officers and law enforcement community who must find a way to work within these confines.”

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In filing an Unfair Labor Practice Charge against the Judiciary, PANJ contends that the Directive “severely endangered and threatened the lives, safety and health of all Field Probation Officers because they can no longer take reasonable actions to defend themselves in the field.”

Despite past relief efforts for probation officers where no real compromise occurred, the grievances filed by PANJ seek to push for the supervision and safety standards, including uniform disjointed policies and procedures, to be redrafted.

“It is disturbing to see that even up until last week Judiciary Management is allowing home inspections by probation officers to go forward with little or no training; no discussion or input from union representatives; and no organized cooperation with the police departments around the state,” Christie continued. “These new standards will undoubtedly cause a serious ripple effect in public safety of our communities.”

The grievances filed in all 21 counties calls on the Judiciary to immediately cease further implementation of these standards in exchange for good faith negotiations with the union regarding the nature, scope and implementation of these procedures and protocols.

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