

INSIGHT

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President's Message

By: George P. Christie

My friends and colleagues I want to take this opportunity to talk to you about my thoughts regarding our association as we enter a new year. As most of you know, the unions and union workers are under attack in this great nation. Management is now looking to limit your pensions and benefits along with other working conditions. The unions are being blamed for all the bad things that have gone wrong with today's economy.

I will tell you that nothing can be farther from the truth when we talk about our union, PANJ. We are a proud state association which has been around since 1904 and a labor organization since 1987. In the years prior to becoming a state labor force, we were among the lowest paid probation professionals in the nation. During those lean years almost every probation officer had to have a second job to make ends meet and help their family survive.

We all worked very hard at our jobs to keep the courts operating and to keep the public safe. We also negotiated better contracts which had livable salaries and benefits for our officers. Salaries that were long overdue and we accomplished this because of our union strength.

According to the Economic Policy Institute, unions have increased wages over non-union workers by 20 percent and raised compensation by 28 percent. Unions have reduced inequality by raising the salaries of the lower and middle income wage workers. The unionized workers receive better fringe benefits like health insurance, paid leave, pension plans and vacations. PANJ has certainly accomplished all of the above by raising salaries and by protecting women and minorities who were paid lower wages than others performing the same duties.

PANJ has helped us all achieve these goals and we need to keep them from being taken away. Our brothers and sisters in the State Troopers Association, The Police Benevolent Association, The Parole Officers Association, and The Firemen's Benevolent Association proudly announce almost 100 percent full membership. Like these other public safety organizations, we too need to keep united and improve on our 90 percent current membership. If you are not a full

dues paying member and would like to sign up a card can be obtained from your local president or by contacting the PANJ office at 732-223-1799. Help us keep our organization strong and enable us to keep protecting your rights.

The PANJ union members are not responsible for the state's financial woes. Bad financial leadership is to blame along with poor and inappropriate investments. Most of the PANJ members are doing double the work without complaint which is ultimately a cost savings to the Judiciary and the State.

Know Your Weingarten Rights Dwight Covaleskie, First Vice President, PANJ, Line Staff

PANJ represents all members in disciplinary actions against the employee. However, initially, it is up to the employee to request Union Representation if he/she believes that an investigatory interview may result in discipline.

The right of employees to have union representation at investigatory interviews was announced by the United States Supreme Court in 1975. The case is (NLRB vs. Weingarten, Inc. 420 U.S. 251, 88 LLRM 2689). These rights have become known as the Weingarten Rights. It has become a very important ruling for all unions members and it is the members right to request union representation during an investigatory interview.

An investigatory interview occurs when management or a supervisor questions an employee to obtain information which could be used to discipline an employee or asks that an employee defend his or her conduct.

If an employee has a reasonable belief that discipline or other adverse action or consequences may result from what he/she says, it is their right to ask for a Union Representative to be present. It is not management's responsibility to inform the employee of his/her Weingarten Rights. **It is the employee's responsibility to know his /her rights and to invoke them. Under no uncertain circumstances should an employee waive his /her Weingarten rights.**

As your Union Representation during an investigatory interview and subsequent representation by PANJ, the employee was suspended for a significant period of time and through a related grievance, management admitted that they did not have sufficient evidence for the suspension.

When an employee requests a Union Representative to be present during an investigatory interview, management has three options.

1. It can suspend the interview until a Representative is present
2. It can call off or stop the interview
3. It can call off or suspend the interview unless the employee voluntarily waives his/her right to Union Representation, **which should never be done.**

As your representative we are able to assist and counsel you during the interview. The Union Representative has the right to know what the subject of the interrogation is, to speak with the employee privately before the interview. During the interview, your representative may interrupt to ask for clarification and object to confusing or intimidating tactics.

It is in your best interest to know and use your rights. Do not be intimidated by management and be sure to know and utilize your rights.

Just remember that PANJ is responsible for your representation as your majority representative. Management does not have an obligation to represent your rights and often views your rights as an obstacle and will go to incredulous lengths to water down and deprive you of those rights.

It is imperative that you know and request your rights.

Best regards in PANJ.

Yes Virginia, there is a Santa Claus! **By: Susan Lively, President Local #100**

As I stood in the middle of a department store I saw several children gathered around the table writing letters to Santa Claus. I could see the smiles on their faces, the gleam in their eyes, and the excitement they all shared as they wrote. Then, one by one they went up to a big red mailbox and put their letters in, with the belief that the letters would be delivered to Santa Claus before Christmas. Children DO believe in Santa Claus but there are many unfortunate children, for whatever reason, who wake up on Christmas Day to a tree with just a present or two.

PANJ local #100, Cumberland County has their own "Santa Claus's." Glenn Corbett, 1st Vice President and I started a toy drive in Cumberland County over 13 years ago through the Probation Department. We faced numerous challenges and complications, but this didn't stop us. Three years ago we continued this tradition and called it "Santa's Sleigh" which was sponsored by our Local.

One Saturday morning, we stopped at a Wawa and were looking at tags on a Christmas tree where children had written their Christmas wishes. One particular tag not only caught our eye, but our heart as we read it... "My mommy has cancer and she doesn't have long to live, all I want for Christmas is BMX bike and for her to be with us on Christmas." All of the tags indicated hardship's in the family. I took this tag off of the tree and made a few phone calls to find out who it belonged to and was directed to a program called the Outreach Program. Through this program not only did we adopt this family but adopted two more. Donations of toys, clothes and gift cards were made by the members of PANJ local 100 along with Supervisors and other Courthouse employees. All gifts were wrapped and tagged with the child's name from Santa Claus. On Christmas Eve day, we loaded the presents in the back of an SUV and delivered them to the families. There are no words that can express the feeling inside when we knocked on the door of a well deserving family and the parent comes to answer as we stood with boxes of wrapped presents for their children. The parents overwhelmed us with hugs and tears of heartfelt gratitude because this year the children will have a wonderful Christmas. Imagine... little children grabbing your legs repeating, "Thank you," as they are jumping for joy. We have encountered many hugs and many tears of gratitude from families over the years.

As for the family of the tag we took from the Christmas tree in Wawa... that was last year and it was true. The doctor told the mother that he could not promise her a New Year. However, God saw her through and although still battling cancer and with so many hospital and doctor bills, Santa arrived at her house this year on Christmas Eve once again.



You see, Christmas is about giving and as long as there is a Christmas, there will be a Santa in Cumberland County with a "Sleigh."

Prevention Goes Hand-in-Hand with Recidivism

**By: George P. Christie, president of the
Probation Association of New Jersey**

The statistics are staggering. Criminal offenders return to the corrections system too quickly. Of the four thousand adult inmates who are released from correctional facilities annually, roughly 65 percent are re-arrested within five years in New Jersey. What's more alarming is the fact that 37 percent of the 1,600 juvenile offenders released each year are incarcerated again within two years.

For many of these offenders, their first run in with the law results in a probation sentence that was clearly not a heeded warning. Too many skirt their responsibility of a probation sentence. Too many commit secondary crimes while serving a probation sentence. To offset the staggering recidivism rates, we need to work with offenders before their lives become deeply rooted in criminal activities.

A recent study released by the Rutgers School of Criminal Justice showed that there is a noticeable difference in the recidivism rates among parolees depending upon how they are supervised. Other studies also have shown that drug courts have had great success rates among non-violent drug offenders if they are placed under intensive supervision and treatment. So then why are we not looking at ways to strengthen New Jersey's community supervision system on a broader scale for first-time probationers? Why are we not focusing more attention on the probation system?

The number of offenders supervised under probation is nearly double or triple the number of offenders incarcerated. New Jersey spends \$35,000 per year per inmate to incarcerate offenders compared to the estimated cost of \$1,250 per individual each year to supervise a probationer. There are cost savings to be realized by placing offenders under probation supervision as opposed to incarceration. However, it is only a monetary savings if we cannot "save" these offenders from a potential life of escalating crime while they are being supervised in the community.

The reality of probation in New Jersey is that it is used as a means of plea bargaining which swells the number of supervised offenders. According to statistics published by the National Institute of Corrections, New Jersey's incarceration rate was 23 percent lower than the national average in 2006.

Yet, the state's probation population rate was 15 percent higher than the national average in the same year. No efforts have been made though to soften the impact of the increase of probationers who need improved supervision. This would involve investing in additional officers that would ensure probationers are complying with court orders thus enhancing the protection of the community

A pilot program, the Greater Mercer Prisoner Re-Entry Initiative, was recently launched to work to coordinate prisoner occupational re-entry by combining efforts of local government and organizations. In making the announcement, State Parole Board Chairman Peter J. Barnes stated that "One of the very important parts of the parole process is making sure that the person who comes out is going to have a shot at redeeming himself."

We applaud efforts to work to rehabilitate parolees, but we also need to launch similar programs to intervene in and improve the lives of probationers. The number of offenders in the corrections system who would need re-entry programs can be reduced if we work to stop the path leading from probation to incarceration. There is a clear line for many offenders from probation to incarceration to parole. It's time we draw a line in the sand and work with offenders before it's too late.

PANJ EF Award Winners Dotty Robinson - Awards Committee Chair

Hello and welcome to the sunnier side of life as we discuss the winners of the John Augustus Award, Probation Officer of the Year, and Supervisor of the Year.

The winner of the John Augustus Award this year or should I say the recipient was Senior Probation Officer Deneen Hohman from Atlantic County. I say recipient because this is our most prestigious award. It can only be awarded if the past recipients agree the candidate is worthy. This was an easy decision for us. Deneen has worked tirelessly for PANJ in many capacities, she willingly works every year as the Program Chair for our conference to coordinate and set up classes for upwards of a 1,000 participants, which is no small task and requires a full year's worth of attention. The training that she coordinates is vitally important to the continuing education of our Officers. She does this all while carrying a full adult supervision caseload in Atlantic County. Deneen is also a wife and mother of two. She balances it all and has never let down her fellow union officials. She is truly deserving of this honor. I was thrilled to see her name among the nominated. Deneen also chairs the Ryan Stremmel Golf outing each year out of Atlantic County, honoring the memory of a 10 year old child of a fellow Probation Officer who was killed.

Sometimes it is like pulling teeth to get nominations for Probation Officer and Supervisor of the Year. Not this year! There were plenty of worthy nominations. The Probation Officer of the year was awarded to Cindy Edwards – McCoard from Hudson County. Cindy was nominated by her peers after working for 18 years in Hudson County. She currently works in Criminal Case Management. Cindy has also worked for the Division of Youth and Family Services

based out of Newark. She handles a difficult caseload while always maintaining a team based attitude. As our President, George Christie has said, "It is the strength of our State Probation system to have Officers like Cindy who always assist their fellow officers without complaint or consternation." If you were with her at the Hudson County Christmas Party you would know that she is one heck of a dancer too. Cindy truly exemplifies all that is good in a member of our organization.

Last but certainly not least, the Supervisor of the Year was awarded to Roy Friedman, hailing from my home county of Bergen. Roy is a 37 year veteran in the Probation System. He has served almost his entire career in Adult Supervision. Roy is the President of the Supervisor's Local in Bergen County. He was nominated for this tremendous honor by the many Officers who have worked with him. He is considered not only a friend, but a mentor and a leader in Supervision. Roy is always ready to assist and impart his vast knowledge of the Probation system. In his 37 years on the job he has seen many changes in the system, yet through them all he has remained constantly and consistently dedicated to protecting the community he serves and the Officers who serve with him. It was a great pleasure to see him rewarded for his dedication, and admirable way he conducts himself.

This year was truly a pleasure to Chair the Awards Committee and I look forward to new nominations next year. To all of my Brothers and Sisters I wish you a Happy and Healthy New Year and progress for us all.



Governor and Legislature Gear Up for 2009

By: Elizabeth A. Meyers, Capital Impact Group Government Affairs Agent for PANJ

While the new year may bring many resolutions such as eating better, exercising more, or learning a new hobby, the legislative goals for PANJ in 2009 are likely to mirror those of 2008. Our main mission continues to be focused on placing the question on the ballot in November authorizing the Legislature to transfer the Division of Probation to the State Parole Board. We are continuing to schedule and meet with members of Legislative Leadership as well as Governor Corzine's office. Their support will be critical in passage of the bills and placement on the ballot. As these meetings occur, PANJ leaders will report to the membership and Executive Board on feedback.

Representatives of PANJ will be appearing before a special panel put together by Assembly Majority Leader Bonnie Watson Coleman that has been looking at ways to reduce criminal recidivism and improve services aimed at community re-entry of offenders. The hearing scheduled in February will focus on "systems" including corrections, parole and probation. Our goal is to communicate the importance of strengthening probation as a means of keeping offenders from moving further into a life of crime. We also are making an effort to remain before the Legislature to raise PANJ's profile and issues of importance.

Governor Corzine gave his 2009 State of the State Address on January 13 highlighting accomplishments during the past year and setting forth goals for the coming year. He reaffirmed his commitment to focusing on the state's economy and financial health as his top priority. The Governor noted that New Jersey's unemployment rate (at 6.1 percent) is lower than the nation's unemployment rate of 7.2 percent.

He spoke briefly about efforts to shrink the size of state government. Under his Administration, there are approximately 3,000 fewer state employees and 4,000 fewer staff members at independent authorities. There was no mention in the State of the State speech of future layoffs or staff reduction. Further discussion regarding the size of state government may occur during the upcoming budget process.

Among the accomplishments that he highlighted were efforts to put in place an anti-crime initiative. The initiative, which was launched 18 months ago, resulted in a seven percent reduction in violent crime in 2007 and an 11 percent reduction in murder in the same year. During the first three quarters of 2008, the state had an additional seven percent drop in violent crime and six percent in murder.

In March, Governor Corzine will be delivering his Fiscal Year 2010 Budget Address. He has asked for the delay until then so as to include possible revenues provided by the incoming Obama Administration. There has been much discussion in Washington about the deficits faced in nearly every state and hopes of governors to obtain state aid through an economic recovery program.

Between now and Governor Corzine's budget address, there will likely be many rumors regarding cuts or layoffs. Thus far, the Governor has ordered cuts in the existing state budget – an estimated \$5 million from the Judiciary alone. The current fiscal year has an estimated \$2.1 billion shortfall. The Administration has put forth \$812 million in cuts to the current budget with additional cuts potentially coming. In addition, Governor Corzine is seeking to freeze raise increases for state employees that were to occur in 2009. He is facing opposition. However, he has stated that if wage increases are not frozen layoffs or furloughs would be an alternative.

Despite the fact that it's early in the year, the 2009 election season has already begun. This year, is a gubernatorial election year in addition to the entire 80-member General Assembly being up for re-election. Governor Corzine intends to seek re-election; he will likely be unopposed in the primary election. There are already three Republican candidates who have announced their bids for the state's highest office: former United State Attorney Christopher Christie, Assemblyman Richard Merkt, and former Bogota Mayor and conservative activist Steve Lonegan. This will be the first time in New Jersey history that we will elect a Lieutenant Governor. Under a new state law, each Party's candidate will choose a Lieutenant Governor candidate within 30 days of winning the primary election. This post will change the line of succession not only when the Governor is out of the state, but in the event of a vacancy in the governor's office.

The national and state economy, new president and congress in Washington, and political atmosphere will undoubtedly all make it an interesting and eventful 2009. It will be important for us to continue to work thoughtfully and diligently on our legislative agenda and in keeping a constant presence before the Legislature and Administration.

Thanks to the Supervisors Negotiation Team

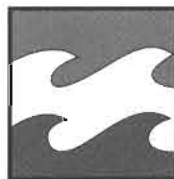
**By Brad Fairchild - First Vice President/
Supervisory Unit**

The Supervisor negotiation team began contract talks in February 2008. The members of this committee logged many late night hours and drove miles to fight for the best contract possible. The recent economic crisis made this task extremely difficult and at times, extremely discouraging. The committee was determined, however, to fight for a contract that protects our members from unfair and unrealistic expectations.

We are pleased to say that we have ratified our contract, which has the best interests of our brothers and sisters in mind. We will continue throughout the contract to seek benefits which were sought but not achieved in negotiations.

PANJ would like thank the following committee members:

**Roberta SandroScull - Atlantic,
Gavin Cummings - Monmouth,
John Korber - Sussex,
Carmelo Velazquez - Essex,
Roy Friedman - Bergen,
Robert Hutchinson -Burlington,
Linda Clark - AOC,
Sue Ormsby-Cuozzo - Morris,
Sharon Alphonse - Appellate,
Janet Sbarro - Appellate.**



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Greg Franceschini, PT Gary Cookson, PT
Mary Wesly, OTR/CHT
Karen Hanchek, OTR/CHT

STRESS ALERT FOR PANJ MEMBERS!!!

You **are able** to remedy unmanageable problems at work,
within the family or with other important relationships.

Help is available. We have identified qualified counselors to offer you
compassionate and confidential treatment.

If you or your loved one has one or more of the following health care complications:

- **Drug and Alcohol Dependence**
- **Prescription Medication Dependency**
- **Addictions of all Kinds**
- **Stress Related Conditions**
- **Sleeplessness**
- **Job Discipline Problems Related to Stress**
- **Explosive Anger**
- **Low Energy**
- **Concentration Difficulties**
- **Adolescent Problems**
- **Family Problems**
- **Relationship Problems**

Ask for Terry Livorsi at 1-888-828-7826 for a private consultation.
He has had 15 years experience in member assistance. He is certified to provide necessary
job protection while union members are getting the appropriate help needed.

Terry is committed to helping you find ways to improve your situation,
address your needs confidentially and obtain timely quality care.

www.UnionSupport.org