

Presidential Newsletter

November, 2001

PANJ ELECTION APPROACHES

By Dwight Covalleskie President, Burlington County

The election for all PANJ officials is rapidly approaching, and the membership should be made aware of a significant change. This year, the ballots will be distributed and counted by the American Arbitration Association. By the beginning of next week, ballots will be mailed to all full dues-paying PANJ members. Votes are to be returned by mail to the American Arbitration Association where they will be held until it is time for them to determine the results. The American Arbitration Association does not use the "chad" type ballot!

If you are a full dues paying member (non-members pay \$8.43 per pay period) and you do not receive a ballot soon, you should contact Maria Landi at the American Arbitration Association (215-731-2280).

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PANJ Preparing for Lame Duck Session of Legislature

By Rob Nixon

Princeton Public Affairs Group

As the New Jersey Legislature begins the final weeks of its two-year term, the Probation Association of New Jersey is working hard to finish off a successful year in Trenton.

The Legislature, which was on recess for the majority of the time between July 1st and Election Day, officially closes at noon on January 8, 2002 when a new two-year term begins. The period between Election Day and the start of the new session, known as

“lame duck,” is usually an extremely busy time. Any bill not passed by the end of lame duck is dead and must be reintroduced and reconsidered in the new term.

PANJ has been pursuing several important bills in preparation for the lame duck period. The bill of highest priority remains Assembly Bill 1448 and Senate Bill 950. Assembly Bill 1448 was overwhelmingly passed by the General Assembly in June. Both bills now await consideration by the Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee, passage by the New Jersey Senate, and the approval of the Governor. PANJ President George Christie has held several meetings over the summer with legislative leadership and Committee members to help move the bill.

PANJ is also closely following the introduction of legislation to provide an early retirement incentive to State employees. Specifically, Senate Bill 2482, sponsored by Senator Turner, provides additional retirement benefits to State employees who retire between April 1, 2002 and July 1, 2002. The bill offers an early retirement incentive of an additional five years of service credit to State employees in PERS, TPAF, and ABP who are at least 50 years old with at least 25 years of service. Employees who are at least 60 with at least 20 years, but less than 25 years of service, will receive payments

on premiums for retired coverage under the SHBP for themselves and their dependents. The bill was introduced on September 6, 2001 and is currently awaiting consideration by the Senate State Government Committee.

Finally, PANJ supports legislation to provide Probation Officers with specific protections under the law. For example, we requested the introduction of Assembly Bill 2330, sponsored by Assemblywoman Previte, which makes throwing bodily fluids at a Probation Officer an aggravated assault. The bill awaits posting by the Assembly Law and Public Safety Committee. PANJ believes that legislation such as this establishes the safety of Probation Officers as a major priority in the law. PANJ intends to pursue similar measures during the next legislative session.

PANJ Litigates successfully at PERC

By John Morton, Editor

PANJ Lead Attorney David I. Fox appeared at the Public Employment Relations Commission for oral argument in connection with a challenge to the recently ratified PANJ contract for the Case-Related Professional unit. Attorneys Frederick Dancer and Elaine Dietrich also appeared, and Mr. Dancer argued in support of Mr. Fox's position. The attorneys proved that our contract is valid, and the effort to indicate otherwise was characterized as an attempt to write new labor law. The other union involved will probably continue their legal challenge. PANJ leaders will let our attorneys deal with

them and we will go back to what we do best; serving the needs of Probation Officers, their supervisors, and others performing similar functions.

Thank you, PANJ

By Jenine Recupero

Just a quick expression of thanks from the spouse of a Cape May County Probation Officer. Indirectly, if not directly, your success is my family's success. We are grateful here for your work. My spouse is happy to have such a powerful, well organized Union with such a strong voice. We think our dues are worth every penny.

Thank you!

Beefsteak Fundraiser

By Tracey Huff, Bergen County

On October 19, 2001, a fundraising beefsteak dinner hosted by Bergen County Probation was held in honor of Probation Officer Lisa Green. We are proud to report that well over 200 co-workers, family and friends were in attendance, including Lisa, and nearly \$10,000 was raised to help her in her battle against cancer.

This fundraiser could not have taken place without the generous contributions made by dozens of local merchants, donations from fellow officers, various PANJ Locals, and other outside organizations.

Lisa was visibly moved and clearly touched by the enormous outpouring of care and support. May we all continue to keep Lisa in our thoughts and prayers.