



## **PRESIDENTIAL NEWSLETTER**

February 25, 1999

### **STATE OF THE UNION MESSAGE**

By George P. Christie, President

Another year has passed and it's time to reflect on the events and our accomplishments in 1998. I would like to thank those of you who voted for me and I am proud to have the opportunity to serve for another three years. Several of our long term goals were accomplished last year. Often times our members focus on one or two issues that affected them, so it is important to review the entire year. This was my fifth year as President and I can assure you that I have loyally served the members and PANJ's mission.

I'm proud to say that we have defended our members and protected their rights. In 1998, PANJ filed over 100 cases representing employees in their relationship with their employer, including a number of unfair labor practices at the Public Employee Relations Commission. We have been called upon to defend members who have been disciplined, and have aggressively represented members who have experienced unfair or discriminatory treatment by the administration.

In February 1998, the Case Related contract was ratified by an overwhelming majority of the members. It brought with it a number of significant changes, some of which may never be duplicated again. We negotiated an average compensation increase of 23%, and entered into the first salary equalization plan with the Judiciary. We negotiated a promotional position called Master Probation Officer and we were the only Judiciary union to negotiate pay increases based on seniority. However, this contract brought with it the concept of the Alternate Work Schedule which had a negative impact on our field officers. PANJ continues to define the details of this agreement through negotiations. We have never given up the lobbying efforts and negotiations to protect our field officers by

providing them with the same training and equipment that are offered to other law enforcement officers.

In March 1998 we had an election against the CWA for representation of the Professional Supervisory Unit, and won by a large majority. We subsequently moved forward to the bargaining table to obtain the best possible contract for all 600 members of this unit.

During the year we were faced with a serious problem, in that, the Governors Office was attempting to move Child Support enforcement to the Department of Human Services. We approached the problem quickly with the assistance of our Attorney, David I. Fox Esq., and with our lobbying firm, Princeton Public Affairs, and we were able to reach an agreement to move Probation Officers out of Child Support for their protection if they wished. Thus far our efforts have resulted in the continuation of Child Support being operated within the Judiciary.

PANJ has continually sought ways to benefit its members and has entered into an agreement with Doehler and Associates to provide our members with lower cost auto and home insurance through Liberty Mutual Insurance Company. Doehler is also preparing an extended disability plan for our members in the event they may have to be out for a long time due to an illness or injury.

Our PANJ legal committee has been quite active under the leadership of our newly elected First Vice-President, Peter Tortoreto. 1998 saw the appointment of the Regional Vice-Presidents and a separate VP for the supervisor's unit. Along with the usual legal issues, the committee has been active in the filing of a Federal Law Suit to compensate our members who have been denied proper payments for overtime work over the past several years. The committee has also been active in the litigation to stop the use of teachers as part time Probation Officers in Middle Township (Cape May County). The Teaching Mentor program, as it is dubbed, calls for teachers to be paid from a grant to supervise juveniles on probation in the high school. Needless to say, we believe that the concept is wrong and in violation of the PANJ contract as well as the law.

PANJ again has had a successful training conference in Atlantic City New Jersey. We are one of the only professional labor associations that has produced such an initiative, which should be viewed as a model for all labor organizations. PANJ continues to host a successful golf outing bringing our members in contact with representatives from the Administration as well as friends from other organizations such as the Fireman's Mutual Benevolent Association (FMBA). The proceeds of the outing have paid for the PANJ scholarships which are given to our member's children for tuition assistance.

The PANJ membership should be the barometer that tells us how the employees view our dedication and successfulness. I can tell you that our membership is up 24% this year which is a wonderful testament to all our PANJ Officers.

In conclusion I will say that looking back we had a busy year, and like all things in life we had our ups and downs. Looking forward to 1999, we will continue to strive for

more officers with higher pay and better training. We have never given up the idea that Probation Officers are Law Enforcement officers whose primary role is to protect the public. Probation Officers also need to have the extensive training and equipment to be able to perform their duties and to protect themselves. Officers who work in different divisions should have the right to transfer (and have first preference) to other divisions. Officers should have the right to transfer to other vicinages if it's in their best interest, or the interest of their families. I vow to maintain this PANJ agenda until we accomplish our goals.

## **PROFESSIONAL SUPERVISORS UNIT HAS CONTRACT**

by John Mooney, Supervisor's Unit Vice-President

The PANJ Professional Supervisors Unit reached a tentative agreement with the Administrative Office of the Courts on January 7, 1999. Members of the PANJ negotiating team spent the next several weeks explaining the proposed contract to employees around the state. Regional meetings were held in Jersey City, Freehold, and Cherry Hill.

The contract equalizes salaries of the employees in this unit throughout the state. Unclassified employees have gained protections for disciplinary actions, and supervisors for the first time now have binding arbitration for grievances.

Ratification ballots were counted on February 4, 1999 and the contract was accepted by the membership, passing with an overwhelming margin of more than 3 to 1. A byproduct of the ratification process has been increased membership in this unit. The unit has grown already by more than 1/3 of its previous size.

The negotiation team consisted of both classified and unclassified members from all over the state. Their diligence and hard work is greatly appreciated, and has paid off with a contract that is a significant step forward for this unit, and a sound foundation for its future growth.

If you believe that a mistake has been made in your salary calculation, please contact the PANJ Office, if you have not already done so. Please put the calculations in writing and mail or fax the document to my attention, at PANJ.

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