

President's Report December 2008

Respectfully Submitted – Dominick Marino, President

Pension Litigation:

We will be in court on December 19th.

PENSION:

You know by now that the Governor and Legislator's pushed through a bill that allows the Pension Fund to allocate \$500,000,000.00 to be invested within institutions that will stimulate the New Jersey Economy. These investments are to yield anywhere from 2.5% and 4% in return.

Most recently Governor Corzine wants to give the municipalities a reduced pension obligation (but the state would continue to pay their full amount) in the form of a 50% payment in 2009, 60% payment in 2010, 80% payment in 2011, and 100% payment in 2012. This reduction equates to \$335 Million from PFRS and \$250 Million from PERS for a total of \$585 million. For the Governor to even think about allowing a reduced payment with the pension system being so underfunded is alarming. Even more so since Governor Corzine has recognized the underfunding of the pension system from his predecessor's and unlike his predecessors, his administration has made a commitment and has kept their commitment in properly funding the pension system. The state for their part has put approximately 1.3 billion dollars into the pension fund in 2008 and has committed to continue to fund the system. There is a real concern with massive layoffs throughout the state. To date over 40 municipalities have sent in requests to lay off workers. They expect many more within the next four months. Since we still have the law suit we have taken a cautious approach. In the many meetings that we have had with the Governor and his staff, our position was and has always been; we are suing the State of New Jersey for the exact thing that he wants to do now. The governor did not have to bring us in and discuss it with us. He could have just dropped the bill in. We at no time ever stated to the Governor or his staff that we would back him unconditionally. When we sent the notice to everyone and posted it on our website, we did not state that we were 100% in favor of this, we stated that we should realize, understand and be willing to see the bigger picture. Yes it is our pension fund that the state is looking to use to help municipalities, but the process is in an effort to save our members and our union brother and sisters' employment. If layoffs happen, it would be an even bigger strain on a municipal budget because of the loss of revenue, thus creating even larger, deeper cuts.

There were no other options that were offered. In this economy, double digit property taxes are not an avenue.

The bill, which is Senate Bill 7, was put forth by Senator Codey. It went into committee on Thursday December 11th and released from committee for a full vote on Monday

(today) December 15th. If we did not have meetings with the Governor and his staff there would have been no wording that would make it difficult for a municipality to layoff firefighters and police officers. This bill was being sent through whether we had meetings or not, no matter what we said or did. There was no other option being discussed, and double digit property taxes were not the avenue. Since we did meet with the Governor he put forth wording into the bill that would be hard for firefighters and police officers to be laid off.

PFANJ Constitution and By-Laws:

We are still in the process of getting the Constitution and By-Laws updated and printed and when done we will advise as to when we will distribute them to the local presidents. I again ask that all presidents contact the state office to verify the correct address.

PFANJ Legislative agenda:

We will be starting our campaign very soon with the legislator to get the Thomas P. Canzanella 21st Century Health Bill (S569 and A1330) on a committee agenda so we can start moving this bill. With the help of the IAFF we were able to put a pamphlet together that we can hand to a legislator when we are lobbying them to vote in favor of the bill. Once we get it into committee we will be reaching out to all the local leadership to contact their respective legislator to gain support. This is a very important piece of legislation for all firefighters throughout the state.

We will also be campaigning to get an equal share of PFRS board trustees. The bill number is Assembly- 3436 and it would create two representatives from each of the four groups, PFANJ, FOP, PBA and FMBA.

Another piece of legislation is to get our members who are in PERS the ability to get into PFRS. We have reached out to Assemblyman VanDrew who has a bill introduced that deals with this issue, and he has agreed to include "fire districts" and "authorities" so that our members would be covered. Once the bill is in committee we will reach out to the locals for help. Much support will be needed for this.

AFFF (Assistance to Fire Fighter's Families) Act: Permits the State of New Jersey to pay a one-time benefit to families of fire service personnel if they die or are killed in the line of duty or sustain a debilitating injury resulting in a permanent disability. This bill has not been introduced yet.

A list of legislative bills that the PFANJ are tracking is on the website.

A complete list of legislative bills was handed out at a previous meeting. If you need another copy or did not get a copy, you can go on our website (www.pfanj.org) and under governmental affairs print out a copy.

The Economy:

There still does not seem to be a light at the end of the tunnel for the economy. I cannot stress enough that now more than ever all locals need to be mindful of the financial stability or non-stability of their respective municipalities. If you are going into negotiations, make sure you have all the facts and be very resourceful and crafty. Remember, we have EARNED everything we were able to negotiate; no one just gave it to us.

Nonfarm payroll employment fell sharply (-533,000) in November, and the unemployment rate rose from 6.5 to 6.7 percent, the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the U.S. Department of Labor reported today. November's drop in payroll employment followed declines of 403,000 in September and 320,000 in October, as revised. Job losses were large and widespread across the major industry sectors in November.

Unemployment (Household Survey Data)

Both the number of unemployed persons (10.3 million) and the unemployment rate (6.7 percent) continued to increase in November. Since the start of the recession in December 2007, as recently announced by the National Bureau of Economic Research, the number of unemployed persons increased by 2.7 million, and the unemployment rate rose by 1.7 percentage points. (See table A-1.)

The unemployment rates for adult men (6.5 percent) and adult women (5.5 percent) continued to trend up in November. The unemployment rates for teenagers (20.4 percent), whites (6.1 percent), blacks (11.2 percent), and Hispanics (8.6 percent) showed little change over the month. The jobless rate for Asians was 4.8 percent in November, not seasonally adjusted. (See tables A-1, A-2, and A-3.)

Among the unemployed, the number of persons who lost their job and did not expect to be recalled to work increased by 298,000 to 4.7 million in November. Over the past 12 months, the size of this group has increased by 2.0 million. (See table A-8.)

The number of long-term unemployed (those jobless for 27 weeks or more) was little changed at 2.2 million in November, but was up by 822,000 over the past 12 months. (See table A-9.)

Total Employment and the Labor Force (Household Survey Data)

In November, the labor force participation rate declined by 0.3 percentage point to 65.8 percent. Total employment continued to decline, and the employment-population ratio fell to 61.4 percent. (See table A-1.)

Retired members – our 7th district is working to get all our retired members back in the process. The reason the 7th district was formed was because of all the knowledge that our retired members have in the many years of negotiating and dealing with mayors and council members. This knowledge is vital to our members and we want to maintain it. We urge all of our current local leaders to get to the office a name and address list of all the retiree's so that we can mail them information as to the 7th district.

Department of Personnel:

There will be an announcement in December for Deputy Chief's test. As reported to the membership last week the Fire Officer 1 test that was due out by the end of the year or January 2009 – might be delayed.

As was reported back in September, the Fire Officer 1, 1st Level Supervisor's test was under investigation. There was a complaint filed that there might have been a breach of the test security. It was reported to us that the DOP initiated an investigation along with the State Police and the Department of Justice. In September we were told the investigation was for the most part completed and that there was no evidence of a breach or that any scoring was out of sorts.

There have been developments that have occurred over the last few weeks that you should be aware of. There is still an investigation being done by the Criminal Justice investigators. They have been in a few towns asking questions. Until this investigation is complete and depending on the outcome of the investigation, no list will be issued.

So with the above said, the DOP will extend the old lists (which I believe expire on December 21st) until the new lists are certified.

As things develop and we are notified, we will send out the information.

Is Sleep deprivation affecting the quality of your life?

We are still in the process of putting a program together for firefighters through a number of credible institutions. Once we get the program in place, we will notify all locals.

February Meeting – MDA BOOT CAMP

The February meeting will be held at the Ocean Place in Long Branch.

<http://www.oceanplaceresort.com/>

A flyer is included with the December packet to all attendees and it is on the website.

Important dates and events:

December 20, 2008 – Englewood Toy Drive
January 14, 2009 – PFANJ State meeting
January 17, 2009 – 20th Annual St. Barnabas Burn Foundation FF Health & Safety Seminar
February 6th – 8th, 2009 – IAFF Attorneys' Conference – Miami, FL
February 11, 2009 – PFANJ State meeting
February 21, 2009 – Wings Lacrosse – IAFF Local 4408 fund raiser
February 27, 2009 – St. Barnabas Ski Race
March 1st – 6th, 2009 – IAFF Political Training Academy – Washington DC
March 15th – 18th, 2009 – IAFF Legislative Conference – Washington DC
April 4, 2009 – PFANJ Valor awards Brunch – Hyatt of Jersey City
June 15th – 19th, 2009 – IAFF EMS Conference –
July 17, 2009 – Trenton Thunder – PFANJ fund raiser
August 16th – 19th, 2009 – IAFF Affiliate Leadership Training Summit (ALTS) – Denver, CO
September 19th, 2009 – IAFF Fallen Fire Fighter Memorial – Colorado Springs, CO
November 8th – 12th, 2009 – IAFF Redmond Conference – Los Angeles, CA