

State President's Report
February 2007
Respectfully submitted by: **Thomas P. Canzanella**

Assembly Bill 1 - Property Tax Credit Bill

Installs a 4% property tax cap (over the previous year less exclusions) aimed at controlling municipal, school and fire district budgets and then indexes a rebate program of up to a 20% in the form of a credit based upon a maximum \$250,000. annual income as reported via State income tax. The 4% cap includes certain exceptions as periodically defined by the DCA Local Finance Board. Currently both pension and health care costs are outside of the cap. This bill also alters the "statutory criteria" employed by arbitrators when making an award so that the most current municipal budget and property tax caps are considered. The original intention in this regard was to actually assign a "weight" to the caps in order that they be of greater priority and relevance than all other items including comparability and ability to pay. Intense behind the scenes lobbying by both the PFA and FOP on these issues (cap exemptions and non-weighting of statutory criteria) must be claimed as small but significant victories in that the foregoing would have resulted in a more negative impact than we will actually experience when conducting our business. The measure also contains provisions under certain circumstances that would allow override of the 4% cap by way of public referendum.

Senate Bill 17 - Public Employee Benefits Reform Bill

Alters the lending rate for PFRS personal loan interest rate to a more competitive rate as determined by the State's Treasurer. Restricts bargaining on and caps accrued sick and vacation leave for "appointed" employees at the local level to a limit of \$15,000. annually. The original intent of this bill was to extend this law, already covering State employees, to local municipal employees including fire and police. Alteration of this language is a small however significant victory on our part.

I attribute our success in the foregoing issues to the alliance we have forged with State FOP President Edward Brannigan, and the diligent work of our legislative consultant Peter Guzzo and his TTP Strategies.

S2249 – State Family Leave Bill

Proposes temporary disability insurance (TDI) coverage resulting in full pay under most of our labor agreements for those required to remain at home in order to care for the sick or new born and adopted children as part of the immediate family for up to 12 weeks. Despite intense lobbying by public employers and the business community this bill was released favorably by the Senate Labor Committee on 2/5/2007.

A3907-Pension Representation Bill

A3907 proposes restructure of the PFRS Board of Trustees to include an individual representing each public safety union; NJPBA, NJFOP, NJFMBA and PFANJ.

The bill was reintroduced by the PFA and FOP in response to the reintroduction of legislation that would add two (2) more trustees the PFRS Board - an active Corrections Officer and then a corresponding gubernatorial appointee. This bill attempts to maintain fire-police and union balance on the Board of Trustees perceiving this as a covert manner aimed at further loading up the Board versus all other interests.

Pension Litigation

We appeared in court on January 29th in answer to the State's motion to dismiss our lawsuit on the basis that "no individual has been irreparably harmed and hence there exists no legal remedy" and that "the courts lack the jurisdiction to order the Legislature to appropriate funding." The judge is now considering oral arguments by both the State and counsel to the PFA and FOP and we await his decision. Should we prevail in this instance the action will proceed to discovery and then trial. The State made similar arguments versus the Teachers action and lost.

State Emergency Medical Services System Review

The State Department of Health is in the beginning stages of reviewing the manner in which EMS is provided at the Basic and Advanced Life Support levels by public providers, volunteer and the private sector. The PFA has every intention of assuring that career professional fire departments are at the forefront and do not get left out of efforts we hope will finally address one of the most archaic service and delivery systems in the Nation.

DOP Recruiting Summit Report

An overview of comments made by various interested parties is contained in the packet. This union is committed to the design and implementation of an "apprenticeship program" that trains qualified candidates in our urban cities to be firefighters over a period of time awarding a title certification, and then allowing them to take the entrance examination as a promotional opportunity for placement on a special list. We are also committed to the increased recruiting of returning veterans.

Wanted: PFANJ/IAFF Labor Candidates!!!

We join with our State-Federation in seeking qualified and enthusiastic candidates for public office at all levels of State, county and local government for enrollment in the AFL's hugely successful Labor Candidates Training Program. NJ leads all other States with 435 union members now holding public office and it is our collective intention to see that more career professional firefighters lead that charge. Contact me directly in this regard. An application for consideration is included in the packet. PLEASE make sure your local membership gets this important information-even if they are already elected we can convert them to AFL-CIO backed candidates.

On that same note: PLEASE canvass your membership to find who might already serve in some elected capacity that we are not aware of. Report your findings to the State Office. Email me directly at canzfire@aol.com .

PFA Honor Roll

For the purposes of listing our members now serving as a part of our Armed Forces, and for purposes of legislation we are considering, please email me at canzfire@aol.com with a listing of those members in your local now serving in any capacity here or abroad. Provide their name, FD rank, military rank and branch of service ASAP.

IAFF Legislative Conference

March 11 – 15, 2007 at the Capitol Hill Hyatt in Washington, DC. The State Office is in the process of making appointments with all Members of our Congressional Delegation relative to our lobbying efforts-see the IAFF website for issues and application to attend.

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Federal Issues

Super Base: US Army Fort Dix, Maguire AFB, Lakehurst NAS face severe cuts in fire and rescue protection staffing while the Department of Defense consolidates these installations into a larger, busier facility with a greater mission and many more aircraft.

The PFA will be working with those locals against such cuts as part of a Congressional lobbying and local public relations effort.

Fort Monmouth: While downsizing and actual move of the mission have yet to ramp up so do local efforts at downsizing and placing our members continue to drag on.

Colts Neck/Earle NAS: Continue to suffer severe overtime problems due to short staffing.

PFANJ FIRE Act Grant Guidance Seminar

Wednesday, February 14, 2007 9am-1pm Middlesex County FA - is aimed at our locals and their departments becoming more successful in the secure of AFG and SAFER grants. Will feature a representative of US Homeland Security, a private grant consultant, and our own presentation to this end. The seminar is free and open to all. Please make sure your fire chiefs and directors are made aware. They should email the State Office regarding attendance at pfanj@aol.com.

PERC Conference

Friday, April 20, 2—7, Brunswick Hilton Hotel, East Brunswick, NJ

Valor Awards

Saturday, April 28, 2007, at the Jersey City Hyatt-on-the-Hudson, beginning at 10am.

Applications have been mailed to all local presidents – last submission date is 2/28/2007.

Convention

May 29 – June 1, 2007, at Caesar's Hotel & Casino - tentative agenda to include discussion of strategies for negotiating around the municipal budget and property tax cap, the same related to health care, and an afternoon retirees conference centering upon retirement and pension tax consequences.

Bravest Charity Golf Outing

Golf: Friday, June 1, 2007 at the Marriott Seaview GC Absecon, NJ

NJ/NY Caucus

The PFA and New York State Professional Firefighters Association are working towards an Annual First District Caucus and Educational Seminar to be held in mid-September in AC. We should have a formal announcement within the next month including firm dates and location.

IAFF HazMat/WMD Training

Hazardous Materials Operations (24 hours), Response to Terrorism Operations (16 hours), Confined Space Operations (16 or 24 hours), Clandestine Drug Lab Response (16 hours), HazMat Technician (80 hours minimum) – all available through the IAFF providing training to members while on duty at no cost to your department. Contact the State Office for more information.

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Jersey City Local 1066 Annual Dinner

Local 1066 will be honoring **Brothers Robert Yackel** and **John Sandella** for their past and continuing achievements on behalf of career professional firefighters on Friday, February 16, 2007, at the Jersey City Hyatt-on-the-Hudson. Contact number for tickets is 201/795-2227.

End report