

INSIGHT

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Changes in Probation

By George Christie, President

During the past 15 years, the Probation Association of New Jersey (PANJ) has understood that changes need be made in probation. The problems in our system are not just restricted to our state boundaries. We see it all over the country and it is a trend that is not going away.

At present, we have legislation pending to transfer probation to the Executive Branch of government where probation can provide a better service to the citizens of New Jersey. Assembly Concurrent Resolution 266 (ACR-266) would give our Legislature the power to move Probation Officers and supervisors without the threat of litigation from the Judiciary.

We know that Probation Officers are no longer social workers. Perhaps there was a time in history when that was true. The primary focus of a Probation Officer in the streets is to conduct surveillance on dangerous people. We should be intrusive in the lives of the 130,000 adult and 15,000 juvenile probationers. We should be searching and seizing contraband; detaining and arresting violators. The people of the state expect to be protected and not be subject to continued victimization by offenders under our supervision.

Our problem is a national problem and it needs to be addressed. Several years ago, the State of Arizona armed Probation Officers because it was felt that the public and the officers needed to be better protected. Like New Jersey, Arizona is a state where the Judiciary oversees probation. However, the Chief Justice there actually empowered a committee to study the issue and approved the committee's recommendation to arm them.

In 2002, current presidential candidate Senator John Edwards (D-North Carolina) made a Senate floor speech about probation. "There are about four and a half million people on probation and parole today and

most of them will break the law again," he said. Edwards added that "The system is overburdened, understaffed, inconsistent, and completely unsuccessful." Senator Edwards recognized the need to better supervise offenders and pour more resources into the community corrections system. "What needs to happen in probation and parole today isn't all that different from what happened to police work 20 years ago," said Edwards.

In 2003, the City of New York armed probation officers for their protection and for the protection of the public. While New York probation is in the Executive Branch of government, the overall issue is the same. They supervise thousands of criminal offenders who often commit new offenses. Probation Officers need to be in the streets and the community to be effective.

In February of 1997, The Governor of Massachusetts and the Attorney General requested that the Legislature in that state to move probation out of the Judiciary and into the Executive Branch. In his statement Governor Weld said "Probation officers must think of themselves as defenders of public safety, not social workers for criminals."

"Today, we begin reshaping probation into a tough-minded program that is going to hold criminal offenders accountable," said Lieutenant Governor Cellucci. "These probationers aren't school children and probation isn't recess."

"The Probation system needs a major repair job and the time to act is now," commented the Attorney General. It is noted that a Harvard study found that 25 percent of youths who committed murder in Boston between 1990 and 1994 were on probation at the time of the murder.

Here in New Jersey the same problems exist. We have collected data on 217 recent probation violators who were arrested for particularly heinous crimes. Of this group, 96 were charged with murder while under probation supervision and nine of the victims were police officers.

We know that change will come because our society will demand it. We are encouraging our federal legislators to pass laws to make probation and parole

officers in the United States law enforcement officers.

However, for the present time, New Jersey Probation Officers must continue to work under very difficult conditions. They lack resources, training, and tools to perform at peak efficiency. Their current performance standards require them to sit at a computer for most of the day rather than be in the community where they are desperately needed. I am extremely proud of all of the Probation Officers and of their hard work. PANJ will continue to fight to create a better system.



John Augustus Award recipient Brad Fairchild and his son at the 2007 PANJ-EF Conference.

ELECTION RESULTS

By Dwight Covalleskie, Chairperson-Elections/
Nominations Committee

The triennial PANJ Statewide Election results were announced at the General Membership meeting in Atlantic City on November 18, 2007. The American Arbitration Association was authorized by PANJ to conduct the secret ballot election. Ballots were mailed to all eligible members on October 19, 2007 to be returned to the AAA by November 16, 2007. The secret ballots were counted and the election results were certified by the AAA, on November 16, 2007. The certified results are as follows: President; George Christie, First Vice President; Peter Tortoreto, Second Vice President; Stephanie Hennessey, Vice President-Supervisor's; Bradley Fairchild, Northern Regional Vice President-Line; Daniel Bergin, Northern Regional Vice President-Supervisors; John Koerber, Central Regional Vice President-Line; Kevin Farley, Central Regional

Vice President-Supervisors; Gavin Cummings, Southern Regional Vice President-Line; Dwight Covalleskie, Southern Regional Vice President-Supervisors; Glen Moton, Recording Secretary; Stuart Martinsen, Financial Secretary; Susan Ormsby-Cuozzo, Treasurer; Ann Rizzi, Parliamentarian; Thea Condry, and Sergeant-at-Arms; Ellen Cribben.

Your Executive Board, under the leadership of President George Christie will continue to work hard for its members with upcoming negotiations, health and safety issues, representing members in grievance discipline matters, as well as many other issues that will benefit us all as Probation Officers. Special thanks to the members of the Nominations/Elections Committee who did a great job: Anne Dutton, Gary Hasse, Dotty Robinson and Francis Noonan.

PANJ-EF CONFERENCE REPORT

By Dottie Robinson, Conference Committee
"The party's over now, it's time to call it a day" and what a day and night it was. The Annual PANJ-EF Conference has come and gone with a great success. Once again we met for classes, and just good old camaraderie. As a member of the Conference Committee, I would like to thank all of the participants who went out of their way to congratulate us for a job well done. We hear complaints but don't often hear the praise. This year things went smoothly, registration worked well and for the first time I

have to say KUDOS to all who attended the Luncheon on Monday. I think this was the best crowd we have had in the past several years and I was truly proud of the professionals who gave their full attention to the program. Thanks to all the participating Counties/ Locals for the gifts. I think we had more than ever this year. I want to extend our thanks to the boys from Sussex for once again doing a great job in the Hospitality Suite, and to all the Locals that contributed so graciously.

I would like to address a few concerns. The committee is constantly asked if we are going to change hotels. The committee has, through the efforts of Mr. John Smack, researched other possibilities. There are several reasons we stay at Trump Plaza. First, they give us the best price for the amenities and rooms. I believe the closest we could come at another venue would be \$125.00 per night a room. This means we have to raise all the costs and that is just too much. Second, Trump Plaza is big enough to handle the amount of participants we have and many others are not. I just want everyone to know we have looked for a better deal, or a comparable one and we have not

found it. Remember PANJ-EF is a separate non-profit corporation from PANJ and we operate strictly on the funds we raise from the Golf Outing and the Conference to provide the training and scholarships. We strive to keep the costs down so we can have more members attend.

Finally I would like to remind everyone that you cannot enter any events at the conference without your tickets. When this occurs we ask for the cash up front and give it back to you in the morning. So thanks to those of you who understood and were so pleasant to the Committee people who work the doors and know that we were just doing our job.

Every year we strive to offer another great experience and we encourage feedback. If there are classes you want or know someone who can present please send the information to Deneen Hohman in Atlantic County. She is in charge of this aspect and will follow through. Please don't wait until September to let us know, the Committee will be gearing up again for 2008 in a few short months.

To all the Local Presidents; please anticipate our Annual Golf Outing and get the message out to all golfers in your county. Remember it is open to everyone and we need your support.

IF YOU DID NOT REPORT IT IT NEVER HAPPENED

By Brad Fairchild, First Vice President-Professional Supervisors

The job of being a Probation Officer has become increasingly dangerous in recent years. PANJ has been advised by many members that they are subject to threats and physical violence with growing regularity. Documenting these events is critical to making the case for enhanced law enforcement training and updated equipment.

PANJ is compiling the individual reports submitted during 2007 and will formulate a state report that will indicate incident trends in office safety as well as in the conduct of field work. What is absolutely essential to this project is that PANJ members take the time to go to the PANJ WEB site (panj.org) and complete the incident report form. If you prefer a paper form, contact the PANJ office at 732-223-1799.

Members are also advised to file a Judiciary Incident form, although we are aware that members in certain vicinages justifiably fear retaliation for reporting any events that may portray local counties in a negative light. The long outdated management practices and attitudes in some vicinages have



Supervisor of the Year Robert Szewczyk and President Christie at the PANJ-EF Conference.

unfortunately instilled an environment of fear so dominant that it impacts the legitimate safety concerns of PANJ members.

Without incident documentation management will possibly turn a deaf ear to our pleas for improved safety and training. If we do not document the dangerous events that (we are told informally) happen with growing consistency, management will believe our advocacy is based on emotion, not facts. If we want to change the status quo we MUST provide a factual basis for our cause.

If you want to improve the safety of our members take the time to report these events properly. Remember-IF YOU DO NOT REPORT DANGEROUS EVENTS, THEY NEVER HAPPENED. Your safety and that of your fellow members depends on your ability to follow through and document dangerous activity.

If you have any questions contact me or Stuart Martinsen. We will provide any assistance necessary to complete the PANJ Incident Form.

Legislative Report

By Elizabeth A. Meyers, Vice President, Nancy H. Becker Associates

As the Probation Association of New Jersey (PANJ) membership convenes this year, we have made several strides since the last conference. There is much more on the horizon, however, that the organization will need to focus on. In addition, the recent election, in which the entire Legislature was up for consideration, significantly changed what the make-up of the Legislature will be in January.

Overall, the Democratic Party remains solidly in control of both houses of the State Legislature. In the Senate, Democrats increased their majority to 23 to 17 by winning two seats that were previously Republican. In the Assembly, Democrats lost two seats overall but maintain a 48 to 32 advantage. As a result of retirements, resignations and election losses, there will be 32 new members of the Legislature including three whom were recently sworn in to fill brief unexpired terms.

For the first time ever, PANJ endorsed a full slate of legislative candidates throughout the state. Due to wise choices by PANJ's leadership in endorsements, 60 of the 68 PANJ endorsed candidates (88 percent) were successful in their election bids. These endorsements were in response to a survey of questions about issues of concern to the membership. This opportunity to poll candidates on issues important to PANJ will prove beneficial when we look for support on key agenda items.

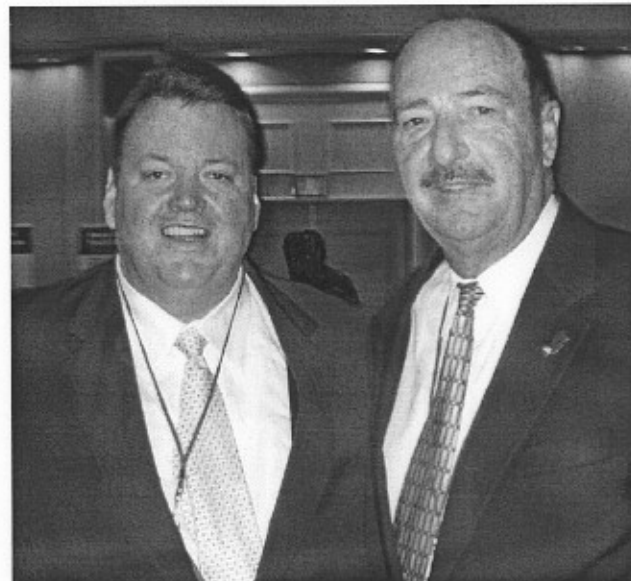
Legislative leadership in the Assembly remained roughly the same with Democratic Speaker Joseph Roberts, Majority Leader Bonnie Watson Coleman, Majority Conference Leader Joan Quigley, and Speaker Pro Tempore Jerry Green (a new addition to the team) at the helm of the majority Party. On the minority Republican side, Minority Leader Alex DeCroce, Conference Leader Peter Biondi, and Minority Whip Jon Bramnick retained their posts.

In the Senate, Legislative Leadership changed quite a bit as anticipated by the large volume of turnover in the upper house. Senate President Richard Codey will now team with Senate Majority Leader Steve Sweeney while Senate Republicans will be lead by Minority Leader Tom Kean Jr. Senator Leonard Lance will serve as the Senate Republican Budget Officer while the Budget Committee chairmanship is still being decided.

The Legislature will begin their "lame duck" schedule in earnest on Monday, November 19, 2007. For the subsequent six weeks, the Legislature is likely to take up several controversial issues including a



Probation Officer of the Year, Nicole Yadlosky, receives her award from President Christie.



President George Christie with PANJ Citizen of the Year, Big Joe Henry

passing permanent end to the death penalty, shrinking the size of the drug free school zone while increasing the penalties within the zone, creating paid family leave, and enacting a new school funding formula. At the same time, hundreds of pieces of legislation will likely zoom through the process as is common during the lame duck session. The new Legislature will be sworn in on January 8, 2008.

PANJ ACHIEVEMENTS:

We forged a new relationship with the new Assembly Law and Public Safety Committee Chairman, Gordon Johnson, after Assemblyman Peter Barnes was named chairman of the State Parole Board. Chairman Johnson has picked up the mantle by introducing measures to relocate probation into the executive branch. These bills have been the basis for communicating with members of the Legislature to earn their support.

PANJ also has continued to build a positive relationship with Chief Justice Stuart Rabner to keep the lines of communications open with the Judiciary. In addition, PANJ has informed the Attorney General's office about the importance of probation issues as evidenced by First Assistant Attorney General John Vazquez speaking at the PANJ-EF conference luncheon.

In the recent year, we also have been very active in communicating with the media about the issues affecting probation. Through press conferences, press releases and letters to the editor we have been vigilant about keeping our issues out there. As is customary, we have reached out to the media to cover the convention as well as this year's award recipients.

PANJ AWARDS FOR 2007

By Stuart Martinsen, Recording Secretary

The PANJ-EF Conference held at Trump Plaza Hotel and Casino in Atlantic City, NJ from Nov. 18-20, 2007 was the host to the PANJ awards on Nov. 19, 2007 at the PANJ-EF annual luncheon. PANJ's Legislator of the Year award was given to Assemblyman Gordon M. Johnson of Bergen County. Assemblyman Johnson was awarded this highest PANJ honor to a legislator for his outstanding efforts on behalf of Probation Officers and sponsorship of A-2549 and A-4360 which would move PANJ members to form a division under parole and to give PO's police powers.

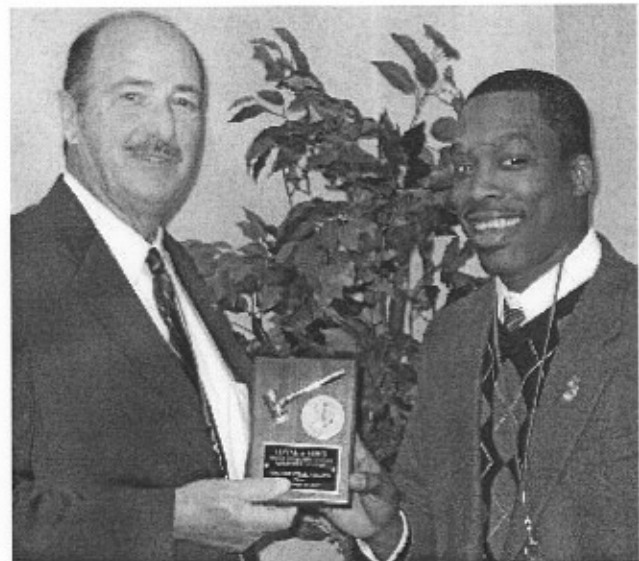
Our Citizen of the Year-William H. Thomas award was given to "Big Joe" Henry of FM 101.5 radio station fame. This award was given to Big Joe in recognition of his efforts on behalf of crime victims, charitable events, and other non-profit activities. This

years John Augustus award was given to CSS II Brad Fairchild of the Cumberland vicinage. Brad has also been very active in PANJ as the Southern Regional Supervisors Vice-President and a contributor to the PANJ *INSIGHT*.

Bergen vicinage PPO II Robert Szewczyk was our PANJ Supervisor of the Year. Bob was nominated by his Juvenile Officers for his outstanding leadership abilities and professionalism. P. O. Nicole Yadlosky of the Burlington vicinage was the PANJ Probation Officer of the Year. Nicole was recognized by her Supervisors and a professional colleague for her relentless devotion to her duties both on and off the job. A Special Appreciation Award was given by PANJ President George Christie to PBA President Anthony Wieners in admiration of his ongoing support of PANJ issues in the legislature and his many appearances at PANJ press conferences.

Also, Mr. Christie was the recipient of a special recognition award given to him by Firemans Mutual Benevolent Association President William Lavin. The FMBA award was given to George in honor of his continued support of the Fireman of NJ and also for the FMBA.

PANJ President George Christie also gave out Presidential Awards to Linval A. Lewis, Roy Friedman, Leon Davis, Joanne Morrison, Rebecca Super, and Brian Banner.

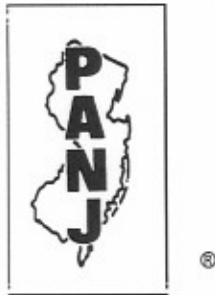


Linval Lewis receives his Presidential Award

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