



GRAND LODGE FRATERNAL ORDER OF POLICE®

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PAT YOES
SECRETARY

Session 1

I have been asked to discuss four of the key issues faced by the National Fraternal Order of Police. While there are numerous issues of concern to us and our members, four of the more prominent ones are healthcare, mentoring future leaders, pensions, and recruiting members to our organization.

I. Healthcare

The healthcare crisis in America strikes our law enforcement community just as it does the rest of our working citizens. The majority of our officers are able to obtain health insurance in partnership with their employer; however costs have been rising at an alarming rate, exceeding the rate of inflation most years.¹ America total spends about 16% of its GDP on healthcare costs, which is more than any other country in the world.² Drug companies and medical providers have no competitive interest in controlling the cost of drugs or services and the cost of these continue to grow. As costs rise insurance premiums and copays rise with them, putting a greater strain on our workers as they try to keep up. We must continue to try to find ways to improve this system and lessen the healthcare burden faced by our officers.

II. Mentoring future leaders

¹ Epstein, M. & Silverman, F. (2000). Healthcare Crisis: Who's at Risk?. In PBS. Retrieved September 6, 2006, from <http://www.pbs.org/healthcarecrisis/healthinsurance.html>.

² . (January, 26 2000). America's health-care crisis: Desperate measures. In The Economist. Retrieved September 6, 2006, from http://www.economist.com/world/displaystory.cfm?story_id=5436968.

It is important for us to reach out to our younger officers. They are our future. Every lodge president was once a new initiate, and we must continue to find ways to develop relationships with younger members and keep them involved. It is crucial that we continue to find ways to bridge the gap between the generations so that the older, more experienced members can reach out to the newer members through mentorship programs and pass on the benefits of their earned wisdom and the honor of our traditions.

One of the biggest challenges we face with newer members is keeping them involved and active within our local lodges. It is important that their lodges reach out in ways that are meaningful to them. Communication is vital, as will be discussed later in this paper, but stronger than that is the sense of community and belonging that we can offer to these new brothers and sisters. Many of them have growing families, and our locals have found that if they can find ways to get the whole family involved, through family-oriented events like barbecues and softball games or getting spouses involved in the FOP Auxiliary, we are more likely to build a strong relationship with new members than if we try to reach out to the member alone.

It is these young men and women who will be responsible for the future of our union, and we must continue to meet these challenges and cultivate the involvement of our young people in order to ensure that the Fraternal Order of Police will always be the strong, thriving organization that has supported our Law Enforcement Officers for over ninety years.

III. Pensions

Pensions are also a matter of great concern to our people. Traditionally, public employers have provided their employees with a Defined Benefit (DB) plan which guarantees a modest benefit to employees based on a formula of years worked and oftentimes an average of income received. However, recent sluggishness in the stock market and a lack of employer contributions to their employees' pension funds has left many DB plans with deficits. This had led to a call from a number of politicians and interest groups for a shift from DB plans for public employees to Defined Contribution (DC) plans. DC plans would force

employees to contribute a portion of their income into a vehicle for pre-tax contribution to investments, which they would then directly manage and be responsible for the outcome. While a public employee could potentially bolster their retirement income with strong returns on their money, they could also receive a far smaller benefit if their investments have sluggish or negative returns. Many agencies have considered switching their employees from DB to DC plans. As millions of Baby Boomers in the public sector prepare to retire, the threat to their pension benefits continues to grow.

Hundreds of thousands of our officers receive DB pension plans and they provide the backbone of their income when they retire. DB plans guarantee public sector employees, who have devoted their lives to serving the public, with a modest retirement benefit that can never be altered. This benefit has attracted a large number of highly dedicated individuals into the public sector and continues to do so as private companies slash their pension plans. DC pension plans provide no guarantees to employees and often provide a benefit that is far less than what a DB plan would provide. Furthermore, the cost of switching employees from a DB plan to a DC plan could cost tens of millions of dollars – money that is better used to shore up existing pension plans. The real winners of a switch to a DC plan are the large investment houses, which stand to make tens of millions handling the pension funds of public employees. We at the NFOP believe in fighting the switch to DC plans in order to safeguard the retirement our members deserve.

IV. Recruiting members to our organization

Naturally, we are concerned with finding ways to continue to increase recruitment of members to our organization, which will help strengthen our ability to work for the rights of Law Enforcement Officers across the country. One of the ways we are working on to improve this process is through new and innovative ways to communicate with new and potential members as well as the Law Enforcement Community.

We have just launched a new website for our union, www.fop.net, which will improve our interaction and connection with existing members as well as dramatically increase our web presence. It will be instrumental in getting more

information out there about what our organization is all about. Through this website the public can easily access information on services available as well as activities we offer, charities we sponsor, and the things that our organization does to fight for the rights of Law Enforcement Officers every day, both locally and in Washington, DC. Younger officers are increasingly web-savvy, and this new website will be an invaluable tool for attracting them to our organization. With this website, members will have access to all of the information on the public side of our website as well as members-only tools like subscriber-only news alerts, rosters for their local lodge, the ability to modify their personal information online, a discussion forum, and other exclusive services and information.

This website will continue to be a window into the exciting things that our union is doing for its membership and the community. We are constantly looking for ways to improve and expand services we offer to our brothers and sisters in law enforcement, adding extra value to their membership and helping us attract new members as they see just how much they can benefit from joining the Fraternal Order of Police.

