



In my 23 years on the job, I have seen many, many instances where the Department has challenged or outright violated the protections afforded to us by the Peace Officers Bill of Rights. As the Chair of Legal Committee, I see the cases all the time. Other times, the Department has treated people with a basic lack of decency, respect and fairness. This unfair treatment drew me to work at Police Litigation and the Officer Representation Section and eventually to be a Director.

LAPD officers have a tough job and a department that is unfair and does not accord its employees a basic level of respect, coupled with a loud handful of biased community activists who don't care about the truth of what it takes to be a cop in L.A., creates the current political environment that exists not only in Los Angeles but also in Sacramento and Washington, D.C. When Department leadership feels political pressure, you can hope for the best but sometimes end up dealing with the fallout.

Sadly, various community "activists," are attempting to turn every use of force incident into a controversy, agitating a small handful of others to conduct "protests" of every police incident that ends in force. The public and the Police Commission need to understand, police work isn't pretty. Police officers don't get paid to get stabbed, nor do we possess magical powers or weapons that allow the seamless disarming of armed and dangerous individuals. When an individual, armed with a deadly weapon, makes a decision (however poor that decision is) to advance on police officers, then that individual is solely responsible for whatever the consequences may be.

This environment will allow spineless politicians and ill-informed activists to gin up the latest assault on your rights and the protections afforded to law enforcement in California. The League must be ready for this assault on your rights, and we are.

Crime is on the rise, Prop 47 has been a disaster and AB 109 is a train wreck. More crooks are on the streets, and our jails and courthouses are nothing more than a revolving door. Now throw in the Governor's Prop 57, another potential catastrophe for public safety—and the incentive to become a cop becomes nonexistent. That's a shame, but in the current environment we find ourselves in, many qualified, good candidates who would make good police officers are choosing other careers. Who can blame them?

Under Prop. 57 a prisoner would be eligible for parole after serving 50 percent of the sentence for his primary offense—regardless of any enhancements that had been added onto the sentence and regardless of previous strikes for heinous crimes such as rape and murder. The initiative would deal a devastating double blow to public safety. By basing parole eligibility on the primary offense only, it would eliminate prosecutors' ability to use sentencing enhancements to secure plea bargains. More disturbingly, it would further gut California's voter-approved and highly successful three strikes law. A criminal could have three, four, even ten strikes and still be eligible for a parole hearing after serving just half his time for the primary offense.

Gov. Brown has admitted that the impetus for his ill-advised initiative is to reduce prison overcrowding. To accomplish this, he wants to release dangerous prisoners who very likely would commit more crimes that would land them in prison once again. Apparently this is what passes for logic these days in the state Capitol and makes our jobs very dangerous.

For those of us still here, there aren't enough officers in the field. Many of you can't get timely treatment for your IOD injuries; you are Monday morning quarterbacked on almost everything and then heavily disciplined for minor infractions or honest mistakes.

The blue line is getting thinner and thinner.

We are working to hold the City and Department accountable to the deployment needs that affect officer and community safety. We are in court to fight to improve the broken discipline process and ensure our members get a fair shake. We've worked with other law enforcement associations and our friends in the state legislature to keep your protections intact in Sacramento, and we're defending against pinheaded legislation that would erode the protections of POBAR and allow the release of personnel information that is intended to hurt cops. We are also fighting to keep in place the current BWC policy from being tinkered with by an activist Police Commission.

Sadly, we have been in a very defensive mode in Sacramento over the past few years because there have been so many attacks on a state level not only to water down protections while you do your job, but to make your job harder to do because of the minimized accountability in the criminal justice system.

There's no doubt that we will continue to have to defend attacks on POBAR and our privacy. However, as Legislative Chair for the League, I believe it's time for us to be proactive on legislation; we need to work collectively with other associations and law enforcement supporters to level the playing field.

We need to resolve issues, such as standardizing what "false and misleading" means for each agency so that each command officer cannot put his or her finger in the air on any given day and have a different opinion about what constitutes this allegation.

I believe it should be a federal hate crime to attack anyone you know to be a police officer in the performance of their duties. We'll have to wait for November to see how likely that will ever be, but we can follow the lead of Louisiana and start to work on it now in California.

I represent the League in a public safety advocates alliance in Sacramento, and the League is a part of several other advocacy organizations dedicated to promoting law enforcement. It's time to redouble our efforts in working together and making changes in Sacramento so that we can be better protected in Los Angeles. Part of that process is to advocate directly to legislators in Sacramento. There's a fine line between those in Sacramento who support law enforcement and those who support labor. We need to be more stringent about our endorsements of those who protect the profession of law enforcement and make sure that they are all aware that if we cannot count on them, they cannot count on us.

As the 2016 legislative session ends with bills on the Governor's desk for his veto or signature, we must remain committed to impacting legislation wherever it is being formulated. We will have a summary next month of the final outcome of bills on the Governor's desk. In the meantime, we have already started collaborating on ideas for potential legislation in 2017. I have received several ideas from delegates, but I encourage anyone who has a suggestion or thought about potential legislation to email me at KristiEckard@lappl.org.