



The mission of the Protective League is to fight for the wages, benefits, working conditions and legal rights of Los Angeles police officers. The Political Action Committee of the League was formed to achieve some of those goals by supporting political candidates who either have shown willingness and the ability to do so or who have made a commitment to do so. Now, as you may guess, politics is tricky business and, in a lot of ways, is as clear as mud.

The American political system is based on representative democracy with built-in checks and balances to ensure that no one person, party or entity would have so much power that it would undermine the concept of democratic decision making, at least in the long term. Politics is a cyclical animal that allows constituents to be involved and express their approval or disapproval of the elected representatives' performance through voting. Their ticket is good as long as we allow it to be. We, the people, hold the keys to their office and can either lock or unlock that door. Unions, as a collective voice, can have an important part in this process.

Politics is complicated, often not straightforward, with many layers of competing agendas, ideologies, legislative ideas and special interests. In its basic form, it boils down to influencing actions and policies of a government.

So why do we have a political action committee (PAC), and why should we be active in the political arena? The LAPPL PAC supports political candidates and/or officeholders via public endorsements and/or financial or public support who advocate the political goals of the LAPPL and who have a record of supporting law enforcement or who make a commitment to support law enforcement and causes important to public safety.

So, what are our political goals? As the LAPPL mission statement indicates, we fight for better pay, benefits, legal rights and working conditions of our members, as do most other labor unions. We also attempt to influence the political process in the state legislature by educating our elected officials about issues relating to law enforcement and public safety in hopes for them to be able to make better guided decisions when it comes to legislation affecting our members, both on and off duty. The battles have ranged from protecting the privacy of our members, retaining retirement benefits, gaining legal protections against abuses of management, advocating or advising against gun, sentencing and body camera legislation. The state legislature can make sweeping changes that can change the law enforcement landscape overnight. That is why it is

important that we educate, advise and guide our elected officials on matters affecting public safety.

At the local level we do the same in attempting to educate our City Councilmembers and the Mayor's office on policy-making that is conducive to public safety. These issues range from staffing issues of the Department, to budgetary, policy and local initiatives that could have an impact on our members as well as the taxpayers of the city.

As you may have heard, this year we have challenged the City and the Department to fix some big internal issues that hurt our membership: To fix the broken workers' compensation system that has sidelined hundreds of officers unnecessarily, and to replace it with an Alternative Dispute Resolution program; to support a baseline staffing model for deployment that would supplement each geographic division with additional officers on an overtime basis; and to demand that the City aggressively pursue in its budget the funds to replace police officers doing civilian work by civilians.

Do politicians always heed the advice we give? Of course not, and that is why a periodic reevaluation of support and endorsement is healthy and necessary. Does their record support a re-endorsement? What have they done with matters important to us as a public safety union and as they relate to public safety in general?

The LAPPL PAC is nonpartisan and supports those pro-law enforcement candidates who believe that we deserve fair compensation and benefits, and who support our legal rights as police officers. A good example of this is the Peace Officers Bill of Rights, obtained by the LAPPL Board of 1977 to benefit all law enforcement officers throughout California. The bill was signed by none other than our former and now current Governor, Jerry Brown! Talk about pulling off the impossible! The political victory of this was tremendous and has benefited tens of thousands of police officers ever since its signing.

As you can see, there are many good reasons to stay active in politics. Just proclaiming to be a pro-law enforcement candidate does not always translate into being good for us. That same person may also ride on the "fiscally conservative" ticket and may not support protecting public employee pensions or our labor contracts. Vice versa, a person who may be a friend of the police by getting behind a fair labor contract may also be pandering to anti-law enforcement groups and attend their rallies, thereby creating an openly hostile working environment for us as law enforcement officers. The perfect politician does not exist, but the best possible candidate for our collective cause at any given race often does exist. Do we always get the voter guide right? The answer is in the eye of the beholder, but the Political Action Committee, which comprises the volunteer rank-and-file delegates, works very hard and diligently at getting it right. The Political Action Committee then makes a recommendation of endorsements to the Board of Directors for their approval. The Board then discusses the recommendations and makes a final decision about the candidates.

I can assure you that each time the LAPPL voter guide for the members is published, we have good, articulable reasons why we believe the candidate names we have there are the best

possible for the given race. These are not decisions made in a vacuum. We weigh many different factors when selecting appropriate candidates based on research and in-person interviews. These choices may not always coincide with your personal choices or even with some of your personal values. The purpose of the PAC interviews and the subsequent candidate selection and endorsement is to pick the most suitable candidate to benefit the membership of our labor union as a whole. That umbrella covers a lot of different issues, from issues of morality and conviction (death penalty, early release program, gun rights, crime punishment, reformatory laws), fair compensation (pension, health benefits, fair pay), legal rights (gun and free speech rights, Peace Officer Bill of Rights, City Ethics Commission fining officers, and whether or not the DA is caving in to public pressure to unjustifiably file on police officers) and public policy (homelessness bills, minimum wage mandates, revenue-raising or destroying-policies, other feel-good versus do-good policy initiatives). We also weigh on the past record on what the candidate has done to further or hurt the cause of public safety and the LAPPL as a labor union, including past statements that the candidate may have said that was construed as damaging to the law enforcement community.

The difficulty for some in accepting the set process and its subsequent recommendations often lies in that, as individuals, we are not monolithic in how we vote. Some things are more important than others on the aforementioned list. Some are based on principle, such as gun rights, death penalty and free speech. Some issues are more pragmatic, like fair compensation, health benefits and working conditions that were equally as hard fought for and are indeed important for the well-being of our families. For others it may be issues of discipline, working conditions and legal rights. Sometimes our voting guide recommendations may not sit well with the members because of their personal party affiliation.

As I mentioned earlier, the goal of the LAPPL PAC is to benefit its members as a whole, and we are a nonpartisan organization. The LAPPL welcomes any candidate who we believe can further our goals as a law enforcement labor organization.

For any PAC-related questions or suggestions, please email me at TJTarjamo@lappl.org or call me at (213) 798-2286.