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**THE GRIEVANCE UNITED STATES CAPITOL POLICE LABOR COMMITTEE**

**Date October 4, 2016**

**Farewell from the Former Chairman**

Brothers and Sisters,

This past June I voluntarily retired from the Department after 30 years of service, consequently ending my Chairmanship of the Labor Committee as well.  I can honestly say that despite the ups and downs of the Department, I enjoyed my time with the Capitol Police, but serving as your Chairman for 7+ years was the highlight of my career.  I am humbled and grateful that I had the opportunity to serve you in this position, since advocating for you was something I took great pride in.  I want to thank you, the membership for the friendships, the support, and the honor of working with all of you.

Regarding the Labor Committee, I want to thank the Shop Stewards who not only bought into my vision for a successful Union, but helped to make it a reality. To my Executive Board, during our tenue I considered you family more than anything, which is why we endured through thick and thin. And personally, I want to thank my wife Debi, and daughters Lauren and Rachel, for your understanding and support over the years.

Upon my retirement, Gus Papa (First Vice Chairman) assumed all responsibilities as Chairman per our Union bylaws. With an election forthcoming, I hope you consider supporting Gus to move the Union forward.  As with any election, you will hear allegations and false promises to gain support, but with Gus you will get uncompromised leadership.

Gus served as my First Vice Chairman for 7 years, during that time whether meeting with the Chief or Members of Congress, he never made it about “his interests,” his focal point was always what was best for the officers.  Gus has also remained a tireless advocate for your safety in the workplace, as when he filed the initial Office of Compliance (OoC) complaint to address the numerous safety issues at the new USCP firing range. He addressed the unsafe practice of having officers lowering and raising the flag from the ledges of Congressional buildings, while also being responsible for addressing the life cycle repairs of all the kiosks. Gus is also well versed in our Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) and has filed successful disciplinary grievances on behalf of officers, while also testifying in arbitration hearings on the Union’s behalf.

Gus has compassion.  Most of you probably don’t know this, but when Officer Vernon Alston unexpectedly passed away last year, Gus took it upon himself to attend the services in Delaware on behalf of the Labor Committee, not only to pay his respect, but to ensure the Alston family received their Labor Committee life insurance benefit for any sudden financial needs they would have. Or when we visited an officer’s wife who lay dying in the hospital, Gus was there with flowers and a shoulder to lean on, while talking with their children in an effort to temporarily ease their minds.

Gus has empathy.  During our 7 years working together, we unfortunately dealt with officer involved shootings; Gus made it a practice to keep in touch with our officers to ensure they were receiving the support they needed during their ordeal. Whether legal, counseling or a reassuring voice, if Gus couldn’t personally help them, he made sure he found someone who could.

In closing, you might hear the “need for change” or “new blood” within the Labor Committee.  A word of caution, tread lightly with anyone that offers wholesale changes, they will usually be at your expense.

Gus has the experience, passion and knowledge to keep the Labor Committee thriving.

In solidarity,

Jim Konczos

Former Chairman

**Chairman**

***Thank You Chairman Konczos***

Brothers and Sisters,

My fellow Officers and co-workers in Blue, I salute you and thank you for the job you do on a daily basis. On June 30th, 2016, Jim Konczos retired as a Police Officer from the USCP after almost 30 years (29 years and 10 months to be precise) of service and as a result also stepped down as Chairman of our Union, the FOP/USCP Labor Committee. Jim was this Union’s longest serving Chairman from August 2009 until his retirement on June 30th 2016.

During the time I have served as the First Vice Chairman, Jim and I have been involved in countless meetings with other Union leaders, Chiefs of Police, USCP Supervisors on all levels, Arbitration Hearings, DRB’s, Congressional Hearings, meetings with Members of Congress, and endless calls, emails, texts with the membership. Jim’s vision was always to improve our workplace, improve our working conditions, improve our retirement, and the list goes on.

We’ve had many challenges along the way as we endured a rocky relationship with former Chief Kim Dine for 3+ years. We have tried to bridge the divide between officers and management that we’ve seen on this the Department for years. I approach our future with optimism as I hope to work with Chief Verderosa who came up thru the ranks of this Department. We’ve had several formal and informal meetings with Chief Verderosa and we are looking to work together to solve problems, increase the low morale created over the last few years, and hopefully make the Capitol Police an enjoyable place to work as we continue to carry out our mission on a daily basis.

Jim Konczos and I first met in 2006 when I first became a shop steward on the House Division and Jim was a seasoned Union Leader on the E-Board. Jim and I hit it off immediately. We had similar viewpoints on many issues, and I would always contact him on labor issues I was having with my shift. Jim was always available and would always offer sound advice. In 2009 when Jim took over as Chairman of our Union, he contacted me to see if I’d be interested to serve as the First Vice Chairman. I didn’t even have to think about it as I knew under Jim’s leadership and the rest of the E-Board we had a solid group of experienced Union representatives. The last 7 years have been fun at times but we’ve also faced challenges along the way.

Eventually I knew the day would come when Jim would step down and retire. As I take over the Union Chairman position per our Union By-Laws, I look forward to the challenge, and I look forward to leading this Union striving for positive change. I learned a lot from Jim Konczos as our Chairman, and I plan to take what I’ve learned and incorporate my own ideas to move this Union in the right direction.

 Jim, congratulations on your retirement. We will miss you as a proven Union Leader. Good Luck in your future endeavors and THANK YOU for all you did for this Union!!!

Be safe and god bless,

Officer Gus “Papa” Papathanasiou

Chairman

**Second Vice Chairman**

Greeting fellow Officers,

Union..... What is the union? The Capitol Police Union is a group of Officers who voted several years ago to unionize and operate under the Congressional Accountability act and to have a say in our day to day working environment. Often Officers fail to realize the sacrifices that those in front of them have made to make the Capitol Police a better place to work. These sacrifices did not come easy. Officers who were supporting the effort to unionize often were heckled and given a hard time by management and by their peers.

What was it the old timers and management feared? It was change. Change(s) for better working conditions and a fair process that leveled the playing field for all, not just those in the "click". With this change came hurt feelings threats of lawsuits and goodbye to a system that was flawed. The current system isn't perfect but it's better than what we had in place years ago.

Instead of criticizing get involved and help to improve your working environment. Look around and listen to those who are complaining are their complaints warranted against the union or are they just bitter and angry? Often those complaining don't have any solutions to their issues. Your union has fought for benefits that new officers failed to realize aren't automatic. Ask any senior officer what it was like to work without any Sunday premium or to work four hours after the House or Senate went out only to receive comp time. Complaints could be levied against you, you never got to see the complaint, it was pursued without any investigation and you were found guilty. In closing, step up get involved and make a difference. Change comes one officer at a time.

Everyone be safe and God bless,

Chris Ferguson

Second Vice Chairman

**Second Vice Chairman**

Greetings fellow Union Members.

I hope this newsletter finds everyone doing well. As a union member, when it comes time for ratification, I would like to encourage all fellow Union members to take the time to review the proposed contract. Whether you agree or disagree with the any new language or articles it is important that your voice be heard. Ask questions on its impact to your working conditions. Whether good or bad, it's your right as a member to ask. Remember it's our working conditions at stake here. So please take the time to vote both in Union official elections and contract ratifications. Let your voice be heard.

Often I hear from the membership "what is the union doing"? Numerous times I want to answer but in fairness to our membership I can't answer that question due to privacy rights. Also, on that note Officers who want their cases taken to arbitration fail to realize the process the board goes through before a decision is made whether to take their case to arbitration or not. The union has an arbitration committee made up of fellow officers who review the cases and make their recommendation. Then we forward the paperwork to our law firm along with the committees decision for their review and it's at this point a decision is made to take the case to arbitration or not. So it's easy to set back and criticize but sometimes we need to man up and accept responsibility for our mistakes.

Please remember your stewards represent you. Anytime you have a work related concern please contact your steward and seek assistance to resolve the issue. In closing, the union should reflect its membership. God bless each and everyone.

Peace,

Chris Ferguson

2nd Vice Chairman

**The Sergeant at Arms Speaks!**

Membership,

I know all of you have heard the rumors floating around the capitol complex in regards to the negotiations for a new CBA. I'm sure you are all very concerned, so let's get straight to the point and compare the 2010 CBA (what we work under currently) and the newly negotiated contract. We will discuss three of the biggest changes in the new CBA as negotiated by the then-Chief Negotiator.

1) The Current CBA as it relates to Article 8 (Changes in Conditions of Employment. Section 08.02).

Currently, we are afforded 21 days’ notice when the Department makes a change to our days off or our normal shift hours except in emergencies or other unforeseen circumstances. This 21-day notice was negotiated this way in 2010 to provide officers ample notice of change in their working conditions so that officer have time to make arrangements for childcare, caring for parents or any other family member, etc.

1A) The Newly Negotiated CBA as it relates to Article 8 Section 08.02 (Changes in conditions of employment)

In this newly negotiated section, employees will be afforded 14 days’ notice when the Department makes a change to our days off or our normal shift hours (again, with an exception for emergencies or unforeseen circumstances).

2) The Current CBA as it relates to Article 18 Section 18.02 (Overtime).

Currently, if an officer uses UNSCHEDULED leave in a pay period we all know our overtime will be 1.0 (Straight time). If an officer uses SCHEDULED leave during a pay period, your overtime is unaffected and will be calculated at 1.5 (Time and a Half).

2A) The Newly Negotiated CBA Article 18 Section 18.02 (Overtime).

In this section as newly negotiated, SCHEDULED leave for employees who are not in duty status for more than twenty-four hours of combined regular and legal holiday hours during a pay period will not count as credit toward the overtime threshold.

For Example: If you take one week of scheduled leave (40 hours) in a pay period. If in the next week you are FORCED (drafted) to work overtime, the first 40 hours of overtime will be STRAIGHT TIME (1.0). In that same pay period in which you took SCHEDULED leave, you would have to work over 40 hours of Overtime to get time and half (1.5).

3) The Current CBA as it relates to Article 19 Section 19.02 (Unscheduled sick leave).

Currently, an officer has to call in one hour prior to his/her shift if that officer wants to request unscheduled sick leave for that day. This article allows an officer to be out for 3 consecutive days before a sick note is required. Only ONE call to a supervisor is necessary.

3A) The Newly Negotiated CBA Article 19 Section 19.02 (Unscheduled sick leave).

This section as newly negotiated would permit the Department to order officers to call back in every single day the officer wants to request sick leave.

On another note, in reference to the latest article in the "The Grievance", Mr. Myers references the condensed pay scale. He states "I have no information that the current E-Board has made any effort to advance the progress of the proposed pay scale". That is the furthest thing from the truth. I AM THE ONE that informally started discussion with House Sergeant of Arms about the condensed pay scale. I wrote about it in a previous issue of "The Grievance" before James Myers was involved in any aspect of the E-Board. Most importantly, I just had a meeting with the House Sergeant of Arms discussing the condensed pay scale in May of 2016. I was told by the House Sergeant of Arms during our "formal meeting" that he has an assistant currently researching pay-scale for different Law Enforcement Agencies to see how ours compares. I had a meeting with CD-2 officers after roll, explaining to the officers that we need to collect this information for ourselves so that we can be prepared and have our own research to present. I am collecting them as we speak. As I get more information, I will keep you updated.

The Union works very hard for you and we have done great things over the years to ensure our Officers are being treated fairly and equitably. A big part of that means making sure our CBA contains provisions that protect our Officers.

Working for you,

Vinnie Summers

Sergeant-at-Arms

**Recording Secretary**

**Purpose of the Union**

Many of officers ask/say, “*What’s the purpose of the Union*?”  I decided to use this platform to answer such question based on my own knowledge. Unions bring a voice that is often not heard.  Some officers are quiet and do not want to make any waves but they count on their Union Representative to be their voice.  Unions give officers the power to negotiate for more favorable working conditions, meet with management about safety-health, hazardous/weather conditions, file Office of Compliance Complaints, assist officers when under investigation, request for more training, help officers understand FMLA/EAP and much more.

Some members of management have a “Do as I say approach” instead of “Lead by example.”  They will tell the officer, “*Well file a grievance*.”  We are all human beings and do not deserve to be treated or talked to like a caged animal.  That mentality is old and ridiculous.  The Union is not here to file grievances on every living and breathing situation.  However, this is what the culture has come to.  Not to discredit those officials who actually care and who try their best to help but they are overshadowed by those that believe they are too good to receive emails, those that shut the door in your face or question you when you have a death in your family or just plain and simply sick.  There is a CBA (Collective Bargaining Agreement) in place for management to adhere to just like there are Directives/SOPs in which they expect officers to adhere to.  When management cannot open the CBA or does not take the time to understand what it says, that is when the Union steps up.

There are more severe circumstances that may call for an attorney to be present at the drop of a dime. While officers have their choice to have their own attorney, I ask are they available at any given time, how much do you pay for attorney fees, do they have experience with the ins/outs of the USCP, are they familiar with the Legislative Branch of government (USCP falls under)?  All these questions (and many more) arise when one says, “What is the purpose of the Union” or since I do not like a Union Representative I am going to get out.  Oh! But as soon as you get that 534 with 24hrs or 535 then you want to sign up to become a member.  WAIT! What happened to your personal attorney?!

All of the Union Representatives go to or have had the opportunity to attend Labor/Law Arbitration Conferences and/or have had training with the FOP’s Legal team.  The Union Reps have tools at their disposal to assist an officer in every situation.  Some may be more knowledgeable then others which is fine, because we all are here to assist one-another.  So instead of asking, “What’s the purpose of the Union” ask yourself, “What did I do to get that 534/535?” instead of blaming the Union that they did not get the penalty erased from your jacket.

Thanks for reading,

Jodie Penny

Recording Secretary

**Executive Chief Shop Steward**

Union Members,

My name is Dennis Lee and I serve as your Executive Chief Shop Steward on the Executive board. There are eight of us on the Board serving you as a Union member. Each of us have a specific role and title however, we work together as a team.

Our current Chairman is Gus Papathanasiou, his role on the Board is essential when making critical decisions on cases that involve discipline, meetings with members of Congress to push Union issues, and discuss policies with the Chief of Police.

We hold Executive Board meetings twice a month to discuss; arbitration cases, discipline, grievances, investigations, and general issues brought up by our members. Chief Shop Stewards from each division report to me regarding these issues and I discuss them at the Executive Board meeting. There are 7 Chief Shop stewards across the Hill and they play an important part when it comes to reporting problems stemming from their divisions.

Capitol: \*\*Vacant\*\*

FRU: Kevin Evans

House: Antwan McCall

PMRD: Steve Riley

Senate: Keith Sloan

LOC: Brooke Detorie

COMM: Jason Zimmermann

The above officers take reports from their shift Shop Stewards and in turn advise and provide me all the information/details needed to resolve the issues.

I am proud to work with ALL these individuals because they are taking their time to help officers that need it. Paul Mckenna our First Vice Chairman is quoted as saying; “putting the needs of our members above my own…our wants must come second to what the membership wants” and I agree with him wholeheartedly!! A strong Union is members working together and striving to help each other.

Please get out there and Vote for your candidates for the position of Chairman, First Vice Chairman and Capitol Chief Shop Steward. I THANK YOU for your time and feel free to contact me with any questions or to join the Union.

Thank you,

Dennis Lee

Executive Chief Shop Steward

**Secretary**

All,

First and foremost I want to say thank you to Jim Konczos for all that he did for the Union. Jim always treated everyone as an equal, often saying of the Executive Board that we were all one of eight. Thank you Jim and enjoy your retirement.

Criticizing Your Shop Steward

It is easy to sit back and say that something is wrong or needs fixing. It is easy to be critical of those who step forward and take on the challenge of leading in a Union. When it comes to being a Shop Steward, I have witnessed Shop Stewards who have been completely under minded by those who would never take on the challenge themselves. What’s even worse is to witness a shop steward relentlessly attacked by former or current Union Representatives. As we move forward I would ask that instead of criticizing your shop steward, support them with accurate statements and accounts of what goes on your detail and division and give them the opportunity to work it out in own style and method.

Getting Out of the Union

I have found over the years that it is interesting that those who leave the Union just can’t leave the Union alone. You most likely left because you didn’t do anything wrong but you were disciplined anyways and the Union couldn’t get you out of it, or you had a personality conflict with a Union representative. I have seen many leave the Union because of these reasons. It’s kind of funny though because when there are three of you in a warming vehicle, or you are on your cell phone, or you have a conflict with an officer and you are told to avoid each other but you go and confront the officer on post; you think you have done nothing wrong. I don’t get it! All of these things are direct violation of Department policy and the Union will fight to ensure your rights are protected but regardless you are in violation of a Department policy, whether you agree with the policy or not. It is unfortunate that the Union in some cases takes the blame for an officer’s discipline when the Union can’t get it removed from the officer’s record, when in reality it was the officer who did something wrong to have it put there in the first place. We will always do our best to help officers out, but in reality you are the one who can help yourself the most.

The other day another Executive Board member asked me my opinion of whether or not and officer would be good on the negotiating team. I told him no and I gave my reason why. Well someone overheard the conversation, ran to the officer and told him what I said, how sad it was for me to see this officer get out of the Union because of something I said. Personally I will tell you that I would say the same thing about myself, I was on the negotiation team and I took myself off of it. I talk too much and I don’t have the temperament to deal with most managers, but I didn’t get out of the Union. I wouldn’t recommend a lot of people for the negotiating team, but why would you quit the Union because of something I said, please don’t give me that kind of power over you. At least have the courage to come tell me to my face that you disagree with what I said, that is what a negotiator would have done, instead you prove my point, you quit?

This will most likely be my last newsletter article. I sincerely wish you all well, and always be safe.

Take Care,

Greg Baird

Secretary

**Executive Board**

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