



Hello Friends.

Well, we are in some crazy times aren't we? I want to share some thoughts with you about the last several weeks and give you a bit of a deep dive and behind the scenes look into the recent legislative process to explain a bit about what challenges OACP and OSSA recently faced.

Many of you know better than I, but as a life member of OACP and a 42 year veteran of Oregon law enforcement, I can tell you with some modicum of certainty that this is the most challenging time our profession has faced in decades.

Not long ago, at the outset of the COVID-19 crisis, police officers were doing our regular, day to day work, serving our communities and keeping folks safe. The COVID-19 virus descended upon us and we found ourselves in the middle of emergency declarations due to the COVID-19 pandemic; social distancing and mask wearing became the norm, isolation was recommended and our lives changed significantly. None in our profession were looking for recognition, we were just doing our jobs but we were recognized as community heroes, working alongside other first responders and the medical community on the front lines, fighting this deadly virus.

Literally overnight, all of that changed. Our profession was thrust into the national spotlight upon the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis, followed by other incidents around the country, including the officer involved shooting in Atlanta.

Those in our profession went from being viewed as heroes to some calling us racists, declaring systemic racism in many institutions including policing and the words "de jour" becoming "defund, dismantle and abolish the police" with the focus of many politicians and many community leaders demanding "police accountability."

What has followed over the past weeks began as protests and marches, quickly devolving into lawlessness, riots and criminal behavior in many communities, but significantly impacting our Oregon cities of Portland, Salem and Eugene. Attacks on police officers, some resulting in injury; attacks on police facilities, other government buildings and statues and monuments, along with political indecision, seems to be the norm.

In the midst of all of this, Governor Brown called a special session of the Oregon Legislature to confront the issues of COVID-19 and police accountability with legislation. The Oregon Legislature quickly developed six bills under the label of police accountability, literally in the blink of an eye. While the Legislature had an agenda and operated initially in a silo, OACP and OSSA were excluded from the conversation. However our lobbyist, Kevin Campbell managed to engage lawmakers on the issues at hand. This was solely due to the legislative relationships built over the years by Kevin, who represents OACP and OSSA. Absent those relationships, we would have been left at the side of the road.

Beginning June 17, a small group of us from OACP, OSSA, OSP, DPSST, ODOJ and ODAA assembled and began pouring over the proposed legislation which was initially quite restrictive and would have crippled law enforcement in many areas. We developed alternative language and proposed changes to lawmakers. A major challenge to our efforts was that the language of proposed bills changed literally hour by hour. We would no sooner complete a review and develop alternative language and lawmakers would change direction, so we would have to start work over again. Lawmakers began to listen and adopted some, but not all of our suggestions and recommendations.

We worked continuously through the days, evenings, over the weekends and on Father's Day to do our best on your behalf in helping to craft this legislation to end up with the least negative impact on you as possible.

Along with counterparts from OSSA, twice I testified in person (telephonically) during the hearings directly addressing lawmakers with a two minute limit so testimony had to be concise, and I submitted written testimony on all of the six proposed bills on behalf of OACP.

On Friday June 26, the six police accountability bills were voted on and passed by the Legislature. All have an emergency clause and will become law when signed by Governor Brown in the next few days.

Because of the rapid pace of bill passage, the next step was to quickly develop training on the bills to push out to you, our membership. With the help of OSP Superintendent Travis Hampton, we assembled a group under the lead of OSP that included members of OACP, OSSA, and DPSST and of course, OSP. Over Monday and Tuesday of this week, that training team quickly developed training for line and command personnel on the new legislation. Stay tuned, as training information will be pushed out soon to our OACP and OSSA memberships.

None of the legislation is perfect, we have already identified gaps and challenges that we will need to visit in future legislative sessions. Though at the end of the day, what we have is workable. It will take some patience and finesse to see it through so our personnel can be successful under this new legislation.

Additionally, we must not be complacent. We must be vigilant. We are confident that there will be a second round of legislation that will test us again. We could see one or two more special sessions called by the Governor before the 2021 long session commences in February. It's quite likely that more "police reform" legislation will again confront us. Whatever the challenge before us, we will approach it constructively and professionally, but emotions will be high and there is no telling what we will face. We can only commit to giving it our all.

It is tough times to be a police officer. Some in our profession are retiring early, some are switching agencies and some are leaving service all together.

Everything aside, we are professionals. We chose this work. We will succeed and we will rise above the controversy and continue to serve our communities. When they call, we will come...

Thanks to each of you for your service and dedication. It is my privilege and honor to serve you on behalf of OACP.

Sincerely,



Jim Ferraris
OACP President