

The Common Plea

October 2006



Local 810

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An open letter to the First Judicial District of PA

As we move toward the holiday season and the homicide rate in Philadelphia continues to swell, city officials mull over the possible causes and solutions to this current crisis. Though there are countless explanations as to why gun violence is rampant in our city, most of them being complex and far-reaching, one simple fact is obvious: a large majority of the perpetrators and victims of homicide in Philadelphia are already involved in the criminal justice system, particularly under Probation and Parole supervision.

As the District Attorney's Office, the Philadelphia Police and various public and private agencies take the stage and assemble a front line for this critical struggle, it has not gone unnoticed by this local that the representation at this table by the First Judicial District of Pennsylvania has been virtually nonexistent. Undeniably the solution to the epidemic of gun violence in Philadelphia is comprehensive and will take years to accomplish, but surely lives could be saved if court supervision of offenders was an urgent priority in this city.

For many years, Probation and Parole Officers, especially in Adult Probation, have been detached from the neighborhoods in Philadelphia, and aside from a small number of specialized units in Juvenile and Adult Probation, namely the Youth Violence Reduction Partnership (YVRP) and Gun-Court, supervision and case management has been conducted from a cubicle in Center City, Philadelphia. Local 810's intention is not to just blindly criticize, as we commend the courts for their participation in these special programs, but what we propose is that its clearly not enough. Local 810 feels that it's highly professional and knowledgeable work force is an untapped resource that is overworked, underpaid and due to a lack of vision from the courts, unprepared and untrained to deal with the problems that a city of neighborhoods spawns.

Local 810 seeks cooperation and assistance from the First Judicial District in creating and retaining a workforce that is present in every Philadelphia neighborhood. We specifically ask that Judge Fitzgerald, Judge Dougherty, Judge Keogh and Judge Murphy, along with court administration, take our position. This means a more progressive pay plan to retain Probation/Parole Officers, more cooperation with other city agencies, better training so offenders can be supervised more effectively and a move toward neighborhood supervision for all probationers and parolees in Philadelphia. The Probation/Parole Officers of Local 810 want to help in alleviating gun violence in our city. We are asking for a partner in the First Judicial District of Pennsylvania. After all, lives are at stake.

Progressive Pay Plan

As you are well aware, Local 810 President Bob Zimmerman's focus for the past three and a half years has been the pursuit of a progressive pay plan for our membership. This pursuit continues to be a main priority. Local 810's initial plan was denied by the First Judicial District under the leadership of Joe Cairone because it was not "cost neutral". While Local 810 understands that the FJD does have budget restraints, we cannot understand why the FJD administration gave essentially the same progressive pay plan to the supervisors at Adult Probation.

Local 810 considers it an insult that out of the fifteen largest counties in the United States, Probation and Parole Officers in Philadelphia rank dead last in maximum salary, whereas FJD administrators rank in the top five. The Probation/Parole Officers within the First Judicial District are also paid approximately five thousand dollars less in maximum salary than their Social Worker counterparts. This despite state legislation that says Probation/Parole Officers should be paid the same as Social Workers. The FJD has recently rewarded the Warrant Unit and court officers for their hard work and additional responsibilities. However, the extra work done by Probation/Parole Officers with the implementation of JACS, MONITOR and CPCMS seems to be irrelevant to the FJD.

Some administrators within the FJD, most notably Dave Wasson, have been more receptive to our issues regarding a progressive pay plan. Currently our plan is being reviewed by FJD budget analyst Kevin Cross. This process needs to move forward! The turnover rate of young, talented officers is high (over thirty percent) and morale at an all time low. The lack of a progressive pay plan is certainly the crux of this problem.

Once again we ask that the First Judicial Districts' administrators and judges take our position. A more progressive pay plan for Probation and Parole Officers will ultimately benefit us all.

New Local 810 Vice-President

Local 810 would like to extend congratulations to our new Vice-President, Louise Carpino. Louise has been an active, hard-working and loyal member of Local 810 for many years. Louise most recently served as Health & Safety Officer within Local 810 and continues to be involved with DC-47's People Committee and the Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW). Louise is the first woman in Local 810 history to hold this office and although she will have very big shoes to fill with the departure of Chris McFillin, we think she's up to the job. Congratulations Louise!



Louise hard at work for Local 810

Chris McFillin to local 2186

Local 810 would also like to congratulate former Vice-President Chris McFillin, who was recently promoted to supervisor in Adult Probation and will make the move to Local 2186. Chris is joining John Gonzalez, Steffen Boyd and Anthony Aner from Adult Probation in Local 2186, all onetime active Local 810 members. Chris was an excellent advocate for Local 810 and elevated the prestige of Vice-President to new heights. His leadership, natural ability to deal with administrators and sense of humor will surely be missed by all Local 810 members. Congratulations Chris!



Adult Probation Supervisor Chris McFillin

Sick Leave Policy

Local 810 is also working hard to rectify issues with the FJD's existing sick leave policy. District Council 47 Health and Safety Director Kathy Black has called it "the most punitive" sick leave policy she has ever seen. Our membership is being summarily disciplined for certified medical illnesses and this is unacceptable. Bob has been working non-stop with Kathy Black in the District Council and FJD Human Resources to come to an agreement. The First Judicial District needs a feasible sick leave policy that will not create confusion and misuse of the FMLA system. Developing...

Odds & Ends

- Local 810 is still working towards a resolution concerning parking issues at 1801 Vine Street and have requested that Judge Dougherty appoint Mario D'Amato to communicate with Carl Ciglar at the Parking Authority to finally bring closure to this issue!
- Local 810 would again like to commend Steward Mario Ferrari at 34 S. 11th Street for his hard work on behalf of Hearing Officers. Also, Bob would like to inform Hearing Officers that two alternate steward spots will be filled at the next executive board meeting.
- All Local 810 Stewards are reminded to continue communicating with the membership in regards to meetings etc. The Stewards are the front line of communication between the local and their respective locations. Keep up the good work!

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The Common Plea Closing Remarks

Bob would like to remind the entire membership that their solidarity will be needed—and expected, in the coming months. Much has been accomplished, but there is still a great deal of work to do. The local is only as good as it's membership and while the meetings have gone quite well, many members still need to come and get involved! With the implementation of a new computer system in Adult Probation, budget restraints in Domestic Relations and parking issues and a change of leadership at 1801 Vine Street, Local 810 needs every member to do their part.

Although there have been numerous challenges to our local in the previous months, Bob, Louise, Jeff and Lisa, along with the Stewards and Executive Board members, have been working extremely hard for the local. We expect you at the next general membership meeting! Local 810 hopes that all of you have a safe and enjoyable holiday season.

We ask that all Local 810 members keep Adult Probation Officer and Chief Steward James McGee in their thoughts and prayers. Jim's twenty-two year old step-son, Matthew O'Mara, unexpectedly passed away on September 17, 2006. Please keep Jim, his wife JoAnn, and their family in your hearts during this difficult time.

All local members should contact Kathleen Evans, Local 810 Secretary/Membership Services with any issues concerning address changes, temporary or permanent promotion issues and new or replacement union cards. Kathleen can be reached at (215) 893-3760.

All full dues paying members are encouraged to make suggestions for the Common Plea

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