

Brainstorming At The White House

I met with President Barack Obama at the White House this week, along with approximately 50 other CEOs representing a wide-range of the nation's industries and non-profit organizations. To begin, President Obama expressed his admiration for the hard work performed by federal employees. Then he explained the purpose of our meeting and outlined the goals he hoped we would achieve with three Deputy Secretaries leading breakout sessions. The Forum on Modernizing Government addressed streamlining government operations, transforming customer service, and maximizing technology's return on investment. He recognized that while many best business practices are not applicable to government operations, many are. The President views these areas as prime targets where government can, but has not, competed to the best of its ability with the private sector.

After Storming Through Idaho

I recently returned from an early January whirlwind trip to Idaho with our Chief-of-Staff Bernard Flynn and Special Assistant Kevin Doyle. Ironically, there was more snow on the ground in Boston than there was in the Spud State. NAGE is the largest public employees union in the nation's 43rd state. We met with our National Representatives Daniel Wolf, Alex Neiworth, and soon-to-rotate Andrew Handhardt. Local 687 Vice President Dr. Robert McCarl, a sociologist at Boise State University, joined us. The purpose of the visit was to ensure Daniel and Alex are fully prepared to meet local needs when Andrew retires. Local 687 represents the interests of several units of municipal employees, including the cities of Boise and Lewiston, as well as employees at Boise State University. Later, we met with the new president of IBPO Local 486, Jason Rose, who replaces the longtime Boise PD local president and former National Executive Board member Kip Wills. Wills accepted a job late last year with the Obama administration in Washington, D.C. Idaho Governor Otter awarded Officer Rose the Law Enforcement, Firefighting, and EMS Medal of Honor in May 2009 for his valiant effort, evacuating citizens of a housing sub-division located near the Oregon Trail during a wildfire burning out of control. Read about Officer Rose's heroic acts that resulted in the award on Idaho's web site at <http://medalofhonor.idaho.gov/recipients/2009/JasonRose.htm> and learn more.

Like Father, Like Daughter

My 17-year-old daughter, Allei, a junior at Lincoln-Sudbury Regional High School, presented Cambridge, Mass., Police Sergeant James Crowley the Martin Luther King Jr. Award right before the holiday. Sgt. Crowley joined Dr. Henry L. Gates Jr. as co-recipients of the school's award this year. Allei, a member of the MLK Club, was responsible for recruiting Sgt. Crowley for the event and personally handing him his award. Professor Gates could not attend because of a scheduling conflict, but he had a letter delivered that when read, touched the hearts of all the teenagers and their parents present at the ceremony.

Colorado VA Member Receives Presidential Honor

Nancy Fichtner, a member of NAGE Local R14-77 representing employees at the Grand Junction VA Medical Center, became the first recipient of the SAVE Award, an initiative by the Obama administration to recognize rank and file employees for proposing common sense ideas to save taxpayers money. Ms. Fichtner, a fiscal program support clerk, proposed that veterans leaving medical centers should be able to take the medication they have been using home with them instead of it being thrown away when they are discharged, a common practice at most hospitals. Her suggestion was chosen from among over 30,000 entries, first making "The Final Four", where more than 80,000 people cast votes to recognize the Local

R14-77 member. By winning the award, Nancy and her children braved a snowstorm and came to Washington on December 21st where they met with VA Secretary Eric Shinseki, before a very special trip to the White House for a personal meeting with President Obama.

Stress Free Scholarships Now Available

Preparing for college can be one of the most stressful times in the lives of many families. Our organization would like to help reduce your burden by offering scholarships with a very simple application process. In continuing our commitment to helping members and their families achieve their educational goals and dreams, NAGE is proud to announce the 7th Annual NAGE Scholarships program. Each year, fifty scholarships in the amount of \$500 each are awarded in a lottery. Applicants for the lottery drawing scholarships must be planning to attend or already attending a two- or four-year college, trade or technical school to be eligible. Scholarships are available to members of NAGE, IBPO, IBCO, and IAEP, and the member's spouse, child, grandchild, niece, nephew, or significant other. The application takes about 3 minutes to complete and must be returned by May 28, 2010. Please click <http://www.nage.org/scholarships.shtml> to learn how to apply.

IBPO Local President Makes Case For Quinn Bill Educational Incentive

Officer Joseph Gentile, president of IBPO Local 364 representing police officers in Springfield, Mass., the state's third-largest city, made plain the case for continuing the educational incentives for Massachusetts municipal police officers in a letter published in *The Springfield Republican*. Democratic Governor Deval Patrick, assisted by the chair of the House Ways and Means Committee Charles Murphy, eliminated the pay incentive officers receive for college degrees in last year's state budget. Gentile makes the argument that eliminating the program was simply politically expedient because most municipal officers already have availed themselves of the program, creating a cadre of college educated municipal police that now better serves the public. In his letter, he acknowledges the strong public opposition to the program, but argues that media reporting has been biased and a purposeful misrepresentation of the program and the program's spirit. The Quinn Bill became law in 1970 because the public demanded better-educated police officers. Instead of creating a two-tiered system for police officers who have higher education degrees, which would have included a higher pay rate for officers with degrees, the state legislature chose to reward officers with a stipend each year after they earned degrees. Now that so many officers have college degrees, the Governor withdrew the stipend. He has college-educated police officers, but now he simply doesn't want to pay for them. Unfortunately, the officers cannot stop using their educations in the performance of their jobs. The program worked so well the Governor and the State Legislature killed it. Once again, political expediency trumps good public policy. Remember to vote on Election Day for the candidate who understands nothing is free in this world.

Vermont EMS Employees Ratify New Agreement

EMS employees who work for Rescue, Inc., serving 12 communities in southern Vermont and two in New Hampshire, recently ratified a new contract. "I think this agreement makes huge strides for our local," said Local 48 President David Palmer. "Management was willing to work with us throughout the negotiating process to form a clean and balanced agreement." The new contract offers members improved and clearer contract language and preserves health care benefits. Local 48 members pride themselves for being one of the nation's leaders for providing rural emergency medical care. Founded in 1966 in Brattleboro, Rural, Inc. was among the first EMS agencies to offer paramedic-level care and now covers an area of 500 square miles.

Meeting With DoD Deputy Undersecretary Addresses Personnel

In the vacuum left by the anti-employee Bush administration at the Department of Defense, Acting Deputy Undersecretary of Defense for Civilian Personnel Policy Marilee Fitzgerald called for a meeting last month with all unions that hold National Consultation Rights to begin a dialogue about how we are going to go about restoring labor-management relations at the nation's largest federal agency. Along with Federal Director Atty. Gina Lightfoot-Walker, we met with the Deputy Undersecretary and discussed how DoD will implement and work under the Obama administration's Executive Order that creates labor-management forums. After the NSPS debacle, the agency seems eager to re-establish positive relationships with its employees. Topics addressed included launching partnerships - how it will be structured, what it will be called - and formalizing councils. The next meeting is scheduled for later this month.