

The existence of a strong and politically respected union is fundamental to work place Peace, Health and Order. Decisions made in collective bargaining and negotiations between employer and unions are more influential. The role of COBA is to play an important role in effective communication between its members and management but lately there has been no participation only dictation from management on the direction of our facility. COBA main function is to represent its dues paying members in the work place by protecting their interest. What interest have they truly represented?

The union strives to insure a healthy and safe working environment. Have they done that? We are still commonly exposed to disease like MRSA, Hepatitis, H1N1, HIV/Aids and the county just shared with them their infectious disease policy last year. We need to ask the question; is it true as claimed that the county recently gave COBA an infectious disease policy LAST YEAR for Review? What about the officers that have been infected with MRSA, Hepatitis and other disease before then? WHERE Is the OUTRAGE? Our union leadership submitted to the county a revise "Infectious Disease Protocol" this year but can not tell us what National Standards or what Certified Correction Healthcare Professional was advised on this revision. The silence is deafening!

When the MRSA Virus was found in NYC Correction Facility, the NYC Correction Union President was outspoken to Quarantine the Facility. Here in Westchester County we have had many cases of MRSA with several officers infected. Where was the outcry from our COBA Executive Branch? The only thing we heard to break the silence was a kindergarten teacher like quote "Wash Your Hands". We have not secured a lobbyist in years so health legislation has not progressed and more and more members are using sick days or forced to retire to due to heart disease or other health related complications.

American Researchers have found that Law Enforcement Professionals are among the high-risk occupations for coming into contact with infectious disease. Law Enforcement Professionals with 4-10 years on the job have the highest rate of being exposed to infectious diseases with an exposure rate of 59.3 per 10,000. Heart disease attacks our men and women in blue at significantly higher rates than the general public.

The life expectancy for law enforcement professional is 15 years less than the average American, and nationally, 50% of all law enforcement officers will die from heart disease within five years of retirement!

According to prisonofficer.org, the average life span of a Corrections' Officer after retirement is only 18 months. On the average a correction officers 58<sup>th</sup> birthday is their last. Correction officers also have the highest suicide rate of all other occupations.

The county has now passed a Health Care reform bill that reduces employee sick leave buy out. This will reduce the maximum number of days from 25 weeks to 10 weeks for non-union employees. This will be the blueprint for future contracts negotiations. COBA can not continue to use binding arbitration as some type of safety pillow. It has not kept us safe since 2006. Where is that union voice that will call the lawmakers out for trying to save on the backs of hard working correction officers and their families? Again more silence! Unacceptable!