

## POLICE OFFICERS ASSOCIATION OF MICHIGAN

27056 Joy Road • Redford, Michigan 48239-1949 • 313 937-9000 • FAX 313 937-9165

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Date: July 18, 2017  
To: All Interested Parties  
From: James Tignanelli, President

Many of you may already have seen the letter that had been dispatched by the Governor's Director of Strategy, John Walsh. It was put on POAM.net on July 14<sup>th</sup>. My correspondence is intended to follow the public release of the comprehensive report which was the result of ten meetings over a period of six months. I hope you will take the time to review the report. It is very detailed and well-written. Often, when such efforts are completed, there are many questions left for those most affected. I think this report details where the questions came from, where the answers were found and, in most cases, where the majority of the task force landed on those questions.

I will delve into the history of this effort but must first thank our legislative director, Ken Grabowski, and the participation of Dave LaMontaine and Dan Kuhn. Our members, and literally hundreds of retirees, were well represented!

As you recall, discussion among legislators regarding "pension reform", "UAL (unfunded accrued liability)", "OPEB (other post-employment benefits)", had been points of discussion for some time. It seemed to be primarily aimed at public education in our state until the past few years when a handful of legislators decided to throw that net over all public employees, to wit: our members. While we were frequently reminded that "it won't affect" our members, we remained vigilant so not surprised when that net landed on us. While we had had some success in the past at "carving out" employees with the "protection" of PA 312, it was obvious that pension reform and OPEB was not going to work that way. Most counties, townships and municipalities, even when they have several suffixes/levels of benefits, treat pension and OPEB costs as a single issue, not one that relies only on the collective bargaining agreements. These were not issues that could be fixed for some and ignored for others and it's important to note that a large percentage of POAM membership do not have PA 312 to rely on. Corrections officers, most dispatchers and other public employees are without PA 312 as it is limited to police officers and firefighters. Efforts to expand that protection to other

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public employees has been an annual effort but, thus far, an unsuccessful one.

The move to put the legislature in charge of collectively bargained benefits that applied to everyone from the newest of hires to some who had been retired for decades became much more serious last year and, when a lame duck session of the legislature was about to push through a dozen or more new laws, the bear had clearly been poked. In my nearly 38 years of involvement in law enforcement, I had never seen a group come together more quickly and more universally on a very narrow list of issues! Many of you participated in the results of that when, on December 6<sup>th</sup>, literally thousands showed up on the front lawn of the capital. This was clearly a time when competitors became teammates!

While I will leave the reading of the report to each of you, I believe you will find that the results of it did not lead to a takeover by the legislature. In fact, they have left it in the hands of some 1,800 local governments throughout the state. This is as it should be. They recognized, early in the report, that while there is a problem that requires immediate attention, it is not a problem unique to Michigan. A problem that has taken years to evolve cannot be fixed quickly and, as noted on page 3 of the report, "local units across the state are unique and at different stages in dealing with this problem, (and) there is not a one-size-fits-all solution", thus they "must be flexible in our approach".

The report goes on to state that, as a goal, the "broader solution to fiscal stability must include balancing efficient use of revenues and control of long-term liabilities, provision of current services, and local government revenue constraints, while assuring retirement security for employees in order to attract and retain the qualified workforce necessary to provide essential services". All of these are points we have preached for some time now from Lansing to Washington, DC.

As I indicated earlier, while the attempts to affect this legislation had universal support among public employee representatives, those talking points were consistently at the top of the list in the efforts of the POAM. Ultimately, the attention you get with legislators is built over a long period of time. It's not the titles we have, it is the **relationships** we have built. POAM is always at the table, always the one that legislators (and administrative representatives) call on for an opinion.

Only a handful of people knew that we had a private discussion in Grand Rapids with Dick DeVos and Jase Bolger the night before the rally in Lansing. POAM was the only one to meet with the West Michigan Policy

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Forum, clearly a very influential group in this matter. Perhaps but a few knew that our research department prepared exhibits for Jase Bolger during a meeting in our office. Even fewer knew of the serious discussions with the Michigan Municipal League, the Michigan Townships Assoc., and Michigan Association of Counties. Evidence of the impact of those meetings and exhibits are all over this report. While I am proud of the universal effort, I must tell you how proud I am of the part our organization played.

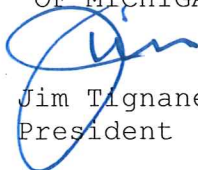
I leave you with this (and lots of reading!). While it is good to boast (as some do) of tens of thousands of members nationwide, POAM long ago recognized that Michigan is nearly an anomaly when it comes to items such as collective bargaining, pensions, PA 312. We relinquished our participation in a "national" organization because we found that we were spending dues money to support a large national headquarters and staff in DC while they worked on legislative issues that were more important to Iowa, Nevada, Missouri and forty-plus other states than they were to our membership which is **exclusively Michigan**. While we have superb representation in DC, our representative talks MICHIGAN issues. Our member groups, while numbering over 530 groups in both peninsulas, are all (may I say PURE?) Michigan and so is our organization. Their dues are spent servicing **Michigan** members.

We are very proud to represent our members, retirees and those not yet hired in these and other matters. Keep in mind that term limits create a nearly continuous turnover of the Michigan legislature. Some are governed by ideology and their motives become quite personal. This report is very helpful and I commend the participants and leadership for their hard work. Please don't relax or feign ambivalence. This will come up again. Perhaps statewide or in your local negotiations. Maintain vigilance!

Thank you!

Sincerely,

POLICE OFFICERS ASSOCIATION  
OF MICHIGAN



Jim Tignanelli  
President

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