

PEACE OFFICERS

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The Birth of a New State Employee Union

Peace Officers of California (P.O.C.) is announcing its formation and participation in the state political process. P.O.C. is an all voluntary, non-profit association formed to represent 2,700+ state law enforcement officers.

Currently, these peace officers are members of state bargaining unit 7 (BU7) and are represented by the California Union of Safety Employees / California Statewide Law Enforcement Association (CAUSE / CSLEA). These officers include Department of Justice Special Agents, California Fish and Game Wardens, State Parks Police, Alcoholic Beverage Control, Hospital Police, Insurance and other investigators, and other State Peace Officer classifications. P.O.C. seeks to create a Peace Officer only State employee Bargaining Unit (BU22).

CAUSE/CSLEA is comprised of more than 60% Non-Peace Officers and represents more than 7,000 employees in total. CAUSE/CSLEA employees include a diversity of Non-Peace Officer classifications, including but not limited to: Milk inspectors, billboard inspectors, DMV drive test employees, lab technicians, smog-check employees and dispatchers.

Peace Officers of California is asking that the Public Employees Relations Board (PERB) allow state peace officers from BU7 to sever from their existing unit and form BU22. Following its formation, BU22 will ask its members to vote on representation between CAUSE / CSLEA and P.O.C. This process is already well underway, and is gaining momentum despite the efforts against it by our own paid representatives in CAUSE/CSLEA.

“We want the State to create a purely Peace Officer union, like the Highway Patrol, Correctional Officers and other local Police and Sheriff’s departments in California. We are the only union in the state, where the law enforcement officers are a minority – we make up less than 40% of CAUSE / CSLEA. Our concerns cannot be adequately represented in that situation,” said Peace Officer Bob Orange, President of P.O.C. “CAUSE / CSLEA has tried to paint us, particularly the Fish and Game Wardens, as bad actors reviled at the State Capitol – which just isn’t true.”

The impetus for change is the conviction of a

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majority of Peace Officers within BU7 that their needs are not adequately being represented in a union comprised of so much diversity. Parity, benefits, education stipends and other components standard for many law enforcement union contracts are noticeably absent from BU7’s.

However, CAUSE/CSLEA is actively and self-servingly working against the very peace officers it is supposed to represent “[The Union]...will aggressively fight the severance instead of remaining neutral..” said Kasey Clark, Chief Counsel for CAUSE / CSLEA. “Although the litigation will draw on the resources of [CAUSE / CSLEA] manpower, all litigation costs will be funded by the [Game Wardens] and [Park Rangers], as a result of their placement in trusteeship by the [union].”

Clark’s statement means that despite the expressed desire of a majority of the Peace Officers in BU7 to form a Peace Officer only bargaining unit, CSLEA is illegally seizing the dues of some of the officers’ affiliate organizations and using those funds to fight against those officers. The CAUSE / CSLEA action reflects the continued deterioration and derision of the law enforcement officers in BU7.

“We are an all voluntary association trying to do the best for state employee peace officers,” said spokesperson Jerry Karnow, a state Fish & Game Warden, “Anyone who doesn’t believe that the 60% plus non-peace officer employees hold excessive sway over the union was not there to see when the non-peace officers received Safety Retirement from Gray Davis, or when CAUSE / CSLEA failed to pass the pay-parity contract for the peace officers in 2003. We look forward to the upcoming PERB hearing.”

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