



NEW JERSEY STATE
POLICEMEN'S BENEVOLENT ASSOCIATION
STATE CORRECTION OFFICERS LOCAL NO. 105
17 North Willow Street
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August 23, 2010

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Hon. Christopher J. Christie
Office of the Governor
P.O. Box 001
Trenton, NJ 08525

Dear Governor Christie:

As you know, earlier this year the New Jersey State Legislature passed S4/A2459, which capped reimbursement for unused sick days for certain public employees, eliminated the Sick Leave Injury Program (SLI), and modified disability retirement for PERS and TPAF members. Throughout the legislative process, P.B.A. Local 105, whose membership includes over 6,000 state correctional officers, juvenile justice officers, and state parole officers, constructively supported the cap on reimbursement for unused sick days as well as the provisions regarding disability retirement. However, one component we could not support was the elimination of the SLI program due to the critical nature of its services to our members. As such, we actively sought amendments to S4/A2459 that would provide for the continuance of the SLI program solely for correctional officers.

While we were successful in engendering support among legislators, ultimately, the overarching policy objectives of the time prevented the legislature from considering our plight in earnest. Now that S4/A2459 is law, our membership is faced with the task of carrying out the duties and responsibilities of one of the most dangerous jobs in America without the comfort that the SLI program provided to officers and their families.

The grim reality of the prison workplace is that a correctional officer can be injured with an improvised weapon, or physically assaulted in a host of incalculable ways, at any given moment. In the past, SLI would provide an injured correctional officer with full salary, benefits, pension payments, and credit union disbursements for a maximum of one year while that individual recuperated and assessed the long term nature of the injury.

Now under current law, an individual would go directly into Workers' Compensation, which only provides a maximum benefit of 70 percent of their average weekly wage. In comparison to the SLI program, an officer collecting the average salary would immediately see a loss in weekly take home pay, which in turn, is compounded by the officer's need to make pension contributions and other required benefits payments during this time. This puts an officer in a vastly different financial position under Workers' Compensation than under the SLI program, and for the average officer, it constitutes a hardship that can permanently affect their quality of life.

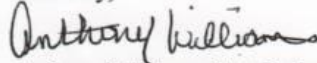
Currently, our membership has asked the leadership of P.B.A. Local 105 to continue to pursue a policy initiative designed to restore the SLI program limited to only correctional officers. In this regard, we are supporting legislation restoring SLI that has been introduced in the current legislative session as S2186/A3312. Both bills have pledged bipartisan support and represent a framework for the discussion on the SLI program that we hope to have with you and your staff, as well as both legislative houses.

Our belief is that by narrowly defining SLI program eligibility to our members, who are the only police and fire related entity that do not have special benefits for line of duty injury, the state will be able to deliver this service at a savings by virtue of its limited eligibility scope, and by avoiding much of the ancillary costs associated with traditional Worker's Compensation claims.

In the coming months, we would like to work with you to construct a policy that empowers officers with the peace of mind that the SLI program provides, yet has a minimal impact on the State's fiscal resources.

Thank you for your leadership and concern for issues that matter to our membership, and should you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me personally.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Anthony Williams".

Anthony Williams, State Delegate
P.B.A. Local #105