

FOP QUESTIONNAIRE

Question (1)

Over the last several years, the Fraternal Order of Police has sought a limited tax credit for members who have served and retired. This is similar to the tax credit offered for military personnel. The "Hometown Heroes Act" would allow for a tax credit for persons who qualify at the age of 50 years. As Governor, what is your stance on providing such a credit for retired law enforcement and how would you assist us in this pursuit.

Answer

I support the Hometown Heroes Act and will work with you to see that it is enacted during my second term. The Hometown Heroes Act, as drafted has an 18.3 million dollar impact to local and state revenues. In the current economic environment, this bill has failed to pass either the House or Senate committees with oversight of this legislation. In January, prior to the session, I will convene a meeting with presiding officers, the appropriate chairs and my key staff to develop a strategy for passage of this Act.

Question (2)

For many years, the Fraternal Order of Police has actively sought for the right to collectively bargain with our employers. What is your position on collective bargaining with binding arbitration? What have you done, in order to support the Fraternal Order of Police in achieving this goal?

Answer

I support collective bargaining with binding arbitration. As Governor, most especially in the 2010 Session, I worked with you to achieve enactment of Senate Bill 726 (Representation of Cecil County Deputy Sheriffs), Senate Bill 1123 (to clarify collective bargaining with approved binding arbitration would remain effective in jurisdictions where it already exists despite the decision of the Court of Special Appeals in Wicomico County). I also worked with the FOP to support House Bill 815 (extension of collective bargaining to Maryland Transportation Authority Police). I also strongly supported House Bill 1098 (extension of binding arbitration in Baltimore City). Despite our inability to pass this Bill in 2010 I am confident working together we can achieve passage of that Bill next Session.

During my tenure as Mayor of Baltimore from 2000 through 2006 and Governor of Maryland the past four years, I have successfully negotiated over twenty police union contracts without impasse, unfair labor practice complaints or mediation. As Mayor of Baltimore, police wages increased over 40 percent. I negotiated the largest raise for police officers in the history of Baltimore and honored every year of each contract without a single unfair labor practice.

Each contract was negotiated in good faith and signed by management and labor. The collective bargaining process is an important part of government, I take it seriously and work hard to ensure labor's concerns are heard and addressed. Refusal to negotiate in good faith is unacceptable and violates the basic rights your members expect when they chose to organize.

By contrast, my likely general election opponent, Robert Ehrlich refuses to negotiate with public sector unions.

Public safety has always been the centerpiece of my public policy. As Mayor of Baltimore, I learned that good labor relations result in better police work. During my tenure in Baltimore, working with the men and women of the BPD we reduced violent crime 40 percent. As Governor, by increasing communication amongst state and local authorities, we have seen crime sink to its lowest levels since 1975.

During my time as a Baltimore City Councilman, Mayor, and as Governor, I have consistently supported collective bargaining, with binding arbitration. I also have a record of successfully working with the FOP to negotiate bargaining agreements and enact legislation to extend collective bargaining and binding arbitration.

Question (3)

Achieving and maintaining public safety is potentially the most important task of our government and our society. Staffing and resources are critical for law enforcement to successfully accomplish this goal. What is your position on furloughs? During these challenging times, what is your position on the elimination of public safety personnel and/or agencies?

Answer

Achieving public safety is the most important task of government which is why in the toughest of economic times, we've chosen to increase funding for public safety initiatives. We are currently investing \$153 million more than in FY2007. And in four years, we've now invested \$8.6 billion, a 17% increase over the previous four years. At the same time, we increased discretionary grants to police and sheriffs departments by 27.5%.

What does this grant funding mean to your membership? Here are just a couple examples of grant projects we have successfully implemented throughout the state:

- Prince Georges County municipal agencies now have police radios that will operate on the County's new 700 MHz system.
- In 2009 alone, \$1 million in overtime was allocated to local law enforcement so your members were able to serve nearly 1000 warrants on violent offenders.
- The Anne Arundel County Sheriff's Office's now has portable fingerprint identification equipment which provides Deputy Sheriffs with advanced technology that enables the immediate identification of wanted persons by scanning both index fingerprints during field interviews.
- All agencies in Carroll County have access to the consolidated county –wide RMS/CAD system
- In Baltimore City, the Gun Task Force is being supported with overtime and equipment
- Created a “Law Enforcement Training Scholarship” program which provides up to \$3000 per officer to attend specialized training for which his/her Department is unable to pay. This program has sent Maryland law enforcement officers all over the country to attend training to improve homicide investigations, response to domestic violence, traffic scene reconstruction and animal abuse investigations. To date, we have provided \$301,191 in training scholarships to over 100 of Maryland's law enforcement officers.

When Maryland supports your agencies in this way, you and management have more resources to hire, train and retain law enforcement talent.

Working together, last year we drove violent crime (and overall crime) to the lowest rates in Maryland since we began tracking in 1975. Last year we reduced homicides by 12%, driving homicides down to the lowest rate since 1975. This completed our largest three year reduction in homicides since the seventies. What's more, in three years we've reduced juvenile homicides across our State by 46%. And working together, last year we drove down the automobile theft rate nearly 23% - and yes, we brought it to its lowest rate since 1975.

During my 11 years as Mayor and Governor, I have been faced with significant budgetary constraints and have always managed to support law enforcement and reduce crime. In Baltimore, I managed a city with tremendous challenges and one of the poorest tax bases in the State. As Governor, I have prepared budgets during the worst national economic crisis in recent history.

Moreover, with the reforms that we have instituted at the Division of Parole and Probation and the Department of Juvenile Services, coupled with the data sharing that is now underway through the public safety dashboard, your membership is benefiting from coordinated public safety resources who have been directed to support and enhance the work of local law enforcement. My reform of the Division of Parole and Probation through the Violence Prevention Initiative was implemented in direct response to the problems I know the Baltimore Police Department officers faced with a supervisory state agency that did not have its priorities straight and did not hold violent offenders accountable. The 24,000 DNA backlog elimination we accomplished at the Maryland State Police crime lab directly supported your violent crime investigations, resulting in, to date, over 200 arrests.

Our improved coordination and cooperation has led to lower crime and safer neighborhoods. But, we have shared in some tremendous legislative victories as well. The pawn shop bill which requires all pawn shops to report to law enforcement electronically is one that would certainly improve work conditions for your members. Instead of having to manually sort through over hundreds of thousands of paper transactions per year, now, this is available to your membership on line, through the RAPID system. All of this data, pawn, DNA, Maryland's most violent probationers, has been put out there to help your membership improve its work product and bring more offenders to justice and support victims.

Tough choices in this recession to include furloughs and layoffs have been made, but not to public safety. We have reduced the size of State Government and state spending has shrunk more than 3%. In contrast, my predecessor, who refused to negotiate with public sector unions, increased state spending over 33%. Sound fiscal management in government is the keystone of providing quality public safety.

In FY '09, because of serious fiscal challenges caused by the worst national economic crisis since the Great Depression, I chose to furlough most State employees, rather than resort to massive layoffs. **I exempted "24/7" employees, including public safety personnel from that furlough.** In FY '10, we once again had to resort to furloughs to avoid layoffs, and revenue shortfalls forced us to include "24/7" employees. In FY '11 we had to propose a similar furlough, for the same reason, to avoid layoffs. To mitigate the impact on our employees, particularly "24/7" employees and public safety employees, my Executive Order awards additional leave days or "reduction recovery days" to mitigate the sacrifice of State employees who are furloughed in FY '11.

This action, among others we took, allowed my Administration to protect local government from even greater reductions in State support which, in turn, allowed local governments to by and large avoid furloughs of many FOP members in County and municipal police departments

throughout the State. For instance of the “Big Seven” jurisdictions, Baltimore City, Baltimore County, (Howard did not furlough officers), Anne Arundel, Prince George’s, Harford and Montgomery, only one had to resort to furloughs for law enforcement.

As our Maryland economy improves, I hope we can avoid future furloughs of State employees. My major budgetary priority has been and remains protecting our public investment at the local level in both education AND public safety. This has allowed the men and women of police departments throughout the State to reduce crime in Maryland to its lowest levels since the 1970’s. THAT is a goal I have consistently supported as City Councilman and Mayor in Baltimore and as Governor. You have my commitment it will remain my top priority, along with improving our education system.