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BOARD SPOTLIGHT

By Matt Harkin, ISPA Director



Hello Iowa State Police Association (ISPA) members. It seems the wet summer has brought on an early winter. I hope you all are keeping warm as no cop should ever be cold, wet or hungry.

I have served on the Des Moines Police Department as an officer since 1991. I am currently assigned to the Narcotics Control Section as a K9 handler. Years ago, at the first conference I attended, I remember thinking I would enjoy serving on the ISPA Board. My first year on the board has been filled with new experiences. Being assigned to narcotics, I was asked to be the ISPA representative on the Iowa Office of Drug Control Policy Council. Sitting down with this group was an eye opener for me. Members vary from corrections to counselors so there is

a wide range of topics covered. I was impressed with how much work goes into research and treatment, as those of us in enforcement rarely see that side. Considering the group's diversity I'd say our goal is clear: to use our knowledge as a group to come up with common-sense solutions regarding drug policy and legislative direction.

I enjoyed learning how to work with legislators my freshman year, specifically focusing on the protection of the 411 pension system. The board and our lobbyists, Paula Feltner and Mike Heller, got the facts out to representatives, and specifically with the help of Representative Dawn Pettengill, were able to prevent any changes to the system. As an organization, we opposed any legalization of cannabis, however a small group organized a strong push for allowing a very select, and I must say needy, group of epilepsy patients the option of using cannabis oil. I'm not sure what kind of push we will have in the future for legalization, but I am sure it's not far away. We were also able to help the Rabiner Treatment Center by lobbying for a standard daily reimbursement rate the state pays for children in residential treatment.

If you attend our conferences, I'm sure you hear our pleas for you to participate in calling or emailing legislators. I hope everyone is on our list to receive the legislative updates. Just know that when we ask for your help, it's because it's an issue that affects us all — be it pension, collective bargaining, criminal code or many other reasons. I promise that we will provide the information you need in order to ask the correct questions or make an informed request of your legislator.

I have had an enjoyable (some say easy) first year, as I spent a month in Indiana training with my new partner, Blaise (pronounced "blaze"), and happened to miss the May meeting. I think I

still owe someone lunch for losing a bet I wasn't there to make. I can say that the friendships started on the board will last far beyond my career. I am looking forward to new challenges both at work and on the ISPA Board in the coming year. I pray you all have a safe and merry Christmas.