

# IOWA POLICE JOURNAL

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## BOARD SPOTLIGHT

By Matthew Harkin, ISPA Second Vice President



Hello from Des Moines. I pray that you all have a wonderful Christmas and plans for a safe new year. As all of you know this has been a difficult year for our profession nationwide, and particularly challenging for the Des Moines Police Department. I will not dwell on the losses but would like to say that those heroes are in heaven, and if I'm lucky, I'll meet them there one day.

I will say that the department leadership has done a wonderful job dealing with tremendous adversities and I want to specifically thank the Des Moines Police Department family as their resolve to press on thrives. It is also important to recognize the citizens of Iowa for their unwavering support of law enforcement. We are truly humbled by their support and cannot thank them enough. Peace officers in Iowa are committed to stronger, safer communities, and will continue to work hard for the neighborhoods in which we live and work.

Officers across the Midwest have seen a sickening increase in heroin abuse and overdoses. This past summer I've watched several people saved with Narcan, which can now be carried by trained emergency personnel. The heroin problem knows no boundaries — I've seen everyone from wealthy teenagers to homeless adults ruined by their addictions. The cost to Iowans for treatment, prosecution and incarcerations will be astounding. A seldom-considered cost of drug abuse is the dramatic increase in long-term health costs due to heart disease, early onset dementia, stroke and mental illness. This financial burden will unfortunately fall on the gainfully employed. I feel dollars spent on education and treatment will save money in the long run.

The Iowa State Police Association (ISPA) Board, along with the help from ISPA members, was able to get the Officer Indemnification Bill passed last year. We will be working on several bills this cycle, including distracted driving, filing false liens, allowing all certified police officers to carry firearms on school ground and increasing penalties for eluding. We need to continue the grassroots communication with our local representatives to keep these bills moving forward.

We just completed an entertaining election cycle which has left us with a different look at the capitol. We have some work to do to educate members, new and old, to the importance of our ability to bargain for our entire benefit package. As officers, we know going in that we will never be wealthy, but we plan to have good health insurance and secure retirements. For those

benefits we enter filthy, infested homes and businesses, encounter dangerous characters and quite simply do things others would never do.

The ISPA Board and I hope to work with citizens, ISPA members and legislators to maintain our ability to negotiate for our benefit package. This is where we need you to do more than pay membership dues. We will need you to call your representatives to share the impact of limiting your ability to bargain for benefits. This is when it hits your paycheck, so this is when members need to make it count.

The ISPA Board will look for your active support and input in the coming year. Always feel free to contact us with any questions, and stay safe.