



Peace Officers of California
P. O. Box 631
Sacramento, CA 95812

Tel (Fresno): (559) 495 – 9259
Tel (Los Angeles): (310) 751 – 0957
Tel (Sacramento): (916) 266 – 6449
Tel (San Diego): (619) 757 – 1110
Tel (San Francisco): (415) 962 – 1499

Mobile: (916) 912 – 5801

Administration

Conference #: (866) 613 - 7708
Fax: (916) 266 – 6456

info@peaceofficers.org
<http://www.peaceofficers.org>

“The Peace Officers of CSLEA need to unite for their own personal benefit and gain by supporting the creation of a peace officer only union. I have been in law enforcement for 23 years, and have been actively involved in employee organizations over my career. I have been the President of an employee professional association. I have been a Union Shop Steward for a national employee union. I was elected by the union membership while serving as a Shop Steward to represent approximately 1,750 members during contract negotiations in difficult economic times.



I subsequently became a member of the Board of Directors for that same union, representing 3 California counties. I was again elected by my membership to represent them during contract negotiations for a second time. During my tenure with this national union, I drafted legislation affecting peace officers, found an Assembly Member to carry the legislation, worked with the union lobbyists lobbying for the legislation and saw it through to passage. I later went on to become a State peace officer and found that CAUSE was the not the sort of union that I was used to belonging to, or working with. CAUSE (now CSLEA) has a leadership composed of our fellow coworkers that handle day to day union business instead of an independent management team which works for the Board of Directors.

Unlike my other union experience, the coworker leadership of CSLEA works for us on release-time from State work and receives a stipend each month to represent us. As such, the differences that I have noticed are that these coworker leaders no longer have to work at the job that they were hired to do for the State. It really seems to me that as compared to my prior union experience, these coworker leaders didn't seem to have the union members' interests at heart. It is apparent to me that how CSLEA's leadership is structured, it creates a circumstance that once you are a union leader on 100% release-time from work, receiving both your State paycheck, and approximately a \$2,000 per month stipend, that it is no longer in those leaders' best interests to ever return to their State jobs; as well as taking a cut in pay. Again, with my previous union experiences, turnover was a common thing amongst the Board Members, who came from the rank and file. Again, unlike with CSLEA, my union experience did not create a situation that was financially profitable for the Board Members to continue being a Board Member indefinitely. Also, again, unlike CSLEA, we didn't receive enough release-time such that it was advantageous to us as Board Members to remain in that position, as we spent most of our time doing the job that we were hired to do.

What I have also noticed with CSLEA was that there were no Union Field Representatives who came around to the worksites, spreading the word about what the union was doing for them - in addition to seeking feedback from the rank and file members. Gone are the days of having strong Shop Stewards who fostered membership buy-in and involvement. Also noticeable is that although CSLEA 'claims' to be a peace officer union where peace officers and firefighters are supposed to have the right to representation through a union of members from a like discipline, in CSLEA we are a minority - and no one seems to care! Additionally, what became apparently clear to me is that CSLEA is a union that has been hijacked by our fellow employees and who are its leaders. These fellow employee union leaders, once in a position of power, continue to receive release-time from their duties as peace officers while also receiving approximately \$2,000 a month stipend, and are more interested in taking care of themselves by staying in power vs. taking a pay cut and returning to a real job.

I was promoted to a supervisory position with the State, and for over eight years I advocated for my subordinate staff to dump CAUSE / CSLEA in favor of a peace officer only union that was not CSLEA. For personal reasons it was in my best interests to laterally transfer to another State agency vs. promoting and moving my family in order to get a more family friendly schedule. Because of my decision to return to a rank and file job, I found myself once again represented by CSLEA. I see our CSLEA leadership being made up of people who I would be more likely to be assigned a criminal investigation on, more so than a union leadership which represents my interests with the State.

CSLEA no longer serves the interests of the peace officers who belong to this union. I know that the other non-peace officer members are equally as hard working and deserving of fair compensation, as well as quality representation the same as the peace officers are. It is however, well known that the public safety unions receive better contracts than blended unions, as the nature of the work requires specialized training and skills, and are more expensive to train for the public entities that employ them. My experiences at the negotiation table were that of hard fought contracts, which came down to: this is how much the governmental entity has allotted for your union - you figure out how you want to spread it over what you are asking we give your membership. In the end you try to get a contract that the majority of your membership will ratify, go on strike or go back to the negotiating table. Don't let it be lost on the peace officers that we are in the minority in this union, and in a negotiated contract there has to be something for everybody if CSLEA hopes to have a contract ratified. While I never recall receiving a ballot to ratify a contract as a CAUSE / CSLEA member, I'm sure that there has to have been something for everybody in past contracts, if the contracts are to be ratified by the majority of the membership.

Power corrupts and whether proven or not, the accusations are out there about our CSLEA leadership. The hearings or tribunals against the members who speak out, such as I am, receiving threats of fines in the thousands of dollars, goes against the credibility of the CSLEA leadership. In threatening to levy fines against members such as myself for speaking out and removing us from the union, is CSLEA really representing the interests of its members?

The paid staff of my former union conducted the day to day work of the union for the membership. I did not receive an approximately \$2,000 per month stipend like some of the CSLEA leadership does. My being involved in a part-time leadership role in my union made it so that I didn't lose my perspective on who I really was advocating for, me or my membership. Yes, as a part-time person attending union board meetings, negotiating contracts and lobbying, I received release-time from my work and I received a stipend for my travels and meal expenses. My involvement with a union was that of a leader who had to work his real job. Working my real job as a union leader helped me to keep the perspective, that my position in the union leadership was an inconvenience to me, but I did it anyway for benefit of my coworkers. While on the Board of Directors of that said union, if the majority of the Board felt that the Executive Director or the Field Representatives weren't doing their jobs, we could vote them out and ask the union to send the local someone else.

With CSLEA, we have the perception of a dictatorial leadership that is more about protecting what the leaders have vs. representing the membership. Sometimes perceptions are everything. True leaders in these types of situations would abdicate in favor of new leaders, but I truly don't believe that our CSLEA leaders will ever do that. I also don't believe that we have the kind of part-time untainted Board of Directors' leadership that it would take to vote those leaders out to save the present CSLEA Union.

Ultimately for our own personal welfare, we as peace officers need to remove ourselves as members of CSLEA and align ourselves with a peace officer only union. I have made it clear here that I believe power corrupts and that our CSLEA leadership operates under the belief of many of our members that it is indeed corrupt.

A new peace officer only union, made up of a part-time Board of Directors, such as P.O.C. is proposing, with a professional team that answers to the Board of Directors is in our best interest. In the proposed makeup of the new P.O.C. union, there will not be the need for full-release time leadership (which would prevent the situation that we are currently in - whereby State employees no longer go to the job that they were hired to do) and to profit from being our full-time union leadership while at the same time receiving their State paycheck. Instead, POC affiliates will control their own share of the release time bank – so affiliates can use State-time to meet and perform both public and political outreach. P.O.C. is proposing to take the peace officers in the direction that we need to go, so that we are not once again hijacked by our fellow employees. Join with me in throwing CSLEA out.”

Kevin “Buck” Buchanan,
Department of Motor Vehicles Investigator
