



## The Legal Side of Things A Closer Look at PBA Attorneys



by Joni Fletcher  
Director of Legal Services - SSPBA

Unlike some other legal plans with only a handful of approved attorneys in a state, SSPBA maintains a standing list of over 600 referral attorneys in our 11 covered states. The list continues to grow as our members identify the attorneys in their areas whom they want to see representing PBA members in need of assistance. It is the members and local chapters who select the attorneys who are on the referral list, as those members identify the attorneys in their area who are supportive of law enforcement and who work hard in representing their clients.

The attorneys who agree to being listed as PBA referral attorneys typically do so because of their appreciation for the efforts of the law enforcement officers in their communities. These attorneys agree to work at reduced hourly rates on PBA cases. In addition, they understand that they may receive calls at inopportune times, as PBA members can find themselves in emergency situations at any time of the day or night and on holidays.

Many PBA referral attorneys are former prosecutors or even former law enforcement officers themselves, and they understand the challenges which law enforcement officers face. In addition, experienced employment attorneys are on the referral list to assist with the all-too-common disciplinary and grievance matters that arise for PBA members.

Attorney Jeff Reynolds in Jackson, MS has handled PBA cases since 2000. He has represented PBA members in the full gamut of covered cases, everything from disciplinary appeals and grievances to line-of-duty shootings and criminal investigations. In addition, he

***"It is my honor and privilege to represent police officers through the PBA," said Tidwell. "Without exception, I find police officers to be not only cooperative clients when it comes to the work of litigation, but to be men and women of exceptional character with a keen sense of duty to their communities."***

has been an advocate of the interests of PBA in standing up to the Mississippi Municipal Liability Plan to demand successfully that the Plan reimburse PBA for the defense costs in a civil matter that the Plan was obligated by statute to defend a PBA member in. Jeff's support of PBA is so great that he flew to McDonough, GA for the purpose of meeting with PBA staff

and personally introducing himself.

Jeff has also enlisted the support of his associates in representing PBA members. Attorneys Ginger Gibson and Julie Ratliff have been strong advocates for members facing difficulties arising from their performance of their jobs. When asked about his work for PBA members, Jeff stated, "It is an honor for me and the attorneys I work with to have the opportunity to represent law enforcement officers for the PBA. These officers put their lives on the line every day to protect us and our families, so we receive great professional satisfaction from helping them with legal issues that they have."

During his 16 years as a PBA referral attorney, Jerry Tidwell of Chattanooga, TN, has represented nearly 150 members. He's handled all types of PBA cases and never hesitates to represent a PBA member in need. While Jerry has professional working relationships with the attorneys representing the law enforcement agencies in the southeast Tennessee area, he is fully committed to ensuring that the members he represents are being treated fairly. Jerry stays in close contact with the PBA Legal Department regarding his PBA cases to make sure that PBA is up to speed on developments.

"It is my honor and privilege



*PBA referral attorney Jeff Reynolds and his staff have been instrumental in helping many members when we needed them the most. Attorney Jeff Reynolds' office is located in Jackson, MS.*



Attorney Jim Lay in Alexandria, Va. has worked with PBA since 2006.

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Attorney Jim Lay in Alexandria, VA has worked with PBA since 2006. He is well respected in the Alexandria law enforcement community and has proven to be a valuable resource on Virginia law

for PBA staff.

“As a former prosecutor,” said Lay, “I am honored to represent the brave and dedicated men and woman who work tirelessly to keep our communities safe and prosperous. While the legal profession has been sensitive to the rights of many members of our society, inexplicably, the rights of police officers and deputies have historically been afforded less respect. Working with

the SSPBA's highly competent legal staff, I'm proud to be part of an effort to correct this imbalance by zealously promoting officers' rights.”

In addition to the substantial list of referral attorneys, PBA members are also served by an experienced legal staff. Joni Fletcher, Director of Legal Services, has worked for PBA since 1994. In addition handling member requests as a Georgia attorney, her role is to evaluate all requests for legal service, to assign member cases to attorneys as needed, and to ensure that members' needs are met. She is assisted by paralegal Jodi Peyton, with PBA since 2000, and Judy Thacker, legal receptionist.

General Counsel Don English and Senior Staff Attorney Grady Dukes are working daily on behalf of PBA members. Don is a former prosecutor who came to work with PBA in 1990. Grady was an officer with Valdosta P.D. when he joined PBA in 1984. He later went to law school and came to work full-time



Don English  
General Counsel - SSPBA

with PBA in 1994. Don and Grady have handled countless shootings, disciplinary appeals, certification hearings and all other varieties of law enforcement-related legal issues in their time with PBA.

In April, the legal staff added attorney Charlie Cordell to assist members from all covered states with their legal inquiries. Charlie came to PBA after eight years of working in a law firm.

Membership in PBA provides access to and representation by committed, experienced legal experts. In the event that there is ever a concern or a question regarding how a legal case is being handled, members need only to contact the Legal Department at (800) 233-3506, ext. 3, to speak with someone who will provide the needed answers. The PBA Legal Department prides itself on providing legal service for law enforcement officers that is second to none.



Grady Dukes  
Senior Staff Attorney - SSPBA



Charlie Cordell  
Staff Attorney - SSPBA