



# PBA Interview and Endorsement Process is Second to None

## Process Builds Relationships That Continue to Affect Change for Membership

By Randy Byrd  
NCPBA Legislative Chairperson

The Police Benevolent Association (PBA) candidate interview and endorsement process continues to lead from the forefront as a critical benefit to members. This process is built by the efforts of members who participate, and seeks to create an environment that will positively change the working conditions for law enforcement throughout the Southern States region. In 2008, candidates seeking office in numerous races were invited to meet with the membership and answer questions of vital importance to law enforcement and members represented by the PBA. Based on the candidates' responses in a graded format, endorsements were given to selected candidates.

The North Carolina division, as an example, used the PBA process in 2008 to interview and endorse candidates for US Senate, US Congress, NC Court of Appeals, NC Supreme Court, governor, lieutenant governor, attorney general, treasurer, secretary of state, auditor, insur-



NC House Member Rep. Grier Martin addressing PBA members

ance commissioner, labor commissioner and NC House and Senate races. These interviews covered nine days, with over 100 candidates and 30 members from various chapters participating.

PBA screenings allow members to come into close contact with first-time candidates as well as those who have held elected office at various levels for many years. This contact is invaluable to members who have never participated in

the process as they gain a broader understanding of their role in creating change for their profession. Jamie Rigsbee, a member of the Raleigh chapter who was participating for the first time, is just one example. Rigsbee was impressed with the fact that the candidate screeners were officers and the endorsements were made based on the candidates' graded answers to the questions. Rigsbee came away with a deeper appreciation of why the PBA sets the standard for political involvement by law enforcement associations. According to Rigsbee, "I came away knowing fully why

the PBA is the voice of law enforcement." Rigsbee also plans to broaden his horizons further by working with the legislature to actively pursue passage of critical legislation. "This entire experience has made me realize that our members have an incredible opportunity to make a difference for our membership and the entire law enforcement profession," he added.

The PBA candidate interview and endorsement process creates tremen-



NC Rep. Paul "Skip" Stam

**"Your interview/endorsement process is as thorough as any that I have seen. In a tight election your endorsement means a whole lot more because of that thoughtful process."**



NC Rep. Tricia Cotham

**"It was obvious that the committee was concerned about their membership and the needs of the membership. I was excited and honored to receive the endorsement."**



NC Treasurer Janet Cowell

**"The PBA works to provide a voice for these officers through their endorsement and relationship building process to effect positive change for their work life conditions."**



*NC Governor, Beverly Perdue*  
**“Receiving the PBA’s endorsement was an honor. Your endorsement meant that you trusted me to do everything I can to secure the safety of our communities and our officers.”**

dous respect for the association and what the PBA represents. Rep. Paul “Skip” Stam has previously served as a primary sponsor of due process legislation at the request of PBA. According to Stam, “Your interview/endorsement process is as thorough as any that I have seen. In a tight election your endorsement means a whole lot more because of that thoughtful process.” Rep. Tricia Cotham, who went through the interview and endorsement process for the first time, also realized the value of the process and the commitment level of the committee. Cotham said, “I was impressed with the interview committee and the thoughtful questions asked of me. It was obvious that the committee was concerned about their membership and the needs of the membership. I was excited and honored to receive the endorsement.”

The PBA process also allows members and candidates to cultivate meaningful relationships that transcend the candidate interview and endorsement process. In many cases, candidates have met with the PBA and received an endorsement when seek-

ing other offices. Newly-elected state treasurer Janet Cowell is one example. Cowell has been a friend of the PBA since her days as a Raleigh City Council member. Cowell moved on to the State Senate where she continued to be an advocate for the PBA. In 2008, she chose to run for state treasurer and met with the committee to discuss a wide variety of issues. The state treasurer oversees the retirement system in North Carolina, and this position is vitally important to law enforcement. Cowell understands intimately the sacrifices that law enforcement makes and the PBA’s work. “I was honored to receive the endorsement from the Police Benevolent Association,” she said. “Law enforcement is the backbone of our community. Their tireless service, often without recognition, ensures strong, safe communities where we can grow and nurture our families. The PBA works to provide a voice for these officers through their endorsement and relationship building process to effect positive change for their work life conditions.” Cowell added.

The PBA was also part of history in North Carolina as Beverly Perdue was elected as the first female governor. She has been a huge supporter of law enforcement since serving in the state legislature. She continued her political career serving as lieutenant governor before running for governor and receiving the PBA endorsement. According to Perdue, “Receiving the PBA’s endorsement was an honor. North Carolinians trust you every day to keep us safe. Your endorsement meant that you trusted me to do everything I can



*NC Rep. Angela Bryant*  
**“I’ve been impressed with the PBA commitment to standing up for its members and for advocating so effectively and professionally in the legislative process.”**

to secure the safety of our communities and our officers. You picked a governor who will not forget the work you do and the sacrifices you make.”

The candidate interview and endorsement process lays the foundation to pursue meaningful legislation to improve officers’ lives. Legislators also develop tremendous respect for the PBA and their advocacy on behalf of the members. Rep. Angela Bryant served as a co-sponsor of 25-year retirement for law enforcement officers and due process legislation during the last legislative session. Her vote in a judiciary committee meeting was instrumental in moving due process legislation for municipal officers out of committee. Rep. Bryant was intensely lobbied by groups that opposed this legislation, but stood steadfast with the PBA. Bryant said, “I’ve been impressed with the PBA commitment to standing up for its members and for advocating so effectively and professionally in the legislative process. I also see how strongly the PBA supports their members at a time



*NC House Member Rep. Marian McLawhorn addressing PBA members*

*(continued on next page...)*

of need, which is deserved because the officers provide that same type of service every day for our citizens,” she added.

Every member reading this article has the opportunity to learn more about this dynamic process and become involved. Those members who have been involved understand the significance of PBA screenings and how the process leads to a greater understanding of critical issues by those seeking elective office. They also realize how the development of positive relationships with elected officials can lead to legislative changes for PBA members and the law enforcement profession. The bottom line is this for officers: elected officials make decisions every day that have the potential to influence officers’ lives. You as a member of the PBA can either choose to sit on the sidelines and allow those decisions to be made without your participation, or be part of the solution by becoming involved. Change for better working conditions requires leadership and the



*NC Attorney General Roy Cooper addressing PBA members*

same commitment to public service that officers give in their communities every day. According to Sam Houston, a 19th century American statesman, politician, and soldier, “A leader is someone who helps improve the lives of other people or

improve the system they live under.”

For more information about the PBA political process or to participate, please contact your chapter or division president or respective legislative chairperson.



*Dear Mr. Roberts:*

*I wanted to thank you for your organization’s continued support of our law enforcement officers and their families. Approximately ten years ago I was dating a law enforcement officer and first learned of the Southern States Police Benevolent Association and the benefits you offer. It just so happened that my brother, David, had recently gotten out of the military and joined a local police department. David was also a new father with his second son and I watched him and his wife struggle with bills on a law enforcement salary. One day, while talking on the phone with David, I had an opportunity to ask if he was a PBA member. He said he had heard of the organization and its reputation for protecting cops, but had not joined due to the extra money needed. When I thought of my nephews possibly being without life insurance benefits if anything happened to my brother at work, I could not go another day without doing something. I knew David’s birthday was approaching so I called PBA and purchased membership for him for one year. I mainly purchased the membership out of concern for the family’s financial situation if my brother was killed while at work. However, I realized the membership also offered so much more than an insurance policy. I realized that PBA also offers legal protection and lobbying for law enforcement officers.*

*When I gave the gift to my brother, I told him it came with one stipulation; and that was that he was to never drop his membership and leave my nephews unprotected. To this day he is still a member and says he feels more secure with it. I know I feel that he is better protected with membership in the SSPBA.*

*Thank you again for what your organization continues to do.*

*Sincerely,*

*Donna*