

# Volunteer Fire Fighters' and Reserve Officers Relief and Pension Act – RCW 41.24

*Provided By Brigette Smith, Executive Secretary, Board For Volunteer Firefighters & Reserve Officers*

- I. Line Of Duty Disability And Death Insurance – Mandatory under state law for volunteer firefighters and EMSD volunteers – optional for reserve law enforcement officers.
  - A. Fees
    1. Annual fees for firefighters – a] \$10.00 per volunteer per year paid by the municipality – b] Full-paid non-LEOFF firefighters covered for 1.5% of annual salary.
    2. Annual fees for reserve officers and EMSD volunteers – a] Set by State Board at annual October meeting for the following year – b] Set to cover full actuarial cost of participation
  - B. Benefits
    1. Medical as necessary – Physicians paid according to L&I's fee schedule
    2. Hospital – Room and care plus extras such as x-rays, laboratory, physical therapy
    3. Disability compensation – a] Not to exceed amount of loss – b] For first 6 months if unable to work at regular occupation – i] \$85.00 per day – ii] \$2,550.00 per month maximum – c] After 6 months, it fully disabled – i] \$1,275.00 per month for member – ii] Plus \$255.00 for spouse – iii] Plus \$110.00 per child under 18 – iv] Maximum of \$2,550.00 per month
    4. Death benefit — \$152,000.00
    5. Funeral Benefit — \$2,000.00
    6. Survivor Benefits – a] \$1,275.00 per month to surviving spouse – b] Plus \$110.00 for each child under 18 – c] Maximum of \$2,550.00 per month – d] Stops upon remarriage
    7. Mileage – Reimbursement at State rate for travel to extended treatment not available in firefighter's own area.
  - C. Written Accident Reports – MUST BE SUBMITTED TO THE STATE BOARD WITHIN 90 DAYS OF THE ACCIDENT
- II. Pension Plan – Optional [Municipality must, by ordinance or resolution, allow participation]
  - A. Fees
    1. Annual fees for firefighters – a] Municipality fee is \$30.00 – b] Member fee is \$30.00
    2. Annual fees for EMSD volunteers and reserve officers – a] Municipality fee set by State Board – i] Set at annual October meeting for following year – ii] Set to cover total actuarial cost of participation less member's fee – b] Member fee is \$30.00
    3. Municipality may choose to pay member's fee
    4. No more than 25 annual pension payments may be paid – a] Member's \$30.00 fee, if paid by member, is refundable upon leaving service – b] Fees paid by municipality are not refundable
    5. Initial enrollment in the pension plan can be made at any time of the year
  - B. Benefits
    1. Pension Calculation [Base pension x service percent = age 65 pension] – a] Step I – Base Pension – i] \$30.00 plus \$10.00 for each year paid-in – ii] Maximum is \$280.00 for 25 year paid-in – b] Step 2 – Service percent – i] 10-14 years of service = 20% of base pension – ii] 15-19 years of service = 35% of base pension – iii] 20-24 years of service = 75% of base pension – iv] 25+ years of service = 100% of base pension – c] Step III – Age election percent option – 100% at age 65 or 92% at age 64 or 84% at age 63 or 76% at age 62 or 68% at age 61 or 60% at age 60
    2. Joint-Survivor Option – Applies only to those serving after 7/1/89 – a] Reduced pension based on the difference in age between the firefighter and his/her spouse – b] Continues to the spouse upon the member's death – c] If spouse precedes member in death, pension will be increased to unreduced amount. – d] With additional reduction for age at time of death, will be paid to spouse of deceased member who dies before drawing pension
    3. If any pension computes to less than \$25.00, it will be paid as a one time lump-sum settlement equal to the value of the annuity
    4. Service credit is given for service rendered prior to enrollment in the pension plan although pension fees cannot be paid for those years

*For More Information, Contact Brigette Smith at 1-877-753-7318 [Toll Free] BrigetteD@bvff.wa.gov*

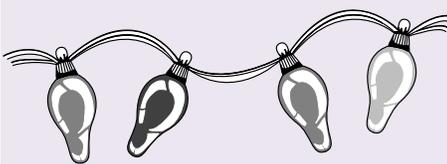
# Project Blue Light

By Gayle Frink-Schulz

**D**uring the holiday season you are asked to put blue lights in your holiday decorations and your windows and tie blue ribbons on car antennas to show support for law enforcement officers who have given their lives in the line of duty for the citizens they have served. Additionally, this will be a show of support for those who continue to work the streets 24 hours a day, every day of the year.

Several years ago, Mrs. Dolly Craig, the surviving mother-in-law of Daniel Gleason, a Philadelphia, Pa., police officer killed in the line of duty in 1986, sent her Christmas message to the COPS National office. Her daughter Pam, the surviving widow of Officer Gleason, had been killed in a car accident in August 1988, before the holiday season. Dolly wrote, "This holiday I'm putting two blue lights in my living room window. One is for Dan and the other is for Pam, who believed so much in the COPS organization."

Dolly Craig is now deceased as well, but her idea of Project Blue Light burns bright in the hearts of the nearly 10,000 families in the COPS organization. ▼



# Gordon Graham's View of Civil Liability



**J**n a most irreverent, unconventional, comedic display of knowledge in the field of civil liability yet, nationally-acclaimed speaker Gordon Graham spent six hours imparting his knowledge and wisdom on the attendees of the WSLEA/SSTLEA convention.

Giving none of the participants in the class a change to sleep, question, or to even think he kept their rapt attention with true stories of a very serious law enforcement problem.

According to Graham, "These are very interesting and challenging times for all law enforcement personnel. Never before in the history of our country have actions of our people been held to the level of introspective analysis that is occurring today."

Graham feels that we must take a risk management look at the link between proper conduct, ethical behavior and decision making, and maximizing customer service and eliminating police civil liability. This includes everyone in the department from the leading officer down to the communications personnel and volunteers.

Graham stressed that it is incumbent upon law enforcement agencies to recognize and emphasize customer service from within and without the agency. The threat that we are simultaneously hit with on a national level is tremendous external factors of decreased public confidence and spending, and a move toward consolidation of law enforcement functions and in some cases privatization. He feels that over the past decade things have changed significantly and the time has come to re-evaluate what we are doing and how we are doing it.

Graham maintains that our job has changed substantially and that we are no longer just law enforcement. Our job now is customer service and that one of the many services that we provide is law enforcement. Each contact we make starts our as a customer service contact. According to him, we must take the time to maximize customer service on each contact or incident encountered.

Graham reminded us that everyone we contact is a potential voter, juror, taxpayer, and customer. He also reminded us that as we make each contact others are watching how we handle that contact. Our behavior is a powerful advertisement either positively or negatively for our departments and ourselves.

Customer service, the most important function in a department, is in a nutshell: Getting the right thing done the right way the first time while treating all involved with the highest level of dignity and respect possible.

Although irreverent, unconventional, and comedic, this is one of the best classes this attendee has participated in and the knowledge gained is usable on the job and off on a daily basis. ▼

## Chuck Munson Earns Award

By RaeAnna Victor

Chuck Munson has been a reserve officer with the Wenatchee Police Department for over three decades. He was one of the first reserves with the department, and found out about the position through an article in the newspaper.

The original class of reserve officers numbered 18. Most were middle-aged businessmen. The class included 200 hours of classroom training and 40 hours of ride a longs with regular officers. Chuck figured from the beginning he would be filling out reports and doing office work. He couldn't have been more wrong.

The day after he was sworn in as a Wenatchee Police Officer, Chuck was standing on the corner directing traffic for the Apple Blossom Festival. With just classroom training and no real experience, in one of the highest traffic volumes of the year Chuck was beginning to wonder what he had gotten himself into.

Soon, law enforcement was in his blood. Originally his interest was in firearms. He made sergeant in 1973 and lieutenant in 1979. He has been a mainstay of the Wenatchee reserve program as throughout the years he has seen many come and go. Chuck has had experience in undercover drug raids and was a member of the Washington State Narcotics Investigation Association. He was a sniper on the SWAT team, and an executive officer for the unit.

Chuck's reserve unit began their affiliation with the WSRLEA in 1990. It was during this period that the unit enjoyed its most success with 40 trained/street qualified reserve officers. Due to changes in administration over the years changes have occurred in the reserve

unit to an all time low of five street qualified officers.

Chuck was a big proponent of the retirement bill. Volunteer firemen had enjoyed the benefit for years, and Chuck felt it only equitable that volunteer police officers do the same. He worked many hours with other reserves and regular officers to fashion a bill that his sister Sen. Val Ogden would sponsor and present to the legislature. There was, of course, opposition. But Chuck and his sister with the help of many others had the perseverance to see the process through to the end. Chuck made the trip to Olympia many times at his own cost. Timing is everything. The legislator in charge of the Ways and Means Committee at the time was not pro-law enforcement, so the bill died in committee. Board members went to Olympia and testified. Some of the reactions were almost comical. Many legislators did not know that reserves existed even though .5% of the officers on the streets of Washington state are reserves. They also did not understand how the volunteers were paid! Through the testifying, House Co-Speaker Clyde Ballard, and Sen. George Sellar became big supporters of the bill. They were also personal friends of Chuck's which helped immeasurably. It took five legislative sessions to finally get the bill passed. Chuck was there at the beginning, and Chuck was there as the end.

During the years of 1984 and 1988 the entire city of Wenatchee was run by the reserve force as they allowed for the regular force to attend the Policeman's

Ball. The Wenatchee reserves have also participated in the Omak Stampede, Douglas County and Chelan County Days, Snohomish County Festival, and the Ellensburg Rodeo. At one time Chuck carried five different commission cards from the various agencies where he donated his time and expertise.

One of Chuck's best memories was the time they were right across the street when a fight call at the carnival went out. There were five commissioned officers and 10 Wenatchee reserves on scene within about three seconds of the call. About scared the participants to death!

Chuck was shot in the line of duty in 1987. While getting ready for a raid, one of the regular officers what checking the shotgun. Unfortunately, he did not check to see that it was unloaded first. Chuck and two other officers ended up in the hospital, but fortunately none of the injuries was were too serious.

Chuck will never forget his funniest experience in the department. Meticulous planning, surveillance, and briefings had gone into a very important raid. When the time came for the raid to come down, all the officers were in the alley waiting for the go ahead. When it was given, the officers sprang into action. Unfortunately, one group of officers were at the back of one house, while the other group of officers were at the front door of a different house, and the suspects took this as a sign and escaped!

Chuck says he would do it all again. While he does feel badly for the flack that his children took while they were in school, he believes they are now proud of what he does for his commu

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# Legislative Award

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nity. Chuck feels the best thing that could happen to the reserve program in the state would be for more recognition and appreciation for the men and women who put their lives on the line alongside the regular officers without compensation of any kind other than the knowledge that they are doing good and helping the community.

Talking with Chuck's wife of 50 years, Carroll, we get a different viewpoint. She maintains that if she had it



all to do over again she would not encourage Chuck so much to be a re-

serve. In the beginning she was one of his most avid supporters. Over the years the nights of missing family time, and the late nights worrying about his safety, especially after he was shot, have taken a toll on the enthusiasm.

A reserve is a very special person, and Chuck is a stellar example of a good reserve. At conservative calculations, he has donated nearly 50,000 hours of service to his community and state over the past 31 years. ▼

## *Reserve Officer of the Year*

# Congratulations to Terry Lattin

**J**n real life, Terry Lattin is the head of facilities and security for a highly recognized, international company. In his heart, he has always been drawn to law enforcement. While in the second year of college, his roommate dropped out and joined the State Patrol. Soon, he had convinced Terry to do the same. It changed the course of Terry's life. And, while the roommate found a career and satisfaction, Terry did not. The roommate went on to become Chief for the Patrol, and Terry quit.

Although the State Patrol was not his calling, law enforcement certainly was. Born and raised in Seattle, Terry Lattin has over 30 years in the reserve police program. Fifteen of those years have been associated with the WSRLEA. As a Seattle reserve officer, Terry has worked in almost every division. Currently he is working with drugs and gangs.

Terry is married and has two children. They all share his interest in law enforcement. Doris, his wife, collects law enforcement memorabilia for him whenever she indulges in her passion

for yard sales and antiquing. His daughter, Amanda, was in the Explorer post from the time she was 14 until she was 18 and excelled in the program. Terry was the advisor for her post for many years. She is now at college studying for a career in law enforcement. Twelve-year-old Stuart is still too young to make career choices, but he has already told his dad that the large patch collection is his in the will.

Terry works many off duty reserve jobs as well as putting in his regular time on patrol. With the extra money each year he and his family travel to California where the family plays and Terry attends the California Reserve Convention. He has been doing this for the past seven years. Terry's philosophy is that, to be a good reserve, you must avail yourself of every training opportunity available, and California has some of the best.

Terry is an advocate for the reserve program. Volunteer firefighters had benefits for more than 20 years, but the law enforcement reserve vol-

unteers had none. So, Terry felt it only equitable to balance the table. With his boards' support at WSRLEA, Terry was one of the driving forces that helped pass legislation that allowed reserve officers to be part of the retirement system. He has also worked on legislation to allow medical and death benefits for the reserves. Terry feels strongly that the reserve make a strong, often silent contribution to society. Many departments would be unable to function without the reserve supplementing the force with their manpower in many different areas.

Other than law enforcement, Terry has an avid interest in American history, particularly in military and Civil War history. He is part of a Civil War Reenactment group.

Terry has grave concerns for the future of the reserve program. He is looking for a few good young men and women to take over the reins. He feels that older members such as he should take a back seat now and lead the new young reserves into the new century of service to the communities of Washington state. ▼

# LEOFF Plan I Update – Whose Money is it?

By Mike Matson, WSLEA Legislative Liaison

## Who Pays for Your Benefits?

Let's talk some basics: LEOFF I is a "Defined Benefit Plan." This means that when you retire from service, you will receive a benefit based on your service credit and final average salary. The amount of your contributions is not a factor in calculating your retirement benefits according to the Department of Retirement System's LEOFF Plan I Member Handbook.

"Your future benefits are funded by contributions – made by you, your employer and the state during your period of membership – and the investment earnings from those contributions. These contributions are held in trust and invested by the State Investment Board."

## Your Contributions

Plan I members are required to contribute 6 percent of their "basic salary" to LEOFF. A payment is basic salary if it is part of the monthly rate of salary or wages attached to a Plan I member's position. Longevity pay may be included in basic salary. Other special salary and wages are not part of the basic monthly rate, and do not qualify as basic salary. For more information contact LEOFF for a copy of DRS Notice 98-004.

A member's contribution is deducted from their paycheck each pay period and forwarded to LEOFF. Some employers, at the option of the employer, deduct contributions before calculating federal income taxes. This defers the member's tax obligation until the member or their survivor receives the money as either a benefit or a refund.

"Accumulated contributions" are the member contributions made to LEOFF plus the interest added to the member's account by the retirement system.

Earlier in this article we briefly touched on "Contributions...are invested by the State Investment Board." The SIB and the Stock Market have exceeded anyone's expectation. In fact, instead of having a deficiency in Plan I, we have "Excess Gains" resulting in a surplus of \$1.1 billion! Yes that's right "BILLION" not million.

WSLEA is participating in discussions with the following organizations:

- Retired Seattle Police Officers Association – Dave Grayson
- LEOFF I Retired Police Officers' Association – Charlie Marsh
- Washington Retired Fire Fighters Association – Ray Sanderson
- LEOFF Education Association – Dan Downs

- Washington State Retired Deputy Sheriff's & Police Officers Association – Bill Stockham
- Washington Council of Police & Sheriffs – Bill Hanson
- Washington State Council of Fire Fighters – Cody Arledge & Kelly Fox

A Sept. 7, 2000, meeting was held in Yakima to deal with "excess gains." At the meeting consensus was reached on four issues:

- The coalition will negotiate with the Legislature concerning the "Excess Gains" in LEOFF I
- The coalition will protect LEOFF I statute integrity
- The coalition will oppose county and city proposals that reduce the number of LEOFF I "Disability Boards"
- The coalition will participate in meetings concerning LEOFF I issues with the Joint Committee on Pension Policy
- The question that must always be addressed, "First and Foremost" when discussing the issue of "Excess Gains" is, "Whose Money Is It!" The LEOFF I Coalition's next meeting will be in late October.

Please contact Mike Matson on this issue. Mike can be reached in Olympia 360/741-1101. ▼

## ~ More Convention Awardees ~

The ONB will feature more Convention Awardees in the Spring Issue –  
Lew Bononcini and Bob Winsor, Distinguished Reserve Officer of the Year from Clark CSO –  
Mike Burris, Auburn PD, John H. McGregor Legislative Award

## WSRLEA Legislative Update

By Chuck Munson

**J**n looking ahead to Legislature 2001, work has already begun in readiness for WSRLEA legislative goals and objectives. We have one bill ready and one bill on stand-by. As you all know, the benefits that we have achieved over the past five years, such as RETIREMENT, DEATH PAYMENT, MEDICAL COVERAGE AND DISABILITY are for Reserve Law Enforcement for a municipal or county agency only. Reserve Law Enforcement that is sponsored by a state agency or a federal agency is not covered – yet.

The bill that is ready to go this session is to allow reserve officers from any state agency to be covered by the

same benefits that all the rest of us have. The burden of pushing this bill will be mostly on the state agencies involved. The State Fish and Game and the State Parks departments are two such agencies.

The bill on stand-by is to cover reserve officers from any federal agency. There is nothing that we can do for them until they request coverage by the state. This legislation will benefit primarily to the Indian tribes. As referred to earlier, this bill is on stand-by.

All reserve officers benefit from the legislative activities of organizations such as WSRLEA. It is impor-

tant to support such groups who work for the betterment of your profession and future. Reserve officers from municipal, county, state or federal organizations are eligible for membership with the Washington State Reserve Law Enforcement Association. Not everyone can be active in legislative issues, but everyone can afford \$1.25 per month, or \$15 for annual dues which go to support programs that provides great opportunities for the individual member and empowers the whole to seek benefits for YOU. RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP TODAY and encourage fellow officers to join as well. ▼

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## Medical Legislation Update – S.O.S.!!!

**M**ike Matson, legislation Liaison for the Washington State Law Enforcement Association, updated WA State COPS at the 3rd Annual WA State COPS picnic on how our association's "*involvement will make the difference*" in order to ensure passage of medical coverage for surviving spouses and their children in the 2001 Legislative Session.

Our concerns were successfully introduced as Legislation during the 2000 Legislative Session; however, time constraints and a short session did not permit this critical legislation to move forward.

Our plan for success in the 2001 Legislative Session... WA State COPS, along with the WSLEA and other law enforcement organizations, and most importantly, all of our survivors and our law

enforcement family must join forces to see this important piece of legislation passed. We need everyone to write to their state senator and their (two) state representatives, urging them to "*support and pass this critical legislation.*"

As it stands now, many of our survivors lose their medical coverage upon the death of their officer. They have access to COBRA for 18 months. Once the 18 months is completed, they have the reality of no medical insurance for their family. Our loved ones have already paid the ultimate sacrifice, and as family members, we have paid a huge sacrifice, also. To be denied access to medical coverage is a travesty that must be addressed. Every letter written urging passage of this legislation is critical.

How to take action: for example,

Gayle Frink-Schulz lives in the 5th Legislative District. Her senator is Dino Rossi; her representatives are Brian Thomas and Cheryl Pflug. Gayle would write letters to her elected officials from the 5th District. If you are unsure of who your legislators are, or which legislative district you live in, either call your county auditor or you can go to the Internet at <http://www.leg.wa.gov/wsladm/>. There is a site map to help you determine your legislative district. The senators and representatives are also listed by name.

Place a red star on your calendar, mark your day-timers, flag your computer calendar – remember to write your letters! Better yet, call your elected legislators and ask to meet with them personally. Thank you in advance for supporting this worthy cause. ▼

# WSLEA's Commitment to Professional Development

By Ken Johnson, Chairman

**W**SLLEA continues our commitment to training the professional officer. To that end we dedicated time, energy and resources to making the joint WSLEA/WSRLEA Convention one of the most comprehensive training experiences available for regular and reserve officers in this state. It was a great success and we hope to match this emphasis in the future. The committee is looking at other training opportunities to offer regionally. If your department has a specific need and you think we might be able to help you meet that need, please contact us. Our continued goal is to make training affordable and accessible to all officers throughout the state. ▼

If you would like to contact me, I can be reached at  
(360) 501-3843 or e-mail at:  
ken.johnson@ci.longview.wa.us.

~ *HAPPY HOLIDAYS* ~

*To You and Yours  
from the  
WSLEA - WSRLEA*



## *Convention 2001*

Mark your calendars tentatively  
for the first week-end in

**AUGUST**  
2001

## Destination, Spokane

## Degree Scholarships Awarded

By Dick Collins, Scholarship Chairman

**T**his year's five recipients of the WASHINGTON STATE LAW ENFORCEMENT ASSOCIATION degree scholarships are special indeed!

This is the first year that all applicants and awardees were female. For the first time, the daughter of a WSLEA Executive Board line officer received a scholarship Danielle Wyrick; daughter of Dave Wyrick. And for the first time, the sister, Nikki Shelton, of a previous recipient was also awarded a scholarship. WSLEA publication co-editor RaeAnna Victor's daughter, Desirea Victor, received a scholarship as well.

WSLEA was proud to award scholarships to the daughters of two fallen officers, Kari Frink and Venessa Caballero! WSLEA was pleased to be able to expand the eligibility pool to include spouses or children of those killed in the line of duty.

We are proud of our WSLEA students and that we can be a part of securing their academic goals!

The degree scholarship application has been placed on the WSLEA web site for your convenience [wslea.org X Scholaship tab] or call the Executive Office to receive a degree scholarship brochure and application. [wslea@olywa.net or 1-800-227-9753] ▼

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