

March 12, 2014

Dear Legislators:

I am concerned about the action the Legislature is taking in dealing with part-time police officers. During my last twenty years as a Vermont Police Officer I have noticed that virtually all the high profile cases involving excessive force and integrity issues involved full-time officers. While I am sure part-time officers must have made some mistakes, I can not recall hearing of any.

It also seems strange to me that some police departments are not even sending an officer to investigate felonies such as burglary unless they are very likely to make an arrest. The victim can go to a web site and file his own report. Of the part-time officers I have known and the ones I presently work with, I would much prefer they **investigate** a burglary rather than just have homeowner report it to a web site.

That said, let me point out some very positive facts about part-time officers:

They often bring critical skills from other employment to their police work. I work with three part-time certified officers: a fish and wildlife expert, a school teacher and a paramedic instructor. They provide an invaluable source of information on wildlife complaints, youth problems and current trends and medical questions including death investigations. All three are also excellent police officers.

As a former Chief of Police I have found that part time work is the best assessment for future full time employment. No amount of reference checking, oral boards, interviews, testing and job applications can begin to compare with a part-time officer doing the job and being constantly evaluated by the world's most critical evaluators, his or her fellow officers. Part time work is an excellent recruiting tool that almost guarantees a good full time officer when a vacancy occurs.

Part-time officers frequently work at a lower salary than full-time officers and seldom have the same expensive benefits package. In addition, they also are more willing to work flexible hours.

If a part-time officer does not perform to expectations, a Chief just stops putting him on the schedule. If a full-time officer does not perform to expectations you either live with him or her until retirement, or begin a long, slow, and hideously expensive termination proceeding.

Part time is also a valid way to recruit female officers. Often females can not attend a nineteen week program at the academy because of child or parent care. If hired, they may not be able to work a full forty hour week for the same reasons. Often part time work is best suited to their situation.

I noted that when I was Chief of a police department that consisted of approximately fifty percent women, that women have fewer personnel complaints, fewer use of force incidents and adapted to Community Policing more easily than their male counterparts.

It appears that you are attempting to legislate common sense. I know of no police administrator who deliberately sends an officer on a call they know they are incapable of handling. They do not want either a resultant lawsuit or citizen's complaint.

In conclusion, it appears that while the proposed legislation has good intent, the end result is to derail some very dedicated officers career track, make administering a police agency more difficult, discriminate against women and increase costs to the taxpayer.

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