

THE OATH OF HONOR CHALLENGE

One of the greatest challenges facing law enforcement administrators today is the creation and maintenance of a values based agency consisting of an ethical cadre of officers and supervisors that represent the highest values of law enforcement. There is little disagreement among law enforcement administrators that upholding professional ethics is the most critical issue facing our profession. Those of you who were able to attend our annual conference will remember Mr. Bill Westfall emphasizing leadership and the "Passing of the Torch." Mr. Westfall's message was that we have a charge as police administrators to pass on to future generations a law enforcement profession that embodies the highest of ethical standards.

The International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) is spearheading an effort to encourage the adoption by all law enforcement agencies of the Law Enforcement Oath of Honor. I believe that the Oath of Honor can bridge the gap between the conceptualization and the realization of a means of truly passing the ethical torch. The Oath of Honor is a critical initiative designed to fill a long term need and eventually be institutionalized throughout the criminal justice profession worldwide.

The Oath of Honor provides a means for law enforcement to demonstrate to their communities that they adhere to the highest of ethical standards. The Oath of Honor campaign is entirely voluntary in nature and should only be participated in by those wishing to demonstrate this important commitment. The La Crosse Police Department has been successful in having all 95 of our sworn members voluntarily take the Oath of Honor and then sign a large certificate which is on public display in our headquarters office. I believe the key to successfully encouraging officers to participate begins by gaining their understanding. The IACP offers a dynamic five minute CD presentation which can be downloaded from their website at http://www.theiacp.org/profassist/ethics/focus_on_ethics.htm. We began by sharing this brief video with our union board and later with their entire membership. Everyone agreed that the Oath of Honor was something we needed and wanted to do. Our officers took the oath collectively during our Police Memorial Day ceremonies last year. We currently ask new members to take the oath so that we might remain a 100% Oath of Honor agency.

HERE'S THE CHALLENGE! I am proposing that every law enforcement agency in the State of Wisconsin subscribe to the Law Enforcement Oath of Honor. Our ethics committee headed by Chief Gary Cox has already accepted the challenge. I propose that the ethics committee issue a suitable certificate to our member agencies who are able to achieve a 90 % or higher participation among their sworn personnel. I would further propose that a large wooden plaque be displayed at official WCPA meetings with a brass plate attached bearing the names of each police department that has become an Oath of Honor agency. The Oath of Honor campaign is an important cornerstone of my commitment to leadership and professionalism for the WCPA. I have already received numerous requests from our members for copies of the Ethics Toolkit. I have place an

order for 100 such kits and in the meantime I recommend that agencies download what they can from the Ethics Toolkit website. The City of La Crosse Planning Department has agreed to produce 30 x 36 inch customized Oath of Honor pledge sheets at a cost of \$18 to any agency interested.

Sincerely,

Edward Kondracki
WCPA President
Chief of Police
La Crosse Police Department

Law Enforcement Oath of Honor

*On my honor, I will never
betray my badge, my integrity,
my character or the public trust.*

*I will always have the courage to hold
myself and others accountable for our actions.*

*I will always uphold the
constitution, my community, and the
agency I serve.*