

LEGISLATIVE DAY

By Matthew Harkin, President



The ISPA's Second Annual Legislative Day went off without a hitch. The food, coffee and conversations started early with most of the board of directors, along with our lobbyists, grabbing legislators as they started filing into the Capital. Conversations over our Blue Alert bill went well and I got the impression legislators wanted to do something positive for law enforcement. A couple legislators asked of my connection with the "silver alert" bill and I had to explain that's just my natural hair color after being a cop for nearly 30 years. It appears our efforts from last year and this winter will pay off and hope that we get Blue Alert signed into law this spring.

There was quite a bit of talk about the pension bill, adding language for member in good standing when applying for a disability retirement and getting "date and time" of injury changed to "in the course of employment". There are concerns from some legislators of the increase in cost to the system and that this is an increase in benefits. We explained that the change simply mirrors the "benefit" of other Iowa employees who are covered under Chapter 85, Worker's Comp. We were lucky enough to have, Dan Cassady, Assistant Director of MFPRSI, there to help with the answers. We explained that, just like the cancer presumption, the increase will be born by the members not the cities. The actuaries have run the numbers and it appears the cost will increase the members contribution .15%. That is about \$100 per year for the average 411 member. This change also includes "disabling mental illness" "arising out of and in the course of employment" as a disease eligible for consideration for disability. Face to face, all the legislators I spoke with supported this bill. We will keep you posted at the session moves forward.

The window tint bill seemed to be a fairly hot topic with a few Senators. I explained the ISPA's position that we find it hard to advocate a law making it more difficult to see into a car as we push for a stronger distracted driving law? Let alone, the dramatically reduced nighttime visibility for people operating vehicles with window tint. I'm curious how that argument will play out.

When the food and coffee ran out, we made our way through the capital looking for any legislator who would listen as we continued to advocate for ISPA members. Lots of other public safety concerns were covered and I feel the day was a success. We'll be sure to get the date of the Legislative day out early next year as we would love to have more members participate. When you get five minutes of "your own time" with your representative, I'll just say, it carries a lot of weight. That's how we make Iowa and our members stronger.