

Morale Up, Confidence Gone

PLEA 2009 Biannual Survey

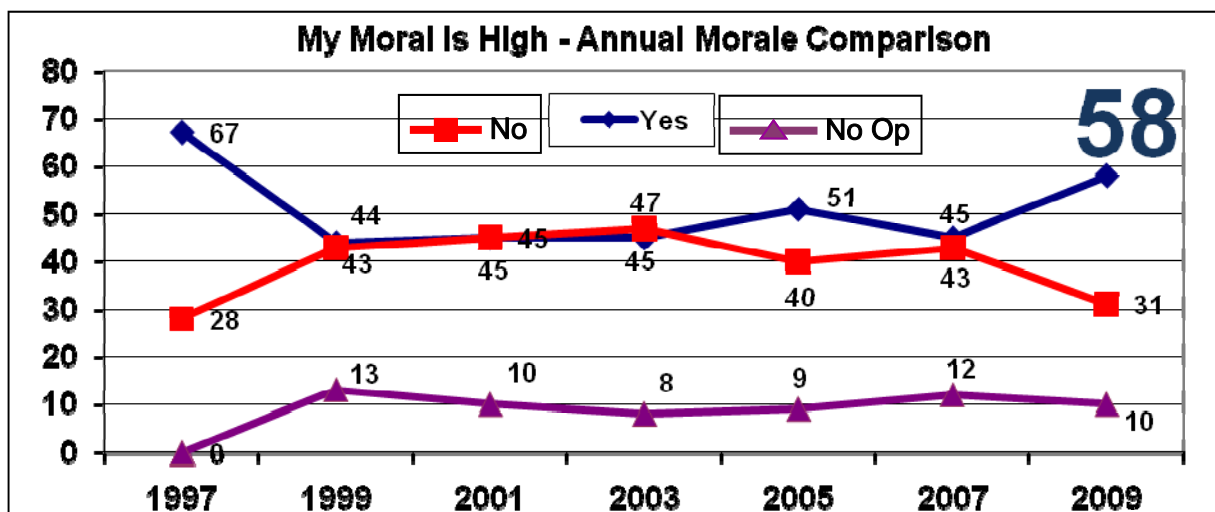
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From September 2007 to September 2009 two PLEA members sacrificed their lives protecting the citizens of Phoenix – Officer Nick Erfle and Officer Shane Figueroa. Numerous others PLEA members were injured in providing front-line protection. The daily risks that all PLEA members take as first-responders and investigators in pursuing the rule of law give unique value and weight to their voice. Mayor Gordon communicated a similar message in a letter to the new PLEA board dated September 18, 2009, “The Council and I have absolute respect for all the men and women who put on a badge and dedicate themselves to serving and protecting our community. Nothing I do as Mayor will ever - ever be as important to me as making sure our police officers are treated with the respect they have earned - and are getting the support they deserve from our entire community.” PLEA is grateful to Mayor Gordon and the City Council for their kind words to PLEA members - words of concern and confidence. Those who do the work and take the risks have earned the right to be heard. The PLEA survey is an important tool whereby PLEA members’ voices determine the direction of their Association. The criticisms, concerns, and compliments of Association members are used to formulate contract strategies and Association priorities.

IN-HOUSE ISSUES

Members were given the choice to describe PLEA’s representation of their issues. In 2007 74% of the members responded that PLEA service was good or excellent. In 2009, this number rose to 82% (*only 8% provided a negative response*). In the same time period, the positive opinion of PLEA’s legal services through Mike Napier increased by 53% (*only 8% provided a negative response*). PLEA members indicated a 21% positive increase in the Association’s ability of providing timely and informative information (*compared to 2007, negative responses to this issue dropped by 13 percentage points*). PLEA saw an increase in PAC contributions from members. PLEA members communicated a clear connection between illegal aliens and crime - 83% voiced agreement in support of State legislation allowing officers to take discretionary action in dealing with illegal immigration (*10.6% provided a negative response*). Perhaps it’s hard front-line police work by PLEA members along with proactive immigration legislation, enforcement, and prosecution behind falling crime rates in Phoenix. It appears that PLEA members approve of their police association.

The annual 2009 survey responses showed police morale at its highest in TEN years. There was an increase in members with high morale to 58%. Historically, the highest percentage of officers with good morale was 67% (*Chief Dennis Garrett in 1997*) – the lowest was 44% (*Chief Harold Hurtt in 1999*). The previous 2007 percentage was slightly higher at 45% (*Public Safety Manager Harris*). Eighty-nine percent (89%) of PLEA respondents believe the Phoenix Police Department is a good place to work – consistent with the 2007 figure of 88%. It appears that PLEA members enjoy police work.



DEPARTMENT ISSUES

An alarming contrast to these upward trends is the downward spiral of the members' perspective of police management. As morale goes up, confidence in management goes down. Members were asked if they saw leadership skills from different management positions in the police department. The only increase in the area of leadership was the rank of commander. In 2007 31% of the members saw leadership from commanders; in 2009 it increased to 36%. A good crew of precinct commanders may have been a factor in this positive response. Leadership seen from other upper level police managers (*assistant chiefs*) fell from 9% in 2007 to 6% in 2009.

The following is an official recipe called a vote of NO CONFIDENCE in Jack Harris.

- Start with an increased response from 10% to 16% in NO LEADERSHIP seen in any police management rank.
- Mix in ONLY 4.7% of officers seeing leadership in the Public Safety Manager (*down from 14% in 2007- nearly a 200% decrease*).
- Add in a MERE 14% of surveyed PLEA members expressing confidence the Public Safety Manager.
- Blend in THREE multi-million dollar lawsuits (*PSB Mark Wilcox, Crime Lab, and Judicial Watch*) focused on police management policies and decisions.
- Sprinkle on a "smidgeon" of a STILL-BROKEN booking system that removes valuable police officers from the street.
- Vigorously stir with 20 EEO COMPLAINTS against police managers.
- Top off with management being tied with vehicles as being the TOP PROBLEM facing Phoenix Police Officers.
- Finally, serve with a FAILURE to provide 300 rifles by August (*made thicker by refusing to allow first-responding patrol officers to make a private purchase of these tools*).



Only 14% of Phoenix Police Officers express confidence the Public Safety Manager

This dish is expensive for citizens to make and hard for officers to swallow. We're hopeful that the quality of life in our communities, the concerns of our police officers, and the cost to the City coffers all strike a chord of progressive action from the City Council. Turning blind eyes, defending the indefensible, or affirming through silence are easy paths to take yet they are roads to nowhere in solving the many problems generated by the PPD's upper level management team.

*Instead of the current recipe for disaster, the Association believes a better formula exists: **LISTEN - LEAD - CHANGE.***

- **Listen** to police officers and their community partners.
- **Lead** with a predisposition towards accountability and common sense.
- **Change** police management's priorities from selfishness back to service.

Perhaps the many needs of our cops and our communities are more important than the one position of the Public Safety Manager. It's time to maximize the police service our citizens deserve and minimize the burdens our police officers carry. People and principles ought to win the day over personalities and politics.