

# COMMO CHECK!

Volume 13, Issue 5

Dedicated to the proposition that a career in aviation is not something you do, it's something you survive!

1 Oct 2013

## The Official Newsletter of the Professional Helicopter Pilots Association, OPEIU Local 102

### From the President by Ron Arsenault

Greetings to the membership of PPHA, OPEIU Local 102. I want to thank all of you who took time out of your busy schedules to vote, during our Vice-Presidential elections. The turn-out was greatly appreciated by all of the candidates. Congratulations are again in order for David Oltmans, who will continue to be your Vice President for another 2 years. The vote results are as follows, David Oltmans 109 votes, Bill Haaren 37 votes, Barry Martin 31 votes. I would like to thank all the candidates for their participation in the day to day business of our Union.

Recently, I signed a Letter of Agreement with the Company that temporarily changed Article 5.3 of the CBA. Currently the CBA does allow the Company to assign another student/s to an IP for the day, if one or both of that IP's assigned students are not present for work. Now, under the terms of this LOA, the Company can have an IP fly another IP's assigned students if his/her students are taking a checkride with a URS employee. For example, IP (A) has 2 students checking and IP (B) has 2 students still training. The Company can have IP (A) train IP (B)'s student while IP (B) gives IP (A)'s students their checkride. We have always been able to trade students for a checkride, i.e.; the P1 or the BI checkrides or a schedule change to meet an appointment, so this only makes sense. You will not float to another shift or location. If the students are checking with the military (CEP/QAE) then the original language of Article 5.3 applies. This LOA does not apply to QA evaluations or solo flights. The LOA is of temporary nature with an end date of January 31, 2014. At that time both parties will get together and discuss whether or not to continue, discontinue or modify the LOA. Most of you will have no problem with this agreement, but there will be some who think we are selling them down the creek. We are not selling out, in fact the agreement should help us out in other ways, It should be easier for some IP's to get finished earlier and possibly get an extra day of IL time. Secondly, The Company has pledged to try and make PL easier to get approved and third there was an agreement reached about shift scheduling that is advantageous for our academic personnel. So this LOA should be good for all parties concerned. However, since we can't accurately see the future that is why we have an expiration date.

Those of you who are big boned like me, remember that the next weigh-in is fast approaching. Come 1 October everybody gets to stand on the scales again. On that subject, still nothing back from the judge on the 250 lbs. weight limit lawsuit.

The E-Board and the Company are working on the digital flight suit name tag issue. Stay tuned for more to come. Same thing for black hats that are no longer issued by the CIF.

Until next time fly safe.



**President**  
**Ron Arsenault**  
**PPHA Local 102**

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## GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

September 12, 2013

The meeting was called to order at 6:33 PM by President Ron Arsenault. Advanced Division Trustee Lee Murphy is on Simulator Period 4. There were 18 members present.

Recording Secretary: The August meeting minutes were read by Jim Guy and the minutes were approved after a date revision. Secretary-Treasurer: Treasurer Richard White gave the Treasurer's report and the report was approved as read. There are 294 members.

### Trustees' Reports:

Primary Division: Barry Martin reported that there were several occurrences of aircraft being issued after a write-up and the problems were not fixed. If this happens to you contact ACLC and/or fill out an ACR.

Advanced Division: Lee Murphy was not present.

BWS Division: Rick Boylston had nothing to report.

Trustee at Large: Rod George had nothing to report.

### Vice-Presidents Report

Dave Oltmans reported that the AF currently have no aircraft to fly due to maintenance. He said that the Air Force contract QA supervisor at AFS was fired last week. Dave also reported that the grievance for the two laid-off employees was settled. They were reimbursed the leave that they lost.

### Old Business

250 lb. Weight Lawsuit and FOIA Issue: It has been three months and there is no word yet. We seem to be on the slow track as far as the Federal Judge is concerned. If there is no change within the next two weeks there will be a weigh-in on the 1<sup>st</sup> of October. We received an update from the FOIA office; they informed us that our request had been sent to "legal", whatever that means. The longer they wait to produce the documents, the worse it looks for the Government in the lawsuit.

LTD Update: We are still working this issue. We have had two meetings with Jeff Luther of First Command Financial of Enterprise. Unum offered a one year program for a reasonable price because Unum gets to sell us other policies as well. We are considering their offer but we are also talking with other company's about it. The Unum rep told us that for a contract our size they usually only have 2-3 people take LTD on average; we had 27 in one year. We will keep the membership informed.

2:1 IP Student Ratio: The Bridge Agreement has been signed. This now allows IP's to train students when that IP's students are taking check rides. The intent is for a swap of students to occur within the same flight or shift. The IP does not become a "float" for the day. Also, if CEP/QAE is checking your students, you are not supposed to fly other students as if you were a float. Bob Price has a very specific intent for the implementation of this policy, we need to try our best to comply but also ensure that the agreement is not abused. This agreement will be in effect until January 31<sup>st</sup>, 2014. We will then assess the agreement and decide if we should continue the policy, alter the parameters, or let it expire.

*(Continued on page 3)*

**September Minutes** *(Continued from page 2)*

**COR Job Description:** We have finally received our requested documents. One of the most surprising parts that we found was that the COR does not have the authority to “de-certify” IP’s. This must be done by the Contracting Officer himself. We are looking into this issue.

**Sandy Ankrom** had a stroke August 1<sup>st</sup> while at the hospital. He is in Health South Rehab in Dothan. He fell on Monday and had to be transported to the ER. Also, Richard Seymore is improving slowly but still has many problems to work thru.

**Layoffs:** There were 15 layoff noticed given out in Primary Division. They were told to expect from 2 to 6 weeks before they would be called back. The next class starting Primary has 51 students assigned so far so we are hopeful that this will continue. Advanced Division is scheduled to have 6 layoffs but they may not need to be activated. Advanced Division is adjusting the class sizes to equal out the student distribution. They still have some time to work the issue. BWS should be OK for now. Remember that the projected layoffs are still very fluid.

**Nametags and Hats:** All employees are issues two black leather nametags. IP’s with digital flight suits are being told by the company to but their own digital name tapes. We are discussing this issue with the company. Don’t buy the digital tapes for now, we will provide further guidance as soon as we can. Hats are also no longer being issues by CIF. The status of wearing hats is undecided for now and we will let you know about this issue also.

**New Business**

**October Pay Increase:** Remind your members that they will not see the pay increase until the first full pay period following the 1<sup>st</sup>. That pay period will be from the 12<sup>th</sup> to the 25<sup>th</sup>. The November 1<sup>st</sup> check will be the first one showing the increase.

**From The Floor**

The question came up regarding the recently laid off employees. PHPA is contacting each employee to let them know what they need to do to maintain membership, etc.

The issue of leave rosters was brought up. Senior employees are taking leave weeks specifically to trade with a younger employee who needs that week. The practice of trading leave has always been allowed and it is up to each Division Director. This practice is making some employees very unhappy.

**The election results for VP are as follows:** Total votes cast: 177; Dave Olmans 109 / Barry Martin 31 / Bill Harren 37. Congratulations to Dave.

The winning draw in the raffle took home \$75 at this meeting. Last month’s winner received \$81.

Meeting adjourned at 7:27 PM.

**Thanks!**

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our membership for your vote of confidence in me this month. I assure each of you that I will continue to try to do my best to uphold the high standards of PHPA as your Vice President. I was also pleased to see Bill Haaren and Barry Martin run for this office. It shows engagement on their part and their example should be followed by every member.

**Dave Oltmans**

## How Things Work, or Not by Dave Oltmans

The goal of any business organization is to produce a product. Without production, accounting, marketing, planning and a business model are all worthless. Because our customer is the government, the PHPA bargaining unit has a very special stake in the production equation. In some respects, we are the company. If we were to lose our URS company affiliation we would be called DAC's and we all know what great deal that has become.

For the past few months production has been hindered by the uncertainty of sequestration, causing many junior IP's to decamp for other jobs to avoid being laid off. Add to this scenario the normal numbers of groundings and retirements, throw in Army specific SOP guidance concerning student training, and the result of this turmoil has been overtime on an unprecedented scale. What has been exposed during this time of IP shortfalls is that the 2:1 SP/IP ratio has become a real stumbling block to solving the production problem.

In normal times of staffing, these shortfalls could be handled on a float IP basis. Our CBA also allows MOI IP's to fill in for shortfalls due to "other than programmed absences." This crisis is not of the company's making so an assertion to "go hire more IP's" is not the solution to the problem, nor is flying more overtime. The solution demands that PHPA and the company think about a more efficient utilization of the assets currently available, (read IP's), who on occasion do not have a student or two students to fly. In other words, we have the capability to at least address production shortfalls until the political funding uncertainty and staffing situation are both clarified. The conditions of utilizing these idle IP's for other than assigned SP training have been specified in President Ron Arsenault's article.

So what other problem might this agreement solve? PHPA and the company are testing to see if the alleviation of production bottlenecks will free up more PL openings and keep check ride scheduling on track for a day or more of IL. We are hoping to see a reduction in the utilization of MOI IP's in the SP training process so that those folks can focus exclusively on QA evaluations. This agreement is not *carte blanc* for supervisors to float IP's *willy nilly*. Like all testing, this hypothesis will be proven or not. And, like all testing, the test will have a beginning and an end. If this test does not deliver on our expectations, we will not renew for February of next year.

Your E-Board understands the concerns of those who feel that this is an erosion of the 2:1 ratio and we ask your forbearance and cooperation as we test to see if we will accomplish our goals. Please remember, however, that PHPA is in the business of production to meet the goals of our employer and to serve the product demands of our customer. That is our number one mission because without production, none of the benefits found in the CBA are worth the paper on which they are printed. Less production, or production bottlenecks devalue a workforce. Any employee who believes that production numbers are the exclusive domain of the company for which he works has failed to grasp the symbiotic relationship that labor has with management. PHPA's goal and framework has been, and is, to have producers who willingly meet the quality and quantity goals of the customer within the bounds of fairness to the employee. In other words, the PHPA tail does not wag the URS or Government "dogs."

The production problems demand solutions that are outside of the box. This work is our work to do, it says so in the CBA. It will shake up the status quo for a while, but it follows that the demands of a new business environment must be reconciled with our new reality. We are making good money. Let's be flexible enough to do a little more to make ourselves problem solvers, thereby enhancing our value while enhancing our image as The Professional Helicopter Pilots Association.

## F.Y.I for SLOA by Dave Oltmans

The Company is recruiting volunteers for the **Special Leave of Absence program**. I fielded some questions concerning SLOA as per the CBA during this month's meeting and would like for anybody considering this option to make an informed decision. The pertinent CBA references have been inserted below and I will add some plain language interpretation.

FROM THE CBA, APPENDIX D.4, e

c. Special leave of absence without pay may be granted by the Company for a period of up to six (6) months. Employees are responsible for insurance premiums as per D.4, b, 2. An employee on SLOA will not lose his seniority rights by position and will thereby retain his right to select annual leave by seniority as per D.6, as if he were on the active payroll the during the whole year. Employees on SLOA for a period of ninety (90) days or less will accumulate their Longevity Bonus as if they had been on the active payroll during the time of their absence. Those on SLOA greater than ninety (90) days will lose that portion of their Longevity Bonus for that year.

D.4, b, (2) Health insurance benefits will remain in effect during the family leave of absence. Family leaves of absence in excess of twelve (12) weeks during any twelve (12) month period may be granted by the Company. In such cases the employee will be responsible for the cost of insurance premiums for elected coverage which must be paid in advance by the employee if they are to remain in force during the additional leave period.

D.6,a,(2)

(2) An employee not on active pay status or present and available for work due to a leave of absence on 1 October will be granted the amount of annual leave indicated in D.6.a (1) and prorated based on the date they return to work.

### Interpretations:

1. If you take SLOA for more than 12 weeks (89 days), you will be on the hook for the total cost of your Insurance coverage on the 90<sup>th</sup> day of SLOA. Prior to the 90<sup>th</sup> day you will only be responsible for the amount that you are currently paying as per Appendix A, Medical Benefits table.
2. You will accrue your seniority bonus for 90 days.
3. Your seniority date will not be affected by SLOA. You will be considered as having been on the active payroll the whole year. You can select annual leave by your seniority and your annual leave cannot be prorated as per D.6,a,(2) above.
4. Since the holiday exodus period is not explicitly referenced in the agreement you should not expect to be paid for that period should your SLOA overlap the Holiday Exodus timeframe.

I cannot think of any other glitch that may adversely affect the applicant for SLOA. If you have other insurance, you may get off on the cheap.

PHPA, OPEIU LOCAL 102  
POST OFFICE BOX 427  
DALEVILLE, ALABAMA 36322

PHONE: 334-598-4121  
FAX 334-598-1620  
E-MAIL:  
LOCAL102@AUTOROTATE.ORG  
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### **CHECKLIST**

PH[A General Membership Meeting 6:30 PM October 10, 2013.

### **MEETING AGENDA**

1. Meeting called to order.
2. Officer Reports.
3. Old Business.
4. New Business.
5. Discussion.

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



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