

Unionism in Law Enforcement

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The changing public climate in the 1960's and 1970's, in which challenges to authority became fashionable and the enactment of public sector bargaining laws, are chiefly what led to the evolution of collective bargaining by government employee associations. Other incentives for public sector employees to turn to collective bargaining were an expanding role of the government in societal affairs, increased educational levels by public employees, and race/gender discrimination.

Law enforcement officers today possess a variety of skills and knowledge. They have to act as social workers when called upon to quell family disputes. They have to administer emergency medical treatment to victims of violent crimes or traffic crashes, and they must be able to operate sophisticated equipment. At times they will have to struggle physically with suspects refusing to be taken into custody, and it is imperative that they keep abreast of the ever-changing rules of criminal procedure.

The constant change, increasing demands for service, vicarious liability, and the increase of lawsuits being filed against individual officers have caused law enforcement officers to continue to seek refuge in bargaining organizations.