



IT HAPPENED TO ME...

## THE BENEFIT OF LEGAL PROTECTION

This is a column for members by members who have had to depend on the PA Principals Association for legal advice, support and protection. The legal protection afforded to members is invaluable and makes a difference.

**A member of the PA Principals Association was asked a series of questions regarding a legal situation they recently faced.**

An employee filed a hostile work environment claim against me and other administrators in our district. The employee made claims that they were being intimidated and took them to the assistant superintendent. Eventually, an independent investigator was secured by the district to examine the claims. It was surprising to find out about this situation, as the employee in question was struggling to do their job but had the support of another administrator (so there was a political aspect at play). The investigation was later extended to the central office.

At one point, I knew that it was time to contact the PA Principals Association. I knew, as a member, that the association provided legal advice and support. I had a direct conversation with the Executive Director (Dr. Eshbach) and was provided with immediate advice. He began by stating that I must do the interview and that I was compliant with the investigation. I did not need to speak with an attorney, as the investigation found that the claim was unfounded for all administrators.

My advice to any member who is facing a similar situation would simply be: Call Eric Eshbach! He gave me a level of comfort when we spoke and a feeling that "I'm not alone." When something like this happens, you start doubting yourself and think, "Why would they be investigating me?" As if you've done something wrong. I am grateful to have called someone with experience who could talk me through the situation.

*-Anonymous Secondary Principal*

### Here's your legal protection:

As a member of the PA Principals Association, you are automatically enrolled as a member of NAESP or NASSP. The national membership provides legal protection for job action taken against you as well as legal liability insurance for eligible civil suit claims. This protection provides legal fee reimbursement in the amount of \$1,000 for each consecutive year of membership up to a total of \$10,000 (for example, a person who has been a member for five consecutive years can claim up to \$5,000 in legal costs). In the event that you are involved in any situation that may result in possible legal action, you must contact the PA Principals Association office immediately. Members of the PA Principals Association staff will assist you in the claim submission process required by NAESP and NASSP.

However, if you let your membership in the association lapse, when you rejoin, your legal benefit will start over at \$1,000. Therefore, it is extremely important to maintain your membership.

### Principals' legal assistance:

If you are confronted with a legal situation in which job action is being taken against you, if you are named in a lawsuit or if you are dealing with an Act 93 issue, contact the PA Principals Association office immediately at **(717) 732-4999**. ■