



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 series of questions was directed to a member of the PA Principals Association regarding a recent legal situation.

I received a call from the district Human Resources (HR) Department and was informed that a teacher in my building had made allegations of harassment and discrimination against me. The teacher claimed that the way I had handled a particular situation was harassment.

I then met with the district HR director and district solicitor. Prior to this meeting, I believed it had to do with this specific situation, but incidents from years ago were discussed. Afterward, I felt that I needed legal advice, and it was time to contact the PA Principals Association for assistance. I knew that legal advice and counsel is part of my membership in the Association.

Following this initial meeting, I reached out to Dr. Eshbach (executive director), and he called me back right away. He provided me with legal advice and walked me through what steps to take in this situation. I was also assigned an attorney who is in the Association's network. Soon after, I received a phone call from the attorney, and I shared the details of the allegations made against me.

This was so important because the attorney shared my side of the story and acted as my representative with the school district's solicitor. The matter was closed due to unfounded charges. Nonetheless, the teacher continues to work in my building.

*My advice to any member who is facing a similar situation would be: **Know your rights and know your benefits.***

- **Know your benefits:** It is important to know that you can reach out to the executive director for advice/counsel and to find out if the situation warrants an attorney.
- **Know your rights: 1)** Be prepared: take notes and ask a lot of questions. Make sure it is not one-sided; **2)** Reflect on any different incidents that may come up so you can remember everything that happened and write it down; and **3)** Follow the executive director's advice and do what the assigned attorney tells you to do.

-Anonymous Elementary Member

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**. ■