

ILACP Vice Presidential Candidate Questionnaire

- Name and job title?

Steven G. Johnson, Chief of Police, Fairview Heights Police Department

- How long have you been in law enforcement? How long have you served as a Chief of Police?

I bring 36 years of law enforcement experience, including 11 years as a Chief of Police. I have served as Chief of Police for the Fairview Heights Police Department since 2023 and previously held the same position with the Swansea Police Department for eight years. I retired as a Captain from the St. Clair County Sheriff's Department after 25 years of service.

- What position are you running for and why?

Vice President At-Large for Region 1. I have been an active member of the ILACP for many years, participated in statewide committees during the SAFE-T Act discussions and revisions, legislative committee, and have valued the opportunity to serve as the current Vice President At-Large for Region 1. I am proud of the progress made by the Board, while recognizing there is still important work ahead. Our profession requires principled leadership that is prepared to advocate for the future, build strong networks for positive change, and confront challenges facing law enforcement. I feel it is important to be part of the future and to be able to give back.

- How have you benefited from being an ILACP member?

The annual conference has been instrumental in my development as an organizational leader. The quality of the courses is exceptional, and the mentorship provided by experienced, long-serving leaders has had a meaningful and lasting impact on my career. The vendor hall has also proven invaluable, allowing me to bring innovative ideas and emerging technologies back to my city and ensuring our agency remains at the forefront of modern policing. After each conference, I return with critical information that directly informs improvements and operational changes within my department.

Serving this past year as Vice President At-Large has contributed significantly to my personal and professional growth. Active participation in statewide discussions and issues has enhanced my understanding of the broader challenges facing law enforcement, including the complexities of legislation, political considerations, and unintended policy consequences. This experience has strengthened my ability to

navigate these challenges thoughtfully and avoid similar pitfalls within my own leadership decisions.

The weekly communications are an essential resource, ensuring my department remains informed on critical events, legislation, emerging issues, and best practices for addressing them. Additionally, the training opportunities offered are outstanding and provide substantial value to agencies that fully engage with them.

- If elected, what would be your top 3 priorities for ILACP?

1. Officer Wellbeing and Safety

In May 2025, three officers from my department were shot in the line of duty. Navigating the aftermath, for the injured officers as well as the entire organization, has been an ongoing and complex challenge. Building sand castles, one area seems good while the other area deteriorates. Progress in one area often revealed new vulnerabilities in another, requiring sustained attention and deliberate leadership. We were fortunate to already have counseling services, critical incident debriefings, peer support, strong community engagement, city council backing, and other wellness programs firmly in place. Without these resources, our department would have struggled to effectively support our personnel. As Vice President At-Large for Region 1, I help lead the Officer Wellness Committee, a responsibility I consider essential. Developing a scalable template of best practices for officer wellness, tailored to departments of varying sizes across the state, is critical to long-term success.

2. Legislative Advocacy

The introduction of new legislation, often well-intentioned but not always fully informed by operational realities, continues at a rapid pace. It is imperative that we maintain a strong, informed voice in the legislative process to help shape policies before they become law.

3. Mentorship of Police Leadership

The only professional success I have had has been a direct result of the mentors who guided me throughout my career. It is my responsibility to give back by mentoring others, helping them advance, and ensuring opportunities are extended forward rather than withheld (similar to pulling someone up a ladder rather than pulling the ladder up).

- What do you see as the biggest challenge facing the ILACP?
Legislative and professional leadership in policing. The Association should continue to push in the direction of educating lawmakers about the true realities of policing. They

have done a tremendous job but we cannot miss an opportunity to sell the great job our officers/leaders do every single day.

- What unique perspective or contribution would you bring to the board that sets you apart?

My department borders East St. Louis and is approximately seventeen minutes from Ferguson, Missouri. Despite the challenges associated with proximity to high-crime areas and broader community divisions, we have cultivated a community that strongly supports and stands with its police department. This support is the result of our officers' consistent delivery of professional, respectful, and effective services. As a result of these experiences, I have been invited to the White House on two occasions to speak on 21st Century Policing.

I am also a speaker in the areas of Leadership, Officer Safety, Criminal Investigations, CyberCrime, Homeland Security, Response to Active Shooter, Interview and Interrogation, and various other topics. I have taught for FLETC and a private company in every state and several other countries to thousands of police officers and civilians.

- Anything else you'd like members to know about you?

While attending the FBI National Academy, I completed a course on violent behavior using a biological, psychological, and social framework. The depth and practical value of this instruction exceeded any single course I encountered during my pursuit of a master's degree. When I returned, I was involved in a case where a teacher had abducted and killed a high school student. It took nearly fifteen hours of interrogation for the teacher to confess to me he had killed her. He admitted to breaking her neck, choking her three times with a belt, so violently the belt snapped, then dragging her body out into the woods and burying her in a shallow grave. After the victim was missing for nearly thirty hours, he took us to where she was. Amazingly we found her still alive. She spent almost a year in a hospital and rehab but went back to school and graduated. She is now married with two great kids. This case was about tenacity, leadership and always doing it the right way, every single time.