The Florida Association of Code Enforcement (F.A.C.E.) has always had a Sergeant at Arms (SAR). What exactly is a SAR, and why is their role important to the Association? Well, let us start with our documents and give you a better idea. The SAR according to the Duties of Officers description states: The Sergeant-at-Arms shall maintain order during all meetings and functions of this Association. The Sergeant-at-Arms shall be Chairman of the Legislative and Judicial Review Committee that coordinates lobbying efforts with our Lobbyist. This position is elected in odd-numbered years.

One duty that is not advertised in the description, but is equally important to their role, is that they are also responsible for ensuring the proper casting of votes according to our bylaws during the election of Board members. The Legislative and Judicial Review Committee, have their own page within the organization's website, which can aid in keeping us informed of legislative updates that may have an impact on our profession.

This article will take you on a journey through the first decade of our Sergeant at Arms, and hopefully give you an idea of the importance your participation as a member of the Association is to the success of the SAR.

The Association's first SAR was William (Bill) Moore of Pinellas Park. Bill Moore held the seat until the 1991 F.A.C.E. Board Elections, where the membership elected Jim McDonald of Bradenton, FL. For the first three years, it would appear the main priority of the founding Board Members was to establish the certification program. That is not to say our Charter Board did not have lofty aspirations for the Association on the legislative side, it is simply clear through the reading of the Board Meeting Minutes, the primary goal was to establish the certification program.

We really do not have much written first-hand insight of what the goals and aspirations of the Association were towards the legislative side of things in the first few years. We can read in the minutes where legislative updates were attended by the Board, and given at annual meetings, but nothing clearly defining the Association's future planning for the legislative side of code enforcement. In fact, the first written item of the SAR’s primary function can be found in the Association's fourth year. At the May 1992 meeting, as established in the minutes, Jim McDonald mentions “The primary function of the Association is to monitor Florida legislation so as to notify the membership of any detrimental as well as beneficial legislation that we may need to act on as a constituency.”

Things began heating up for the legislative side in ‘93, with the implementation of three levels of certification complete, the Board of Directors began actively focusing on legislative growth. Brian Archer was elected that year as SAR, and the goals were clear. Ron Collodi, then Second Vice President, stated in his report at the June 25, 1993, Business Meeting that the membership’s assistance would be required for the promotion and adoption of state legislation regarding:

1. Assault of a code enforcement officer to be a felony offense.
3. The personnel records of code enforcement officers to be private
4. Placing a portion of fines into a separate fund to provide training for code enforcement officers.
Success in the legislative and judicial committee was recognized at the June 15, 1994 Business Meeting, whereby Brian Archer explained the lobbying efforts with the Legislature resulted in the adoption of three bills affecting code enforcement: HB 155 & SB 168: Personnel records, HB 693 & SB 304: Revisions to Chapter 162: providing for expeditious and effective code enforcement, and HB 495 & SB 96: Methods of enforcement and penalties to impose on violators.

Continued success rained in during the '94-'95 leadership year, with the passage of House Bill 1441, which authorized code enforcement boards to impose a fine not to exceed $5,000 per violation if the Board finds the violation to be irreparable or irreversible in nature. The bill also provided that such costs from the successful prosecution of a case may be included in the lien authorized under s. 162.09(3). The bill took effect on October 1, 1995.

The year also brought about a real understanding regarding registration, certification or licensing of code enforcement officers. It was clear that at the State Legislative level, it would be no easy task and certainly not one that would be accomplished in any one year. Under the leadership of President Rick Wolf of Alachua County, the Board of Directors initiated a long-range plan and contracted the assistance of Charles Barner, a consultant and professional lobbyist with Regulated Industries, Inc. Mr. Barner suggested the Association engage in a Sunrise Study on the feasibility of licensing and assess what division of government F.A.C.E. would be licensed by. Rick Wolf once again called upon the help of the membership to tell the "horror stories" of why professional licensing or certification should be required.

The '96 legislative session turned out to be a non-regulation friendly year. The Board of Directors used the time to work on the Sunrise Study, which was a year-long study required by the State of Florida to determine the feasibility of licensing. Brian Archer advised the membership that completing the study would hopefully have F.A.C.E. ready for the following year’s legislative session. The '96 legislative year-end reporting stressed the Association would need the support of the League of Cities before going to the Tallahassee Legislative Session to lobby for state-mandated certification requirements, or for recognition of hazardous pay conditions.

The F.A.C.E. Board of Directors renewed the contract with Mr. Barner to continue lobbying for F.A.C.E. into the '97 legislative session. Mr. Barner continued to stress to the Board of Directors that F.A.C.E. would need the endorsement from the Florida League of Cities and counties to be successful in Tallahassee. It was suggested they find a way to get the League involved in our programs. The '97 Legislative session resulted in a trip to Tallahassee to lobby for code enforcement officers to be state certified, as well as making it a felony to assault a code enforcement officer. The year ended without the signing of a bill into law.

The final years of the Association's first decade ended without a successful bill mandating certification or recognizing that code officers have a high-risk profession. However, Board Members continued to meet legislative representatives in Tallahassee during those years under the leadership of Phyllis Wright, City of Lakeland. The Legislative and Judicial Committee found success with minor implemented changes to F.S. 162, and the blockage of mobile home park owners proposed changes to FS 162. As Phyllis ended her five-year service to the Association, she reported to the membership that then-Governor Bush requested she keep in touch with him about F.A.C.E.; and her final note to the membership on trips to Tallahassee was, “We have made a GOOD NAME for our Association!”