

THE 411 FORUM



A publication for the hardworking men and women of AFSCME 411

July 2006

AFSCME Endorses Candidates to Protect Jobs/ Benefits

THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Apathy. That is what I see and hear everywhere I look when I talk to working men and women. Did we just give up? Do we think the battle cannot be won? Working men and women are on the verge of losing rights and benefits fought for over the last 50 years by our grandfathers. These are rights our grandparents died for in the great auto plants of Michigan. Are we so eager to give up our retirement benefits? Our health care? Our job security? I hear working men and women apologizing for their health care and retirement benefits. When did these become luxuries and not the benefit packages we earned working hard on the job many years? I refuse to apologize for having good health care and retirement benefits. I work hard for those benefits and so do you. Why are working men and women so willing to concede those benefits we established as necessities long ago. No employee should be made to beg on bended knee for benefits needed to sustain their health and livelihood into retirement. Apathy. That is our enemy. We need to elect candidates this August and next November who support working people - not AFSCME working people, not UAW or Teamsters working people, just working people. That means you and me!! It's easy. The cure for apathy is quite simple ... **Walk out your door on August 8th and vote!!!!**

BE sure you vote August 8th

for County Commissioner to protect your job and benefits. Vote on the basis of which candidate will vote for you when the hard choices need to be made in the next year. Now, more than ever, your vote will make a difference. Remember, you are electing your boss. Public service employees have the greatest power of all employees - to elect who will make decisions regarding their wages and benefits. ***If you do your work at the ballot box, your work is done.*** Let's do our work where it needs to be done by electing the following candidates:

County Commissioner Races

- District 1 - Andrey Duzyg
- District 2 - Marvin Sauger
- District 3 - Philip DiMaria
- District 4 - Jon Switalski
- District 5 - Susan Doherty
- District 6 - Joan Flynn
- District 7 - no endorsement
- District 8 - David Flynn
- District 9 - Robert Mijac
- District 10 - Thomas Alef

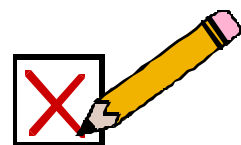
- District 11 - Rick Fast
- District 12 - Christopher McNeely
- District 13 - Jeff Grundy
- District 14 - Brian Brdak
- District 15 - Thomas McVicar
- District 16 - no endorsement
- District 17 - Ed Bruley
- District 18 - Dana Camphous-Peterson
- District 19 - Paul Gielegem
- District 20 - Kathleen E. Tocco
- District 21 - Leonard Haggerty
- District 22 - Betty Slinde
- District 23 - William Crouchman
- District 24 - Sarah Roberts
- District 25 - Michael Landsiedel
- District 26 - Alisa Diez

These candidates, in particular, have made a solid commitment to protect the jobs and benefits of AFSCME 411 employees. Many of them have long-term political records we can depend on. This next contract negotiation will be difficult. We must have county commissioners sensitive to the needs of the employees. Our fate lies in your hands. Get out and work for these candidates. Get your friends and neighbors to vote for them.

Jill Lezotte for State Rep.

If you live in the 32nd District, you have the opportunity to vote for one of AFSCME 411's officers for State Representative, Jill Lezotte. Jill is running as a Democrat in the district covering Lenox and Chesterfield Townships. Jill has been a dedicated AFSCME 411 member and the Secretary of the local for a number of years. Jill will represent the working men and women of Macomb County and protect retirement, wages and health care. Vote for Jill Lezotte if you live in her district.

**Don't forget to
vote on
August 8th**



Updates: Countywide Budget Cuts

At the last Finance Committee Meeting, which was held on June 23, 2006, a recommendation was adopted to reduce the budget at **Martha T. Berry** to the 2005 level, a cut of approximately \$3,327,000 from the 2006 budget.

It is projected some of the cuts will be offset by a tax on nursing home beds that would be returned to County run facilities like Martha T Berry that could provide \$1.1 million per year in new monies. It is also anticipated there will be an increase in revenues now that the construction has been completed and the facility is able to increase their census numbers. But, even after those anticipated increases, the facility will still need to make major changes to meet its future budgetary needs. AFSCME 411 has been in contact with key commissioners, as well as the Director of Human Resources and Martha T Berry to work on this issue and offer solutions outside the box. The easy answer is to look at current employees and their wage and benefit packages and start hacking away. Both historically and statistically, this approach has proven to be detrimental to both the facility and the patients. Happy, well-paid employees with secure benefits stay on the job. This stability of work force has proven to have a very positive effect on the patients in a long-term care facility, such as Martha T. Berry, where the turnover rate is traditionally very high. Some ideas to produce income at a facility such as Martha T. Berry include the formation of a foundation that would oversee development and fund-raising initiatives of the facility. This could include memorials, tributes and special events, such as galas or large yearly events. This foundation could raise non-profit monies to assist in funding Martha T. Berry. Another idea is to house physician offices within the facility. These offices would pay rental income to the facility. These ideas, as well as others, will be offered as alternatives to staff, wage and benefit cuts – the traditional avenue utilized by employers to balance budgets. Hopefully, the County of Macomb will think outside the box

also in these discussions and save long-term jobs.

At the same Budget Meeting on June 23, 2006, a **hiring freeze** was approved which added to the current hiring freeze that no temporary employees would be approved for vacant budgeted positions. Temporary positions would be approved only for people on leaves of absences, including military leave, worker's compensation and all other leaves of absences only.

In two separate letters to the commissioners in April and May, Finance Director, David M. Diegel stated the "major budgetary challenges facing the County continues to be **pension funding requirements and health care costs** for employees and retirees." He further stated there had been a "significant increase in our retirement rolls due to the 70 point plan which in turn creates ever increasing health care costs for retirees during a time that we are experiencing little if any growth in our employment base due to budgetary constraints." He stated in his letter dated May 9, 2006, the average cost of fringe benefits for a general employee in 2005 exceeded 56% of payroll before any contribution were made by the county toward the unfunded liability for retiree health care. He states if the unfunded health care liability were added, the amount would exceed 60% of payroll. He goes on to state the county has not made any contribution to retiree health care liability since 2003, due to the current fiscal situation. As you can see, the employee medical coverage has no longer been identified as the cash cow, it is now our pension plan. With this type of rhetoric taking place, we need to stand firm. We need to elect commissioners who will make the tough decisions that need to be made to balance the budget in ways other than on the backs of the employees.

Finally, all conferences have been suspended, as well as an effort to cut overtime hours. Every department has made a mandatory 3% cut. Future cuts including mandatory cuts

Contractual Reminders

It is a violation of the International Constitution to "act in collusion with management to the detriment of the welfare of the union or its membership", punishable by a judicial body. This means running to your boss and working with them against other members. Work with your union steward instead. This doesn't mean you shouldn't report something that is illegal or dangerous. You need to report these issues as quickly as possible. This does mean you don't have to work against other members – we are all sisters and brothers!!!!

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