

THE 411 FORUM



A publication for the hardworking men and women of AFSCME 411

March 2005

Negotiations for New Contract Begins

THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Seniority rights is a hot topic in county hiring. A large number of the non-economic proposals we are offering in this contract are in regards to protecting the seniority rights of our membership. I view this issue as second only to health care as the most important one facing our membership in this contract. With the growing numbers of unemployed workers seeking stable jobs, guarding the promotional opportunities for our membership is imperative. The newly created hiring practices implemented as an outcry to make amends for past discriminatory practices in the county for many years is welcomed, but not at the sacrifice of seniority rights. We will continue to grieve any attempt to divert from our contract language in hiring practices. We have been assured this will not occur. As you know, some of our positions are classified entry-level positions and, therefore, per contract language, not subject to seniority rights. We are attempting to move many of these positions out of the entry-level classification. Many of these positions present promotional opportunities for our members. We are also attempting to include demotions as part of seniority right language. With these changes, and others we have proposed, we are attempting to better protect the seniority rights of our members. We will fight hard for these changes. It is our strong and heartfelt position that the employer have an allegiance to the employees who have served him well for many years. Your negotiating team will continue to fight for this belief at the bargaining table.

The negotiating team, elected at a membership meeting last year, began meeting with Ted Cwiek, Director of the Human Resources Department, last October. AFSCME's contract expired December 31, 2004. The negotiating team and the Human Resource Department have agreed to extend the contract until May 1, 2005. A further extension will occur at that time until a contract settlement is reached. A number of key issues, including employee health care, have surfaced. At this time, the negotiating team has presented the Human Resource Department with a number of proposals dealing with non-economic issues. These all include language changes in our current contract. After the non-economic issues are concluded,

economic issues will be addressed.

If you would like more details regarding negotiations, please attend a membership meeting.

They are held the first Wednesday of every month at 5:30 pm in the Senior Citizen Auditorium in the Verkuilen Building. Your 2005 negotiating team members consists of:

Dorothy Bursey	Clerks Office
Patrick Militello	Treasurer Office
Jan Wilson	Sheriff Office
Joyce Compo	Health Department
Steven Corbett	Treasurer Office
Donna Cangemi	Mental Health
Carol Monroe	MSU Extension
Cathy Phillips	Council 25 Staff
Brenda Adams	Council 25 Staff

These members are to be applauded for their dedication and diligence.

Already, they have given up many nights at the union office working to obtain a good contract. Without a



Where Does Our Dues Go?

With the increase in membership dues last January, many members have been asking where their membership money is spent. Only a small portion of the monthly membership dues stays within our local. The majority of money goes to AFSCME International and to Council 25. The dues increase last January was approved by the delegates attending the Council 25 State Convention October, 2004

and the International Convention last June. Within our own local, the executive board approves a yearly budget. The expenditures in our local, as well as the current savings accounts, past records and all other financial records, are open records to all AFSCME 411 members. The financial status of the local is reported at every membership meeting by the treasurer. If you have any specific questions

Social Security Crisis– Fact or Fiction ?

What should you know about Social Security? According to the Social Security trustee reports, the standard basis for analyzing Social Security, the program can pay all benefits through the year 2042, with no changes whatsoever. According to this report, even after 2042, the program would always be able to pay retirees higher benefits (in today's dollars) than what current retirees receive. A second assessment by the non-partisan Congressional Budget Office is that Social Security is even stronger. This report projects Social Security can pay benefits through the year 2052 with no changes whatsoever. By either measure, Social Security is more financially sound today than it has been throughout most of its 69-year history. The proposal that President Bush is using as the basis for his plan phases in cuts over time. **A worker who is 45 today can expect to see a cut in guaranteed benefits of around 15%.** A worker of 35 around 25%. A 15 year old who is just entering the work force can expect a 40% cut. For this worker, it would mean a loss of close to \$200,000 over the course of their retirement. Why should this make a difference to you? Social Security pays the most to those who need it most. The fact is that current benefits are structured so that low wage earners get a much higher share of their wages in benefits than do high wage earners. A worker who earned \$10,000 a year during their working lifetime can expect to see a benefit that is equal to approximately 70% of their average wage. A worker who earned \$36,000 a year will get approximately 40% while a worker who earned \$50,000 will get 35%. The fact is that without Social Security 65% of African American women and 52% of white women over the age of 65 would be living in poverty. Social Security is more than a retirement program. Nationally, 50% of beneficiaries receive all or part of their benefits either as a disabled worker or as a surviving spouse. **Over 80%**

of these beneficiaries are women and children. Under the proposed plan allowing the choice to privatize, women stand to lose more than just their retirement security. One in 10 female Social Security recipients depend on its disability benefits. Nearly 4 million children receive Social Security benefits as dependents of deceased, disabled or retired workers. **For nearly one in four women age 65 or older, Social Security is their only source of income. Privatizing Social Security would cost the average retiree \$152,000 in benefits in the 20 years after retirement.** For those who choose private accounts, the government would take back .50 for ever \$1 in the account. That's on top of the 30% benefit cut. It would fall on the shoulders of taxpayers and family members to provide the help to our most vulnerable citizens that is now provided by Social Security's guaranteed benefits. The truth is, privatizing Social Security would explode the deficit, saddling our children with a \$2 trillion in debt while at the same time plunging many of our retirees into poverty. There are other options. According to the American Academy of Actuaries, removing the cap of \$87,500 would eliminate 77% of the projected shortfall when the baby boomers begin to collect. There are other options that have been suggested also. They include: raising the retirement age, reducing COLA by 1/2 point, reducing benefits 5% for future retirees and reducing benefits for those whose income exceeds \$50,000, to name a few. Whatever your opinion on this important issue, this article is an attempt to keep you informed. If you would like more information, the following websites will be helpful: www.cept.nt/publications/facts_social_security.htm, actuary.org/ or aflcio.org/social_security. If you like to sign a petition in opposition to rent proposed changes



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UNION DISCOUNTS

Your union membership entitles you to a number of union discounts. Some of these include vet insurance and vet discounts, web site shopping, music clubs discounts, health clubs and car rentals. You can also access the **Homework Help web site**, the **Test Preparation web site** or apply for a number of scholarships through Union Plus. For details on these and other discounts visit our website at www.afscme411.org or go

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