

# THE 411 FORUM



*A publication for the hardworking men and women of AFSCME 411*

February 2010

## THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER

It has snowed a lot this winter—eight inches one night and six inches a week later. The following mornings, the public drove to work on clean and safe highways thanks to our fellow AFSCME 893 members at the road commission. Our courts run smoothly everyday thanks to our dedicated members at the County Clerk. Buildings are clean and grounds safe thanks to our Facilities and Operations members. Veterans, chronically mentally ill, the elderly, homeless and the hungry find essential services thanks to our members at the Health Department, MSU Extension Services, Community Mental Health and Veterans Affairs. Throughout the county, our members perform essential public services every day. How did we become the bad guys? Don't you think its time our elected "leaders" start tackling fundamental problems that our state budget faces at all levels of government rather than blaming it on us and pretending their hands are tied to do anything else but blame public employees. AFSCME International has a video called "Stop the Lies" aimed at addressing these mistruths about public employees. <http://www.afscme.org/StopTheLies>

## Are Michigan Public Employees Overcompensated?

Recent research indicates state and local government employees are not overpaid when comparisons are controlled for education, experience, organization size, gender, race, ethnicity, citizenship and disability. **On an annual basis, full-time state and local employees are under compensated by approximately 5.3% compared with similar private sector workers.** This is according to a study by the Economic Policy Institute published February 3, 2011. This study could not be more timely. In Governor Snyder's "Citizen's Guide to Michigan's Financial Health", released January 31, 2011, he states, "In 2009, state classified employee compensation was 113% higher, on average, than the private sector." This guide further makes the claim that, "Average annual compensation of state employees (including salary, wages, and benefits) was over twice the average annual compensation of private sector workers in 2009" The Economic Policy study contradicts this assertion and points out that public employees in the State of Michigan are substantially more educated than their private sector counterparts. Approximately 53% of full-time Michigan public employees hold a bachelors degree, compared with 31% of full-time employees in the private sector. Higher levels of

education are strongly associated with higher earnings in the labor market. Only 1% of state and local government employees lack a high school education compared to 7% of employees in private firms. Public sector employees receive more of their compensation in the form of non-wage benefits than private sector workers. **Public employers provided a greater share of employee compensation in the form of health insurance and retirement benefits. Public employees receive a lesser share of their wages in the form of pay and consume less in costs for legally required benefits such as worker compensation and unemployment insurance than private sector employees.**

Comparing private and public employee wage and non-wage benefits leads to an incorrect conclusion that public employees are overpaid. Controls that consider education level, increases in health insurance premiums, deductibles and co-pays, furlough days as well as previously stated factors such as experience, organization size and gender must be factors that are considered in any comparison for an apples to apples comparison. If you are interested in viewing the Economic Policy Study: [http://epi.3cdn.net/ac5a7563f793ddf366\\_89m6b5vrv](http://epi.3cdn.net/ac5a7563f793ddf366_89m6b5vrv).

# The State of our Union: AFSCME 411 Report

*The AFSCME 411 officers and executive board work diligently throughout the year to maintain a strong and viable union. I am proud to report the continued efforts of your officers and executive board in this State of the Union report.*

**MEMBERSHIP** - Membership, despite the slumping economy, has not declined dramatically. The January 2011 report from AFSCME Council 25 reported a total membership of 791. In March 2007, the membership stood at 846, the highest total. In August 2002, total membership shrank to 725. When I first took office in 2001, total membership stood at 628. Thanks to a number of successful organization efforts over the past decade at MSU Extension, Headstart, Community Mental Health and Board of Commissioner Office, our local continues to reach those employees who are not yet unionized.

**FINANCIAL** - Fiscally, the officers and executive board continue to show great respect with your union dues. The local complies with all the mandates of the AFSCME Financial Standards Code. The local maintains a CD, a savings account and a checking account. An annual budget is submitted each year to the executive board and approved, including monthly savings. An annual audit is performed by our trustees followed by a report to the membership. Extensive financial reports are reviewed monthly at the membership meetings. Fiscally, the local remains strong and viable.

**GRIEVANCES** - Currently, the local is processing 125 grievances on behalf of membership. The local has twelve trained union stewards countywide to assist membership. The local strives to resolve grievances successfully with positive results for members.

It is with great sadness that we say goodbye to two AFSCME 411 members in the past month. The membership, officers and executive board express our condolences to their family, friends and fellow workers:

## THE FINAL FLIGHT

*Don't grieve for me, for now I'm free, I'm following the path God laid for me.  
I took his hand when I heard his call,  
I turned my back and left it all.  
I could not stay another day, to laugh, to love, to work, to play.  
Tasks left undone must stay that way, I've found that peace at the end of the day.  
If my parting has left a void, then fill it with remembered joy.  
A friendship shared, a laugh, a kiss,  
Ah, yes, these things too I will miss.  
Be not burdened with times of sorrow,  
I wish you the sunshine of tomorrow.  
My Life's been full, I savoured much,  
Good friends, good times, a loved one' touch.  
Perhaps my time seemed all too brief,  
Don't lengthen it now with undue grief.  
Lift up your heart and share with me,  
God wanted me now, He set me free.*

## NEXT MEMBERSHIP MEETING MARCH 2ND – 5:30 PM VERKUILEN – SENIOR AUDITORIUM

**AFSCME Local 411**  
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**President:** Donna Cangemi  
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**Vice President:** Jan Wilson  
Cell 321-2380

**Secretary:** Cindy Donahue  
**Treasurer:** Karen Davenport

**Union Stewards**  
*Verkuilen, Emergency Services, Health*  
Joyce Compo 321-4199

**Sheriff**  
Jan Wilson 321-2380

**Old Adm. Bldg.**  
Benny Smith 944-8481

**New Adm. Bldg.**  
Denise Mentzer  
469-6287 or 465-2672

*42nd District Court Romeo*  
Cynthia Antonette

*Headstart Teachers*  
South of 16 Mile Road – Mary Jo Duffy –  
943-1600

*Headstart Teachers – North of 16 Mile Road*  
Mary Max – contact at worksite

**MTB**  
Diane Coleman – contact at work site

**MTB**  
Elaine Lipsey – contact at work site

*Facilities and Operations*  
Christopher Halvorsen – 549-7788

*Health Department Southeast Health*  
Brenda Mixon – 465-8449

*Public Works, Pump Station*  
Alex Pirkovic  
557-3022