

MAINLINE

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF AFSCME LOCAL 444 AUG/SEPT 2012

SUPPORT THE CHICAGO TEACHERS!

Public school teachers in Chicago, Pres. Obama's old stomping ground and Democratic Mayor Rohm Emmanuel's fiefdom are on strike after being presented contractual language that would make it easier to fire teachers and to fire them over poor standardized testing results – in schools where teachers are paying for art supplies and sports equipment, and in neighborhoods where kids have a hard time getting breakfast or avoiding gangs, we don't need teachers spending the entire year teaching kids to fill out Scantron forms!

PENSION REFORM

It is still unclear whether EBMUDers will be directly impacted by PURPA, the Pension Reform Act of 2012. I have seen memoranda that say we will and others that say we won't. But the good news is that public pension defined benefit plans will not be turned into a 401K style system where our collective billions in savings would go to further enrich the super wealthy fund managers on Wall Street and losses in the stock market are socialized into reduced payouts to the pensioners. The bosses pensions will be capped at \$110,000/yr and they will not be allowed to receive better medical benefits than us.

If we do fall under PURPA we will have to pay 50% of the cost of our pension by 2018, a potential increase in our payroll deduction to around 8% and capped at 14%. For new members it could mean a potential change in the retirement multiplier, which would be graduated, topping out at 2.5% at age 67. And members would not be able to buy back lost time for leave of absence or any other break in service. Otherwise, our pension appears to be fairly consistent with the new rules and restrictions being placed on CalPERS plans. We will keep you updated as we learn more.

HELP STOP PROP 32!

Do your part to help fight corporate interests who are trying to stop unions from contributing to political campaigns. The Rightwing union

foes have cleverly disguised a bill, Proposition 32, as being “campaign finance reform” We all can probably agree that one of the biggest problems in government today is the financing of politics by special interests who then use their influence to sway the elected to do their bidding rather than serve the People. But this bill will only tie the hands of labor, mandating that any political contributions are voted for and approved by each and every member, while corporate interest only need approval of their board, and organizing as an LLC or other entity grants an exemption. Super PACs will go on collecting money from millionaires and billionaires, while we the working class will have no ability to raise significant opposition to the typical right-wing union busting politics they play and policies they push.

AFSCME Council 57 is doing phone banking every Tuesday and Thursday evening to fight this Proposition. Contact Annelisa Luong at aluong@afscme.org to help out. We need you!

Board of Directors meeting, Sept 11, 2012

Mike Wallis’ staff presented to the Directors at Committee meeting the plan to “Transition [water reclamation] to O&M”, but their plan was a laughable one page outline and the Directors said so! (OK, they didn’t say it was “laughable” but just about). The presentation outlined current operations of the reclamation facilities and the water filter plants and suggested that due to the sequential operations of USLTP and the Sobrante plant that the Water Side could just rotate through the reclamation facilities. Alex Coate noted that the District will continue to supply Chevron with recycled water, and that the District will contract with the out-going reclamation facilities supervisor for a “smooth transition”, which they want to start by moving water operators in as early as Nov. 1 and have all the wastewater operators out by the end of the fiscal year (June 2013), and that since they will not have to backfill the WWTP operators, they will save a million dollars.

Surely, they expected to hear the Directors say “A MILLION DOLLARS!!!!!!” But that was not so. Frank Mellon first stated that replacement of AFSCME Local 444 operators with Operating Engineers Local 39 will cause a major jurisdictional dispute and unfair

labor practice charges and that it will be years of litigation before they implement their plan if they proceed in this manner. Wallis interjected that the reclamation facilities supervisor is retiring on Oct 31, and Mellon told him “that’s not my problem” and instructed him to start training a new supervisor (since there is no conflict with Local 21. But that screws the supervisor who has put in retirement paper and accepted a consulting job with the engineering firm Black and Veatch for a “seamless transition”!) and to go back to the table with the plan and include labor in discussions.

The Business Agent for Local 39, Rick Putz, then spoke against the jurisdictional violation, said his operators don’t want the change and will fight to prevent it. Then it was Rubens turn! He told them that 444 is dead set against the proposal; that it would mean the loss of seven 444 positions and at least one supervisory career path for 444 members. Then he chastised Management for failing to communicate with the Locals; they communicated with Chevron and with management internally, but notified 444 of the plan with a 1-page memo the late in the day before a holiday weekend just prior to presentation to the Board, in complete disregard of labor, taking us all the way back to 1998; that “shadowing” operators with water side supervisors was totally inappropriate; that management has let rumors run rampant, and that we expect better from the bosses.

A couple of water treatment operators then spoke questioning the safety of the plan in regards to Chevron’s record, and the logistics in terms of the criticality of water treatment operations. It was also noted that the plan was missing detail on the cost savings.

Directors McIntosh and Katz both echoed Director Mellon’s comments, saying that it was “amazing” that management had not had any dialog with the unions; that crossing the two unions was a bad idea; to go back to the drawing board; that it was even “outrageous!”, and that the plan was “simplistic” in terms of benefits and may look good on paper but “did not reflect real life or the depth of consequences.”

Coate was left whimpering that “no disrespect was intended” wanted to “allow the board to understand what they were talking about so that they’re apprised of the Project before 444 comes.” And the \$1 million we’ll be saving will be significant...sorry.

DATE: May 10, 2012

MEMO TO: Members of the Retirement Board

FROM: Tamara Wickland, Manager of Employee Services

SUBJECT: Retirement Board Regular Meeting – May 17, 2012

*“Lloyd Sawchuk commented that the charts aggregate all retirees and does not distinguish out retirees prior to the 2004 pension formula increase who most likely have lower pensions. **Frank Mellon requested that staff research the legality of suspending the COLA for current retirees.**”*

Mother MUD appears to be jumping on the “we are broke bandwagon”. No surprise, it’s happening to everyone else, why not us. Public workers are like a frog in a pot of cold water. If heat is applied slowly it will sit there until it’s cooked. As our leadership continues to capitulate the economic noose around our necks tightens. It’s happening every day. Read the papers; cutbacks, furlough days, wage freezes, increasing our contributions into our pension plans and for medical insurance. Nickel dimed, nickel dimed, we are being cooked. If you think you are above the fray you are in denial. If you are ok your community isn’t. Kids are not being educated, people are losing their jobs, people don’t have health insurance, safety nets are being cut, etc. Wall Street continues to steal our money. Democrats and Republicans are useless, they are more interested in making money, having affairs, using drugs, shoplifting, driving under-the-influence, etc. Do good, well-meaning people want to help us by continuing the trend to nickel dime us with “small” regressive taxes. Currently, the City of Richmond wants to tax sugar drinks. Their target is the poorest members of the community.

The enemy is Capitalism, an economic system that dumps us like week old meat. If you think Capitalism works for you are not paying attention. We have the power to change all this but first we must free our belief that our government and economic system works for us. We need to free our mind of magical thinking and look at reality. We are being eliminated, the Capitalist don’t need us. We are week old dead meet. Fight back. Fight for Socialism. STRIKE! REVOLT!!!

Charles Smith, ret.