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8400 Enterprise Way, Oakland, Ca.

www.AFSCME444.com · AFSCME444@gmail.com

Message from the President

Brothers and Sisters of Local 444,

Soon we will be negotiating for a new contract and will require the input as well as support of everyone. Stewards are currently distributing surveys with the goal of receiving 100% members' participation – surveys are also available to download from the website. We will be asking each of you to return them to the stewards that same day. They are straightforward and brief enough to allow everyone to do so, and to get it done!

The surveys are for our guidance and not intended to encompass every issue, but to set the agenda for negotiates. Any other issues of importance may be forwarded to any one of our Negotiating Team Members for consideration, or brought to the General Membership Meeting on the third Thursday of every month at the Council 57 office located at 80 Swan Way in Oakland (visit our website at www.AFSCM444.com if you need directions). We look forward to hearing from everyone and depend on your participation as we begin preparations for the upcoming contract negotiations.

Your elected team members: **JOHN BRICENO President, RUBEN RODRIGUEZ 1st Vice President, TYRELL JACKSON 2nd Vice President, JOSEPH PANGELINAN Chief Steward, ROBERT LOPEZ Treasurer, ERIC LARSEN Member Relations Secretary, DWIGHT GEORGE Executive Board Member**

In Constant Solidarity,
John Briceno President
AFSCME LOCAL 444

AFSCME International Convention Las Vegas 2016 & Political Participation

The delegates to the 42nd AFSCME International all left with a better understanding of why unions must exist. Many of us know that a critical function of the union is contract negotiations. Every local bargains for the best contract for its members. Some locals unfortunately reside in “***right to work***” states, where the unions bargain for non-members as well, who gain the benefits of the union contract without paying dues, effectively ‘free-riders’. Elected politicians who vehemently oppose working class families/unions/labor laws in these states receive their marching orders and money from private sector organizations i.e.; ***ALEC (American Legislative Exchange Council), Chamber of Commerce, PPP (Public Private Partnerships)*** to name a few (more on this in the next article).

Imagine the difficulty a worker has when they negotiate by themselves for a fair and equitable contract, or to fight management on a disciplinary charge. Our strength is in our memberships’ commitment to participation and involvement with the Union.

Another crucial part of union activism is political participation, especially at the lower governing level i.e., your City Council and County Commissioners, Judges, School Boards, and governance of Special Districts (***EBMUD, BART, AC TRANSIT etc.***). But in order to have a political voice one must be registered to vote and use that power.

What labor demands from elected officials are laws that protect worker’s rights to organize, collective bargaining rights, health and safety etc... and not red herring issues that only divide working class people.

There are many ballot measures that often directly impact you and your loved ones. One example of an extreme anti-public worker ballot measure in 2015/2016 was the ***Chuck Reed & Carl DeMaio*** initiative titled “***CA Public Vote on Pensions Initiative***”.

That ballot measure “Eliminates constitutional protections for vested pension and retiree healthcare benefits for current public employees, for future work performed. It added initiative/referendum powers to state constitution, for determining public employee’s compensation and retirement benefits. It bared government employers from enrolling new employees in defined benefits plan, paying more than one-half cost of new employee’s retirement

benefits, or enhancing retirement benefits, “*unless first approved by voters*”.

Fortunately, the California attorney general’s office of *Kamala Harris* (labor endorsed) issued a title and summary that was based on independent analysis and gave voters a clear and accurate description of what the ballot measure really meant. The anti-pension organizations failed in their suit against the A.G.s office and shortly after withdrew their initiative. This is just one of many examples where labor endorsed candidates working within the law help protect working class families.

As we approach the presidential election I cannot help but think of the importance of the next President’s selection of a Supreme Court justice to fill the current vacancy and possibly two more within a four-year period. Had it not been for the ~~timely~~ untimely death of supreme court justice Antonin

Scalia, a then pending case “*Fredrick’s v. CTA*” would have made “*right to work*” the law of the land, breaking the unions ability to fight back against anti-labor/anti-worker attacks.

The republican presidential candidate Donald Trump has publicly and proudly stated that he loves “*right to work*” law! As I write this article more anti-public worker laws/rulings are making their way to the Supreme Court. While our union may not be perfect, I am grateful and proud to be part of an organization called “*AFSCME*” that represents our interests nationwide. Also at the local level being a member of “*Local 444*” our union that has negotiated salary and benefit packages that allow us to live and work with dignity!

In Solidarity
Ruben Rodriguez
1st VP Local 444

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\$6 Trillion – that is the value of the public sector. \$6 Trillion is why the Koch Brothers have committed to spend OVER \$800 million this election cycle. But they are small potatoes. In fact, billions of dollars are

pumped into the political machine in both contributions and mis-information – to break the Unions that protect workers and stand in the way of privatizing the public sector.

Much of this money is cycled through foundation set up as 501c3's (yes, non-profits!) so that billionaire families can remain anonymous, unlike the Walton's and the Koch's whose contributions and objectives are public, many of the mega-rich seek to keep private, but have the same political goal: to profit off of lowering our wages and eliminating our benefits, by making us work longer hours with fewer breaks, harder and faster until they kick us to the way-side as we age, replacing us with younger and naïve workers who don't know their rights.

They hate unions because unions give the workers power to negotiate fair wages, cutting into their profits; unions give the workers power to negotiate good benefits, again cutting into their profit; unions help protect the workers in the work place by assuring safe working conditions and that the terms of the contract are followed – so these capitalists finance groups like the Americans for Prosperity (AFP) with \$122-\$290 million per year in tax deductible contributions to spew **misinformation**.

The AFP, which claims to be a 'charitable social education organization' spends these

millions of dollars of contribution on advertising and writing news media opposing trade unions and collective bargaining, opposing the minimum wage, opposing health care and expansion of Medicaid, opposing global warming regulations and so on. Other organizations like ALEC (\$7.8 M/yr), the State Policy Network (\$63.8 M/yr), the Franklin Institute (\$6.9 M/yr), LIBRE (\$4.9 M/yr) and the Freedom Foundation all either write anti-labor legislation, or provide anti-worker media as 'education' to foster the ideas that unions are bad for the United States of America.

This is the fuel for the political machine we fight; that AFSCME, SEIU and all of the other unions and labor organizations that help fight for our working rights are up against. If you are a voluntary AFSCME PEOPLE member you can know that your small contribution is helping to expose these groups and protect our rights. Because *they know* **we are stronger together!**

Member Relations Secretary,
AFSCME Local 444
Eric Larsen

Fact: in 2015 all AFSCME Local 444 members received a 3.7% COLA increase to their wages through contract negotiations.