

MAINLINE

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Updates on Union Activity from the Chief Steward:

International Convention in LA started Monday and 444 is represented by President Ruben Rodriguez and 1st Vice President John Briceno. This is a contentious convection with elections for the President of the International at stake along with the direction the AFSCME Union will take over the course of next few years.

There is also a contentious rivalry between Council 57 and the International and the election and voting rights of 5000 AFSCME brothers and sisters at Local 2620.

Stay Aware of updates to the following:

The Union is still meeting and conferring with the District about a new Division and Classification the District is preparing to create with the Meter Readers.

The Union is also meeting with the District about the future of Healthcare and how the Federal Program could affect Local 444 brothers and sisters.

Chief Steward Franklin is still working on the report for job injuries and 444 members' responsibilities and rights. Also she is trying to put together a similar package for non work injuries and health issues and how it could impact 444 members employment. Also the union is trying to put together a packet on retirement vs. disability retirement and what rights 444 embers have.

The contracting out committee is fighting to prevent our work from going out to contractors. If you hear about anything in your division, please contact a member of the committee (John Bricino, Danny Guaraglia or Eric Larsen). After incessant badgering by 444, management is hiring a janitor for SD-1. We continue to battle

with them over much of the proposed pipeline work, and they are hiring new pavers and a maintenance mechanic.

From the Member Relations Secretary:
Pension Reform:

There is a great deal of activity happening throughout the country attacking pensions, particularly those of public workers whose pensions are fixed. In California, Jerry Brown and others are seeking to increase the retirement age of public workers and shift pensions out of a fixed rate structure and push them into a 401k style pension, which yet again socializes corporate losses as they privatize the profits. In California, this legislation is being bank-rolled by Enron billionaire John D. Arnold¹.

The attacks are coming from both Republicans and Democrats alike. With the recall defeat by Gov. Scott Walker and the passage of Measure B in San Jose by Democratic Mayor Chuck Reed the public has allowed AFSCME workers to be effectively disenfranchised; in San Jose AFSCME local 101 voters changed pension structures rather than management at contract negotiations when a strike could be the outcome, and in Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker has gutted collective bargaining rights of AFSCME workers state wide. The leadership of our International (mostly lawyers and politicians) all the while have condoned battling at the ballots or in the courts, rather than rallying strikes or other civil disobedience.

These events deserve very careful analysis, and require our attention and critical thought. The outcome of the International Convention may have some telling signals of the attitudes of our leadership and the membership, but it is doubtful that there will be any break from politics as usual.

¹ <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2011-08-12/enron-billionaire-bankrolls-california-advocate-for-public-pension-changes.html>

I would like to hear what our membership think about these issues, and I ask you to send an e-mail with your thoughts to AFSCME444@gmail.com Please state whether you want your opinions published in the Mainline, and if so, whether anonymously or not.

Editorial

Decades of post-World War II economic prosperity have become memories of the distant past. I was fortunate to begin my employment with EBMUD in 1984 when the United States economy, emerging from a period of deep recession, rebounded to undergo the greatest trend of economic growth experienced since World War II. Both private sector and government employers were quite prosperous and they could afford to offer increasing wages and benefits to their employees. Fast forward to the very beginning of the 21st Century and you see an economy in a near depression-like collapse. Economic scandal, due to corporate fraud, became commonplace. Most of the corporate elite faced no penalties for their economic rape. We still remain in the mire of this economic collapse and oddly live in an era where most Americans view trade unions with disdain. Members of the general public are outraged that government employees seem to be less bloodied by the corporate rapists, when compared to the private sector. Elected officials maintain their perpetual onslaught to take away government workers livable wages and benefits. The public largely fails to recognize that the vast majority of government workers never benefited from the financial abuse committed by some high ranking officials in fire departments, police departments and county hospitals. Some elected officials and the general public desire to revel in the bloodletting of government workers in a quest to see all segments of society drown in the blood of financial ruin. We, therefore, live in an age where the power of the organized trade union is indispensable in keeping our heads afloat.

We live in an age where the meritocracy of the obsequious sycophant rewards the backstabbing betrayal of one's co-worker. We have all had the misfortune to work with some that are blatantly self-serving and manipulative in their lust for the praise and recognition from those in authority. Some

have actually walked among us, in years past, inside our union hall. We recognize their smug, egotistical, self-righteous hypocrisy now that they've achieved their true goal of becoming a management tyrant. Their ranks seem to be growing in size as upper management builds an army to assault union member's hard earned wages and benefits. Upper management, no doubt, feels the pressure to placate the bloodthirsty public by subjecting unionized workers to substantial takeaways. The 2013 contract negotiations will be the battlefield where our financial futures will be decided. Intelligent management appreciates the collateral benefits achieved by hard-fought trade union victories.

Collateral benefits are also appreciated by the most unprincipled, untrustworthy and shameful creature in existence—our union-hating fellow co-workers that hold AFSCME Local 444 represented positions at EBMUD. They choose to remain ignorant of the fact that their wages and benefits were acquired through battles won by elected union officials. The union-hating freeloaders are aggressive in their search for the weaknesses and failures of some union members. This seems to be their justification for demonizing the union. It is disturbing to listen to their complaints about what the union did not do for them, or that their union dues were raised, while they make no attempt to attend any union meetings. There is no valid excuse for consistently failing to productively participate in the union that has benefited you with your current working conditions, wages and benefits. We all may have very different personalities, lifestyles and values, yet we share in the common bond of seeking victory in maintaining our quality of life. Your economic security hangs in the balance. If you choose to remain complacent, you may loose much of what you enjoy.

In Solidarity,
Steven Colson
AFSCME Local 444 Steward, Chevron
O&M