

Messages from Your Officers

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From Mary

Since we last wrote we have had two good Executive Board meetings where decisions have been made for the betterment of all members. In our deliberations, whether it was to help a member and/or local with financial needs or supporting a fight back campaign at the ballot box or supporting the work of our staff at Council 40, we are together. In short, we make decisions to help meet the needs of AFSCME Council 40.

Our Council, our locals and our members are experiencing significant challenges which directly impact our abilities to maintain a quality of life for ourselves and our communities. To a great extent this is due to the overall economic crises we are experiencing -- locally, regionally, and nationally. I believe that these conditions will improve. Remember, in the past, downturns have strengthened us and given us opportunities to show our communities that the work we do makes a difference.

We started a new agenda item under my area called "Listening to the Members." Board members relate to each other on what they have heard is going on in their specific areas of representation. Unfortunately, more and more of these include the lack of raises, reduction of benefits, and most importantly, loss of jobs. We have pledged to redouble our efforts to use our tools and resources to reverse these conditions.

We need your feedback as to how we can help you, as well as how we can provide you with updates that affect you and to inform you about the events that are going on at all levels of our Union. As a reminder, our toll-free telephone number is: **1-800-362-8261** and is 24/7. Call in and leave a message for anyone in Council 40. Somebody will get back to you within 24 hours. This fall we made small incremental updates to the website. In January, 2010 look for more in-depth changes to the website and a Facebook site for the members to utilize. Use our website, **afscmecouncil40.org**, and the toll free number to take this opportunity for two-way communication.

Council 11, the "service council" that serves the three Wisconsin AFSCME Councils (24, 40, and 48) for lobbying, public relations and more, has established a new website, **wiafscme.org**. Check it out for lots of useful information about Council 11 and its services, and to preview the activities and operations of Wisconsin AFSCME.

We just completed negotiations with our staff representatives and support staff. Appreciating the current crisis, we worked together and signed a reasonable contract. The staff representatives and support staff will not take a raise next year and changed their insurance plan substantially to benefit the Council. I again want to say thanks to everyone involved in these negotiations.

Please remember all year, and especially during the holiday season, that if we shop at Wal-Mart or any other nonunion employer, we are weakening all unions and endangering our job security. Even though times are tough, they'll get worse for all of us if our own behavior damages our own, or any other, Union. We would like to encourage you to shop at stores that employ our sisters and brothers -- buy Union Made/United States Made products.

Our Union is strong today and, with your help, will be strong tomorrow. We truly are stronger together. I will continue to be in touch with YOU, the members, via email and telephone and by attending membership meetings. I am here always to serve you and your needs.

From Jim

Since my last message, I continue to work for you – the members.

AUGUST -- The officers met with Mike Mann from AFSCME International to put a timeline and a plan together for continuing the implementation of central collection of dues, and in addressing how we are going to have a fair and balanced progressive dues structure.

SEPTEMBER -- The officers met with our staff at their annual training in Elkhart Lake. We let them know of our commitment to work together for the members. We are all part of the AFSCME Wisconsin Council 40 Team. We also thanked them for their work as it is important to everything we do. I attended, along with other Council 40 members, the National AFL-CIO Convention in Pittsburgh PA. Elected at this convention was Rich Trumka as President, Elizabeth Schuler as Secretary-Treasurer, and (AFSCME Member) Arlene Holt-Baker as Executive Vice President. The direction for the AFL-CIO is changing but the solidarity was felt at this convention across the Board of the Labor Movement. We must stick together for all our jobs. In late September the officers greeted our 2009 Basic Leadership Training Institute class in Madison.

OCTOBER -- Attended the annual Transportation Development Association (TDA) meeting at the Monona Terrace in Madison. The TDA is a coalition partner that we work with extensively on transportation issues. We had our Council 40 Board meeting along with committee meetings prior to the PEOPLE Conference Convention, which I also attended. We praised Michael Murphy and Lenny Hand on their many years of service to politics at all levels of the Union.

NOVEMBER -- Attended Council 40's Education Conference in Wisconsin Rapids with 150 other members.

WORK IN PROGRESS -- I continue to attend many County Board meetings to help in preventing the possible sale of the Jefferson County Nursing Home. My presence at Board meetings assure the County Board that AFSCME is here watching and listening! I am hopeful you are doing that at your county, city, and village meetings. They can't sneak anything into their budgets, resolutions, etc. if we are THERE!

I have been working with the newly organized members of the Paraprofessionals of Palmyra-Eagle School District. Once we organize, we continue to reinforce that we are here to help in any way we can.

I continue in my work as the President of the Jefferson County Chapter and Executive Board Member of the South Central Federation of Labor.

I continue to work hard for you as Council 40 Vice President. **Do something for your union; do something for yourself.**

From Diane

We will be working together on a **centralized collection** and **progressive dues system** in the coming months. This will be a very challenging project, due to the size and complexity of our Council. One of my responsibilities will be to ensure that local leaders have the necessary information and resources for implementation as well as a strong understanding of both systems in order to explain this to the members.

WHAT ARE CENTRAL COLLECTION AND PROGRESSIVE DUES? Under our current dues collection system, local treasurers keep the local's share and send a dues check to the Council each month. **Central collection of dues** is a system where dues are transmitted directly by your employers to the Council, and the International and local unions are sent their shares within a short turn-around time. **Progressive dues** is a dues system based on your salary, such as a percentage of the employee's salary per pay period, a multiple of the employee's hourly rate of pay or a progression of salaries or pay ranges - \$10 & under pays X; \$15.00 - \$10.01 pays – Y; \$20.00 - \$15.01 pays – Z. The members will decide which progressive dues structure is best suited to their needs.

WHERE DID IT BEGIN AND WHY? Delegates to the 2006 International Convention set *central collection* and *progressive dues* into motion by passing constitutional amendments to ensure we have the resources to meet the challenges our members are facing now and in the coming years. **WHEN WILL IT BEGIN?** *Central collection* must be completed before we can set *progressive dues* into motion. The Council has 20% of our locals under central collection now and intends to have this process completed by summer of 2010. We invite you to contact Council 40 to get your local scheduled for central collection as soon as possible. It will take 2-3 years for *progressive dues* to go live. **HOW WILL WE DO IT?** We will be establishing a timeline, gathering membership data, and developing a long range financial forecast of our operations for the coming years with the assistance of AFSCME International. This data will be used to determine what is required to continue our operations in the coming years. An ad hoc *dues committee* will be established and will include rank and file members to study the options, make decisions and develop a proposal, which must be approved by the delegates at a future Council 40 Convention. There will be *informational forums* held around the state and convention workshops to explain the process and receive information from you to address every possible question that may arise to ensure a fair system for all of our members.

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP US? We ask that you take the time to consider all of the information provided to you in the coming months and reflect on how important your Union contract is to you and your co-workers. What you do and what you contribute are what helps make Council 40 a strong and vibrant Union where, when we speak collectively, our voices are heard. When we speak as one, we are only a whisper. SOLIDARITY today is more important to our organization than ever before, and SOLIDARITY will help us through this transition.

Solidarity Always

If you have any ideas on how we can help YOU and/or your local in better serving the Council, please do not hesitate to contact one of us.

