



September Membership Meeting

Wednesday, September 8
7:00 p.m.
Southdale Library

Special order of business:
Election of Delegates to the
Council 5 Founding Convention

October Membership Meeting
Wednesday, October 6
7:00 p.m.
Ridgedale Library

**For our members who are
physically challenged,
please let us know if special
accommodations are needed.**

Health care committee

The good news: for single coverage, there will continue to be no-premium cost for health insurance for those choosing Health Partners. Also, there is still a no co-pay option under Health Partners, but spouses of employees will also have to do a health assessment as well. End of good news.

For everyone else there will be a marked increase in premium for both family coverage with Health Partners and for single and family coverage with Blue Cross and Blue Shield. Health Partners premiums increase by about 17%. Blue Cross/Blue Shield premiums increase by about 39%. These increases are the direct result of medical inflation (about 11%) and high

Founding Convention for New Council 5

At the Special Council 14 Convention in July, the delegates voted unanimously for unification of all the AFSCME Councils in Minnesota. That same day, Council 6 voted to unify. Council 96 had already done so. At a later convention Council 65 decide against unification. Therefore, the three councils will become one, and they will be Council 5. This council will include AFSCME locals in the Metro area, Minnesota State Workers, the University of Minnesota, Duluth and St. Louis County.

On October 1 and 2, 2004, there will be a Founding Convention for the new Council at the Sheraton Bloomington Hotel in Bloomington. The business of the convention will be to ratify the constitution and elect officers.

At Local 2822's September Membership Meeting on Wednesday, September 8, at 7:00 p.m. at the Southdale Library, delegates will be elected to this convention. Our local will be entitled to about 70 delegates. The decision will be made at that meeting about how many delegates to send and whether lost time will be paid.

utilization of medical services by Hennepin County employees.

There have been two meetings of the Labor/Management Health Care Committee since the last newsletter. Molly Malecki and Dawn Klingman represent Local 2822 on the committee. Many other union locals have representatives on the committee. At the first meeting, the two health care providers presented their proposals, which left the committee

This convention will be run by the International and will have extremely strict rules. Any delegate who has not registered at the convention by 9:30 a.m. on Oct. 1 will not be allowed into the convention. Locals are entitled to vote on the basis of one vote for each member. The number of votes shall be divided equally among the delegates present. Prospective delegates must be aware that they will be voting for a certain number of members, and if they are not present when a vote happens, those members' votes will not be counted. There is a possibility that all the voting will not be completed on October 1, so prospective delegates must be able to commit both days to the convention.

Registration will begin on Thursday night from 6:00 p.m. until 9:00 p.m. There will be a meeting of the delegates from the former Council 14 that evening. The time and place have not yet been announced.

Anyone with questions or an interest in being a delegate should attend the membership meeting on September 8. You may also contact president Molly Malecki by e-mail at Mmafscme2822@aol.com.

stunned. Health Partners also presented some alternative scenarios which could cause the premiums to be less, but they would also cause more out of pocket expense at the time of treatment, either by way of higher co-pays or deductibles.

Article 22, Section 1 of our contract with Hennepin County states that the employer will continue to pay the premium

(Health continued from page 1)

for the lowest cost plan for individual coverage in 2005. Eighty-three percent of Local 2822 members have Health Partners, and 73% of those have single coverage. For the majority of the members of Local 2822 there would be no advantage in changing the premium structure, because those members with single coverage would lose money by way of co-pays or deductibles. Furthermore, if one or more of these alternative scenarios referred to above were in place in 2005, employees who elected to stay with Health Partners family coverage under the current plan would see their share of the premium contribution increase even more. This would also be true for those selecting the Blue Cross/Blue Shield family coverage.

There is no doubt in the minds of the committee members that next year, a contract year, serious changes will take place. The committee was given an introduction to Health Reimbursement Accounts (HRS) and Health Savings Accounts (HAS), which are an up-and-coming style of handling health insurance by the employer. This was not a proposal, but it was an example of how money can be saved on the cost of health insurance. The committee left knowing that next year's health insurance decisions will be extremely complicated and difficult.

The actual insurance costs for 2005 will be released by the Hennepin County Human Resources Benefits Department.

Vote, vote, vote

Our next contract begins in the voting booth not at the bargaining table. The voters voted in a "no new taxes" governor and House of Representatives. And what did we get? No raises for two years.

If the union doesn't get this message out to our members and get them to vote for labor friendly candidates in this election, we can expect more of the same for the next two years. We have to make the connection between elected officials and our wages and working conditions.

Please read the materials that the union sends you; become informed about the candidates. Help when asked. Spend an evening calling other union members. Door knock for your favorite candidate. Write a letter to the editor. Pass out fliers. Especially register to vote and VOTE!

International Convention

By Zanona Anderson

This was my first International AFSCME Convention. Words cannot describe it! I found it to be inspiring, educational and an experience of a lifetime. I had been to other conventions but not like this one with so much power behind it -- you could feel it all around you.

When we first arrived in Anaheim CA. the weather was overcast and the transport to the hotel was scary with our care-less driver. We arrived at the Disney Paradise Pier Hotel, and Disney characters roamed about the hotel to give us a warm greeting. Well, after hours of waiting to get checked in, we took a stroll over to the convention center which was two blocks away. The registration process for the convention was a breeze, and there was time left over to get in some Zs.

We attended a nice reception that evening, held at the convention center, with live entertainment and appetizers, they even had a display of the Golden Gate Bridge for "Kodak Moments." It was great seeing my AFSCME brothers and sisters with their families and friends having a good time. Our daughter even enjoyed the tasting of different cultural foods. There were about 5,000 expected to attend the convention. By the looks of the room crowd that night, the estimate was accurate.

In the convention hall every state had designated seating, and there were podiums and microphones for the speakers who would speak on the upcoming topics. Oh, and I must not forget the display booths outside the convention hall where we could buy PEOPLE merchandise or AFSCME items -- people were trading pins, buttons, anything they could get their hands on from other locals. The one item that held my interest was the Commitment Wall where we could write our comments about what we are committed to do to get George W. Bush out of the White House.

The business meeting began by saluting our troops in uniform, along with a special guest -- Shoshana Johnson--that was a treat for me --seeing a former POW who was a captive for 22 days in Iraq! I bet a lot of you may not know that Shoshana's cousin, Tisha Barton, is an AFSCME

member at International Affiliate Relations Department. Shoshana made a point to mention, "I could not get my hair and nails done." She joked about that. She also mentioned others names, who had served our country. Shoshana was among 17 members of the Army's 507th Maintenance Company who were ambushed in Iraq in 2003.

Keynote speaker, AFSCME International President Gerald W. McEntee, spoke on the 2.2 million jobs lost since George W. Bush has been in office and another 8,000 jobs will be lost by 2006. McEntee also talked about health insurance costs skyrocketing and a need to help our seniors before worrying about Iraq. He talked about organizing successes since the last Convention. He told about 6,500 new members that organized in Orange County, California. Council 25 is new in Puerto Rico. New Mexico got a new state contract.

A short video was shown. It was very touching, listing the names of those who had paid the ultimate price for America. It was a moving memorial.

Continuing business was resolution after resolution, and let's not forget the amendments. There were political opinions from people speaking on the same subject and veering off into other areas and had to be told, by the speaker, "we are voting on a specific issue right now."

Secretary Treasure William Lucy spoke about being involved for 51 years of service, not with AFSCME specifically but just doing his part. He said AFSCME members have consistently, for 3 years in a row. built, strengthened and increased power. And in 4 years the middle-class has suffered after 8 years of prosperity. William Lucy was also on the same page as McEntee-- get George W. Bush out of the White House!

Joseph T. Hansen the International President of United Food and Commercial Workers said, "Wal-Mart is driving businesses out of business by paying low wages; they claim that 90% of their associates get health insurance but admit to getting it through Medicare." Unpaid medical bills, Hansen said, is the leading cause of bankruptcy in America.

The business session then moved on to the nominating caucus, and Peter Benner

was elected our district's International Vice President; Gerald McEntee was re-elected for an unprecedented eighth term. Secretary of Treasurer, William Lucy, unexpectedly declined his re-nomination. His decision was based on health and stamina. I was happy to learn, later in the convention, that Lucy announced he had reconsidered and will now take on another term.

Fabian Nunez, LA Assembly, spoke on the support of in-home services, which do not create poverty wages for employees. We must continue to fight and pressure for the rights of our people.

George Wendt (Cheers) was the special guest for the Award Ceremony. He announced the 21st Century Activists, who received the "Star of Excellence"

This day was really exciting for me. I attended my first rally held at U of CA Medical Center in Irvine CA. About 2000 strong, we marched to support Service Workers Local 3299 who have not received a pay increase over the last 2 years, while earning poverty level wages.

The treats never end! Another great speaker was present: the founder and President of Rainbow Push Coalition, Jesse Jackson. He, too, was on the same page for removing George W. Bush from office and win back America.

The conference is almost to a close and all resolutions and amendments would soon be finalized. We, at AFSCME, seem to agree on several things and that is getting George W. Bush out of office and take back America. We know we are going to win. For the grand finale, we welcomed Senator John Kerry, the Democratic Presidential Nominee. The house rocked -- not just in Anaheim CA but members nationwide watched via Webcast. The Senator asked for AFSCME's help in this election year. He said we understand and that we can help build our country by ending the Bush administration. The Senator opposes privatization of social security. He is for securing prescription drugs benefit to put seniors ahead of big drug companies. Senator Kerry, a Vietnam veteran with five medals, understands it's about working with other countries, that bringing people to our side is not a sign of weakness, but a sign of strength. This was my highlight of my great experience.

A Responsible Levy, That's all we ask

By Molly Malecki

The presidents of the AFSCME locals have begun meetings with the county Commissioners to make a case for their setting a RESPONSIBLE LEVY on September 14. Yes, we are asking them to raise the property taxes. Last year every one-percent of levy amounted to about seven million dollars, which is what a 1% pay raise would have cost.

Politically, raising taxes isn't very popular. But there comes a point where services in Hennepin County have so eroded, and employee dissatisfaction is so intense, that not raising taxes is an even less tenable decision for the Commissioners. A survey of our members, done by the "Building for a Better Contract" people, listed how the current budget cuts have hurt our clients, patrons, and customers. A few of the responses include: no longer able to do the "drop in" visits on day care homes; schools no longer doing hearing and vision screenings for our clients; not enough workers left to maintain efficiency; libraries open fewer hours; no money for books at ADC; limited materials available for libraries; people are competing for computer time at the libraries; medical programs cut for the working poor; shelter funding cut; families in crisis because of cuts in Day Care Assistance; more families going to shelters.

We also surveyed our members about how the budget cuts, i.e. no cost of living raise, have affected them personally. The responses include having to take second and third jobs; no longer able to take dependent coverage for the county's health insurance; now eligible for Medical Assistance; had to take child out of day care; can't get mortgage because wage is frozen for two years; now qualify for low income housing; walking to work, parking too expensive; emotional and physical stress is causing more physical sickness; exhausted; demoralized. The list goes on and on.

If there is any hope that things will improve in Hennepin County, the Commissioners are going to have to set a RESPONSIBLE LEVY. They need to levy enough to fill in some of the cracks people are falling through and to have a base to pay its employees a fair wage and provide affordable health insurance. All of us need to help get this idea across to them. Write a note to them or give them a call and let them know how much harder you have to work and how the people you see are suffering from these cuts. Remember, if you call a Commissioner, don't do it during work time (do it on your lunch break, before or after work) and don't use a county phone. If you write a Commissioner, do it on your own time and use your own paper, envelopes and postage.

HCMC Nurses

AFSCME is not opposed to the nurses at HCMC being given a raise.

The County Board has been debating this issue. Some people have gotten the idea that AFSCME is opposed. That is not the case. AFSCME would like to have the County Board look at other job classes at the hospital that are underpaid and have retention problems also.

I can't express enough my appreciation, to my sisters and brothers who allowed me this unforgettable experience, and I hope to have an opportunity again in the future. Thank you AFSCME members for showing how families work together.

Editor's note: Due to space limitations, Molly Malecki's convention report will appear in next month's edition.

Dignity and respect

By Lynn Stetler

Work continues on the Dignity and Respect Labor Management team. Since our first meeting in April of this year, both sides have articulated similar feelings as we discussed workplace examples and worked to define the issues. As we continue our work, we realize that the problem won't be solved easily and will take time-- it certainly won't be "fixed" by attending a 2-hour workshop. We are committed to changing workplace abuse and restoring accountability in Hennepin County. We will be making a joint progress report shortly as we continue our work, realizing that our union contracts specify that we have a program in place in September 2004.

Local 2822 Officers

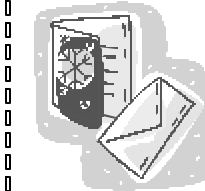
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Bulletin Board

The New Voice deadline is September 8. Articles will be accepted up to and including the day of the monthly Membership Meeting for inclusion in the following month's newsletter. Send your written contributions to Molly Malecki or Lynn Stetler.

Visit Local 2822 Website

<http://www.afscme2822.org>



Help us remember your co-workers with a card. Let us know to send a sympathy card, get well or congratulations. We will send a card, hand-made by E-board member Lynn Stetler.

Contact Heather Clark, our Good and Welfare Coordinator at 952-847-8650 or by e-mail: hclark@hclib.org. The request should include the name of the member, the reason for the request and home address, if possible."

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Merry Brigham
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Name _____

Job Title _____

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I'm especially interested in:

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