

PROFESSIONAL VIEW
PEA'S NEWSLETTER FOR JANUARY-MARCH, 2004

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Writing my last newsletter article for the professional employees association has caused me to reflect on my long association with PEA. My first contact with the association occurred shortly after I started working full-time. I received a written notice to attend an evening meeting which included a free meal, so I decided I couldn't turn that down. At that time, the professional employees association was only an informal organization for City and School District professional employees, not an official bargaining unit. I attended that first meeting, enjoyed the camaraderie and the opportunity to meet other professionals in City and School government. Thereafter, I attended the meetings as often as I could (they kept providing free meals).

After a few years, I was asked by some of my coworkers to run for a position on the board. This led to my election as secretary. Shortly thereafter, the Minnesota legislature passed a law requiring public employees to decide whether they wanted to organize into a union. According to the law, the union would work as a voice for the employees with their employers. The union would represent the employees' interests during negotiations and with other labor relation matters (i.e. grievances, layoffs, etc.). A vote by the members of the association was taken and they agreed to organize. Thus, the professional employees association changed from a loosely organized group of professional employees into a union, with an obligation to represent the members in accordance with the requirements of the Public Employee Labor Relations Act.

With the Association's change in status into a bargaining unit, I continued to serve on the executive committee in several capacities, including the last eight consecutive years that I have been president. I must admit I agreed to run for some of the executive committee positions rather reluctantly, especially the presidency. However my belief that the professional employees association provides a tremendous benefit to our employees in the delicate and sometimes contentious relationship between employees and their employers convinced me to serve. Now it is time to move on with my life and for the association to benefit from new leadership. Future presidents will bring their individual vision, skills, expertise and energy to the association.

During my term as president, I initiated the quarterly newsletter and worked with the executive committee to develop and issue each member their own professional employees association membership card. In addition, I figure I have written over forty articles for the newsletter over the ten years I served as president. I believe the newsletter serves an important function in a small association like ours. We do not have weekly or monthly general membership meetings, so the newsletter provides a way to keep you current with important issues.

Last year we issued membership cards to all members. Because the election in June will only be for six months, the executive committee has decided to delay reissuing new cards until the executive committee, whom you will elect in December, can decide if they want to continue issuing the cards. Although I am a strong advocate for both the newsletter and the membership cards I know that each president has to look at their time and energy and decide whether they are willing and able to do the work it takes to keep these projects alive.

I am proud of two accomplishments during my presidency that I want to share.

First and foremost I am proud that I worked as hard as I did. I worked hard at my City job and in the conduct of the association's business. I believe I only missed two or three meetings during the whole ten years of my presidency. To accomplish this I had to have good health, a lot of luck, a very cooperative and flexible executive committee and the willingness to keep the professional employees association as a priority in my life.

Hard work allowed me to be involved in several important issues over the years, including the following. Developing the joint powers agreement to combine the City of St. Paul and Ramsey County health departments proved to be very time consuming. All of the unions that represented St. Paul and Ramsey County employees, and representatives from the St. Paul and Ramsey County administrations, worked tirelessly to reach a solution that was acceptable to all parties. Now that we have many years of history with the joint powers agreement, I can assure you that the hard work paid off handsomely. We have had an extremely small number of employee problems since the joint powers agreement was signed and enacted.

When Mayor Norm Coleman attempted to privatize City jobs, the St. Paul Works! Alliance was formed. This alliance is a loose affiliation of a majority of the City employee unions. We joined together when the privatization discussions were on-going and have continued to meet regularly through 2003. This affiliation offers all unions the opportunity to meet together to share resources and information in support of our common interests.

The St. Paul labor/ management committee on health insurance(LMCHI) has met many times during the last four to five years to review and consider possible options for our health, life and disability insurance plans. Even when the plans are not up for renewal, the committee continues to meet to learn about the latest laws and/or rule changes that may affect our health plans in the future.

FROM THE PRESIDENT (con.)

Secondly, I am proud of the union's choice of business agents. Mike Wilde and Chuck Bethel have served the association in a capacity that exceeds what any president could hope for. They are both hard workers, have a great depth of knowledge in labor relations issues and have the highest personal standards. The professional employees association has been and continues to be fortunate to have such an extremely high level of selflessness in our business agent/legal counsels. They both made me look better, as a leader, than I could ever hope to be. Their depth and breadth of knowledge, leadership and integrity has been recognized and appreciated by leaders in the City and School District administrations and officers and business agents of the many other unions who have worked with Mike and Chuck.

I have shared with you some of the work that is involved in being the association president, but let me also share some of the fun parts of the job. I have had the opportunity to meet and work with some extraordinary employees who readily share their time and talents to benefit the rest of us. I have shared parties, lunches and dinners, as well as drinks after our late meetings with them. I can tell you the association is extremely fortunate so many talented people, with little financial remuneration, give their time, energy and talents to help the rest of us. The professional employees association has a very bright future.

As I end, let me leave you with this wish. May you be blessed with a rewarding job, great labor contracts and the best of health

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

It's time to start planning for the next round of contract negotiations. Your ideas and opinions are needed to help make the talks successful. Please consider joining us as we meet to discuss the issues. Even if you don't want to sit at the table during negotiations or cannot make the commitment to attend every meeting, please come when you can. We need an accountant to work with us, especially after the talks begin. Having someone to interpret the numbers would benefit every one of us in the long run, so please think about it and talk to your accountant co-workers.

Please email me or call me if you are able to join us, and let me know what evenings work best for you.

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NEWS FROM HEALTHPARTNERS

Have you seen the newspaper ad? The big feet? Well if you get beyond the feet you will find out the HealthPartners has an incentive plan, **The Frequent Fitness Plan**, to pay members to stay fit. HealthPartners has agreed to reimburse individuals a portion of the cost of their membership in either Northwest Athletic Club, Weight Watchers, The YMCA of Mpls., The YWCA of St. Paul, Gold's Gym, or Flagship Athletic Club. Depending on which club you go to, you may save as much as \$20.00 off your monthly membership fee. If you already work out, you might as well get the rebate. If you were thinking of joining a club, this might be the incentive to get off your butt. Contact your club or HealthPartners for the details. You can call HealthPartners Member Services at 952-883-5000 or go to their website at: <http://www.healthpartners.com>

Minnesota Department of Revenue
Political Contribution Refund Information
Submitted by David Peterson, PEA Treasurer

Individuals who contributed in 2004 to a Minnesota political party, a candidate for state office, or candidates for the Minnesota Legislature are eligible to apply for a refund of their contributions.

Only those contributions made to candidates who signed an agreement with the Campaign Finance and Public Disclosure Board (formerly Minnesota Ethical Practices Board) to observe state campaign spending limits qualify for the refund.

Minnesota Statutes defines "contribution" for purposes of the political contribution refund, as "a gift of money." Eligible candidates and parties should therefore not issue an official Form EP-3 (receipt) to contributors who donate goods or services.

The maximum refund contributors can receive is \$50 for single persons and \$100 for married couples. A single person or married couple can file one refund application per year.

Anyone who is registered to vote or eligible to vote in Minnesota is eligible to apply for a refund.

To apply, a contributor must:

1. Get a receipt (Form EP-3) from the political party or candidate to whom the contribution was made.
2. Fill out Form PCR, obtained from the party, candidate, or Minnesota Department of Revenue.
3. Attach the EP-3 to the 2004 Form PCR (2004 contributions only).
4. Mail it to the Minnesota Department of Revenue at:

Minnesota Political Contribution Refund
Minnesota Department of Revenue
St. Paul, MN 55146-1800

This refund program is not tied in any way to the state income tax form. Form PCR must be filed separately. Taxpayers can only file a claim once there is no amending to the PCR.

A taxpayer may file a claim for the PCR immediately after making the contribution.

Claims for contributions made during 2003 must have been filed by April 15, 2004. Claims for contributions made during 2004 can be filed any time between January 1, 2004 and April 15, 2005.

