



PROFESSIONAL VIEW

PEA'S NEWSLETTER FOR JULY-SEPTEMBER, 2004

FROM THE PRESIDENT

First off, I again want to compliment Jaber Alsiddiqui and the other School District PEA contract negotiators on the success of their efforts this summer. They were able to get meaningful wage increases for our school district members.

As Fall approaches, Sheila Winderlich and her committee are drafting PEA's initial contract proposal to the City. She is looking for members willing to help draft our proposal and people with accounting backgrounds to help analyze counter-proposals from the City. She can be reached at 651-501-6309.

Remember - it's your contract too!

I have a little quiz for the membership. What is the significance of the numbers 0.45, 0.0 and 0.0? I hope you all realize that 0.45 is the % wage increase all City PEA members received for 2004. The number 0.0 represents the % wage increase the Police Federation just agreed to in their 2005 contract. Since the City usually attempts to pursue the concept of "pattern bargaining" in its negotiations, it is not much of a leap to realize this might be the figure thrown at us when we start negotiating (did you also know that our wage increase for 1993 was only 0.0%)? The last 0.0 is the % wage increase the City might try to offer for 2006. Unless something can be done to positively impact the contract negotiations, our members could face a 10% loss in wages, against the cost of living increases, over the next 3 years.

Think about it!

As PEA enters into negotiations, it is important to realize that a primary duty of the Union is to negotiate contracts for our members. Tough times require tough negotiations. Our members did not share in the Boom years of the 90's and we do not expect to suffer during the Stagnant 00's. By accepting modest raises in the past, our members have allowed the City and

State politicians to hold the line on levy increases, reduce taxes and even rebate money. Now because of reduced revenues, the City is trying to turn our modest increases into no increases. It is not reasonable for the City to expect no employee wage increases for 3 years and still expect a stable, dedicated and motivated work force. We must work with any friends on the Council, in the City and in the Administration to convince them of the folly of making City employees the scapegoat during these strange economic and political times.

Workers have to start realizing the importance of economic issues in the political arena!

Finally, I want to make everyone aware of their responsibility to your co-workers and PEA members. In times of downsizing it is important to keep the big picture in perspective. When a position is not filled after someone retires or leaves, extra work and duties are often taken on by the remaining workers. If extra work requires extra time, it is incumbent on that individual to account for that time. Failing to get comp time or overtime credit only reinforces the idea that there was too many people in the first place. The other scenario involves taking on duties that were originally assigned to a supervisor or another job title. Working out of title must be documented and credit assigned to the individual. It may require a JAQ or a change in title, but working out title is a Union issue and we will aggressively pursue each instance.

Steve Olson, President

OPINION PAGE
by Mike Wilde, Business Agent

Whenever you get a chance to watch kids argue or fight you realize the whole disagreement is almost always about how they “feel”. One kid makes another feel bad. So that kid will respond by making the other one feel worse. When adults jump in we look for the facts and we try to correct the problem. The solution is usually found in the facts not the feelings.

But if you listen to two adults discuss politics, especially the Presidential race, all you hear is feelings. One guy will talk about his beliefs and opinions. Then the other one will interrupt with his biased opinion. It is very rare that the adults will rely on facts to learn more. But facts are the most important part of making informed decisions. Without facts we end up arguing like little kids.

As professionals we are almost always required to have obtained higher learning through a college degree or specialized training. The essence of this learning is analytical thinking. Don’t get me wrong. We don’t have to agree with one another. Really we don’t but we should agree to look at facts. Take a moment and review these facts. I apologize for the first few; they’re obvious but we have to start at the beginning.

1. PEA is a labor organization representing approximately 320 men and women in their professional titles in public service.
2. The working lives and earning power of our members is directly affected by our labor contracts, state and federal laws and economic conditions.
3. Our members are indirectly affected by the government’s attitude toward citizens’ right to form unions and the concept of collective bargaining.

Now for the facts from President George W. Bush’s approach to labor relations:

4. President Bush on Aug. 27 announced his intention to limit next year’s pay raises for federal workers to 2 percent, citing executive authority that allows the president to limit increases in times of “national emergency or serious economic conditions.” Monday September 15, 2003.
5. On May 29, 2003, the Bush administration announced its plan to ultimately eliminate 850,000 federal jobs by putting them up for bid to private companies. (Do you remember “Compete St. Paul”?)
6. On June 19, 2003 President Bush’s Labor Secretary sided with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and rejected businesses’ requirement to keep a record of some repetitive work injuries of its employees. Records could be used to avoid injuries.

7. President Bush terminated collective bargaining rights for 1,300 federal workers of the National Imagery and Mapping Agency (NIMA). He also revoked the union status of hundreds of workers in five Department of Justice Divisions. (These are public workers who lose all contract rights with the stroke of a pen).
8. Bush’s first work-related executive order required employers to post notices telling workers about how to avoid unions and union dues – but it did not require the employer to mention a worker’s right to join a union. When a federal judge overruled his order, President Bush appealed.
9. Bush enacted new financial reporting requirements for national and local unions (Local 49 too) that will cost unions and their members over \$1 billion to comply.
10. Bush has repeatedly attempted to change the 66 year-old law that establishes overtime pay. His proposed change will take away overtime for about 6 million working Americans. Reuters Saturday, Aug.21, 2004.
11. The Labor Department offered tips and advise to employers on how to avoid overtime under Bush’s new proposed rules. AP Monday, Jan. 05, 2004.
12. The Bush White House asked Maryland firefighter Tom McEachin, who happens to be the President of Firefighters Local 1619, to resign his appointment to the Medal of Valor Commission because of his union affiliation.

These are facts that assist in deciding whether President Bush supports unionized workers, the collective bargaining process, or the legal rights that protect us all. It doesn’t do any good to shout your opinion or pound on the table. But instead rely on the facts to decide whether America’s unionized workforce has a friend in the White House.

Oh...and if you think it was pretty bad the last four years. Imagine what will happen in another four more years when he doesn’t have to worry about re-election.

Please note this article is an opinion page. We encourage criticism, responses and competing opinions. Please send them to the office to be published in the next newsletter.

What is an important
DATE TO REMEMBER?

The answer is **DECEMBER 1, 2004.**

This is when the next great PEA GENERAL MEMBERSHIP meeting is scheduled. We again will be holding the meeting at MANCINI'S and every attending member will receive an excellent meal and a chance to win FABULOUS DOOR PRIZES. As an added BONUS, We will also be holding a GENERAL ELECTION to select a new EXECUTIVE BOARD.

It will be your chance to ENJOY A MEAL, get to know other PEA MEMBERS and VOTE on who you want to represent you.

**MARK YOUR CALENDER NOW!!
DECEMBER 1st (NO EXCUSES)**

FROM THE TREASURER
Submitted by Rhonda Gilquist

Financial management is a concern for all government agencies, businesses, and organizations, particularly during periods of economic crisis. If there is a deficit in an organization's resources, spending must be reduced, money must be borrowed, or new financial resources must be obtained in order to survive. Sound financial management is really quite simple. Many of us practice it every day in order to survive, provide for our families, and improve our lives. Perhaps money is borrowed to purchase a car that will help us get to that new job which will help pay off the loan. Or a vacation is camping instead of Hawaii because we need to save for our children's college education.

Since I became the Treasurer for PEA July 1, 2004, I am impressed with how well the organization has managed its finances. Union dues have not been raised in the last five years. We share a copy machine with the League of Women Voters in order to offset some of our copier costs. PEA returns a portion of its members' dues by providing meals and prizes at membership meetings for members that attend. These are only some examples of what contributes to PEA's sound financial management. There are many PEA members that contribute their expertise and time to the association. As we discuss how we use PEA's financial resources, we need to balance the association's needs and goals with the future of PEA members in mind. The input and suggestions from all PEA members is very important in order to balance membership needs and goals.

**A COMPARISON BETWEEN HEALTHPARTNERS
2004 AND 2005 CITY HEALTH INSURANCE RATES**

PLAN	2004 RATE	2005 RATE	% INCREASE
PLUS	\$359.97 Single	\$426.47 Single	18.5%
	\$939.97 Family	\$1,113.64 Family	18.5%
PRIMARY	\$373.44 Single	\$441.86 Single	18.3%
	\$956.05 Family	\$1,153.81 Family	20.7%
CLASSIC	\$358.67 Single	\$423.03 Single	17.9%
	\$899.87 Family	\$1,104.64 Family	22.7%
DEDUCTI BLE	\$323.96 Single	\$377.41 Single	16.5%
	\$829.38 Family	\$985.50 Family	18.8%

CHANGES: Rx from 80/20, \$10 minimum, 25\$ maximum
TO \$10 generic, \$20 brand name

UPDATE ON BILL GILMAN

Bill Gilman, one of our previous PEA stewards and a City employee for over 17 years, was recently diagnosed with Lou Gehrig's Disease (ALS). Having been laid off from City employment, Bill faces many financial challenges in order to meet the needs of his family and his health care. If you would like to help Bill with a financial contribution, please forward it to Paula Peterson at the Department of Fire and Safety Services, 100 East 11th Street, 55101. She will collect contributions and forward them to Bill as they arrive. Bill will surely appreciate it. Thank you.

WORTHY OF NOTE

The first minimum wage, of twenty-five cents, was established by Congress in 1938.

PERSONNEL UPDATE

by Karin Anderson, Personnel Committee Chair

There have been quite a few steward changes lately which I'd like to share with all of you. But first: the next time you see your steward or any other PEA steward give them a nice "thanks." They are willing to give their time and effort to help the board and you in keeping PEA alive and well. They work for you when you need it and work with the board when we need it. They all deserve a round of applause. To help them help you and PEA in general, remember to keep them informed. And, when they need to step down, I would ask you all to seriously think about being a steward. The job is usually uneventful, except for those wonderful dinners you get to share with your fellow board and general members!

David Sundmark in Parks, Mike Kassin in Public Works Office, Kou Vang in Water, Corrine Hass in Office of Financial Services, and Lyla Griffin in Schools have all either stepped down as stewards or soon will be stepping down. Some because they have been promoted out of PEA and some because they believe others in their areas should be given the opportunity to serve. Thank you all for your years of service and for doing a great job for PEA.

Who's new? Jamel Anderson has agreed to take on David's people so Jamel is now the steward for both Parks Labor and Parks Office. Bruce Riebe has stepped forward to steward Mike's folks since he knows all of you already, so Bruce now has TMS and Public Works Office. Kou Vang found his own replacement, and so now Issac Afwerke is the new steward for the Water Department. We haven't yet found a new steward to fill Corrine's spot, but she has agreed to stay on for a little while as we look for her replacement. And over in Schools Colleen is taking care of business for all 66+ members until we replace Lyla. Way to go all of you - thank you, thank you, thank you.

PEA has over 300 members, so keeping tabs on the comings and goings, and the ins and outs, of the various departments must be all our jobs - help us out and be "PEA Active." And, if you are in the schools or OFS choose to be your colleagues' next steward and volunteer!

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Submitted by Jaber Alsiddiqui
Negotiations Chair for the School District

A few weeks ago I heard a statement from a co-worker who said that the concept of "union" is getting old and counterproductive. He indicated that employers nowadays provide decent wages and benefits to their employees. I started thinking about his statement and decided to do a quick research on the differences in wages and benefits between union and nonunion workers. Here are some of the numbers I gathered:

Union workers median weekly earning	\$760
Nonunion workers median weekly earning	\$599
Percent difference	27%
Union Women's median weekly earnings	\$696
Nonunion women's median weekly earnings	\$523
Percent difference	33%
Union workers with guaranteed pension	69%
Nonunion workers with guaranteed pension	14%
Percent Difference	55%
Union workers who get health benefits	75%
Nonunion workers who get health benefits	49%
Percent Difference	26%

Sources: U.S. Dep. Of Labor, Employment and Earning, January 2004; Bureau of Labor Statistics, Employee Benefits in Private Industry, 2000

I can only see the gap between union and nonunion workers will widen if it was not for the union. It also make me realize that the reason we have better working condition is a result of having the union that bring balance between industry's bottom line and provide decent living wages to employees.

AMERICAN SPLIT PEA SOUP

Recipe By : John Setzler

* Exported from MasterCook * by Brian Krawiecki, Secretary

Serving Size: 4

- | | |
|---------------------------|--------------------|
| 8 cups water -- cold | 1 carrot - chopped |
| 1 ham bones | 1 teaspoon salt |
| 2 cups split peas | ½ teaspoon pepper |
| 1 chopped onion -- medium | |

Bring water and ham bone to a boil.
Add remaining ingredients and simmer

EMPLOYMENT REFERENCE LAW PASSED

Submitted by David Peterson, Vice President

The following employment reference law (M.S. 181.967) passed during the 2004 Legislative Session, effective for August 1, 2004.

No action may be maintained against an employer by an employee or former employee for the disclosure of certain information about the employee to a prospective employer or employment agency, unless the employee or former employee demonstrates by clear and convincing evidence that:

- (1) the information was false and defamatory; and
- (2) the employer knew or should have known the information was false and acted with malicious intent to injure the current or former employee.

The information that may be disclosed includes:

- (1) dates of employment;
- (2) compensation and wage history;
- (3) job description and duties;
- (4) training and education provided by the employer; and
- (5) acts of violence, theft, harassment, or illegal conduct documented in the personnel record that resulted in disciplinary action or resignation and the employee's written response, if any, contained in the employee's personnel record.

A disclosure under clause (5) must be in writing with a copy sent contemporaneously by regular mail to the employee's last known address.

With the written authorization of the current or former employee, the following information may also be disclosed in writing:

- (1) written employee evaluations conducted before the employee's separation from the employer, and the employee's written response, if any, contained in the employee's personnel record;
- (2) written disciplinary warnings and actions in the five years before the date of the authorization, and the employee's written response, if any, contained in the employee's personnel record; and
- (3) written reasons for separation from employment.

The employer must contemporaneously provide the employee or former employee with a copy of information disclosed under this paragraph and to whom it was disclosed by mailing the information to the employee or former employee. A prospective employer or employment agency shall not disclose written information received under this section without the written authorization of the employee.

If you enjoy this newsletter just half as much as we enjoy doing it, then we've enjoyed it twice as much as you.

