



PROFESSIONAL VIEW

PEA'S NEWSLETTER FOR OCTOBER-DECEMBER, 2004

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Submitted by Steven Olson

My how time flies. It seems like only yesterday I was elected PEA's President and already my term is complete. Six months certainly does pass quickly. For those of you who missed it, we had another great PEA get together on December 1st at Mancini's. Great food and beverages, but only 80 of us attended out of over 350 members. That means only 23% of us can find time to socialize and eat a free meal with our fellow members. What has to be done to get better participation? I'm open to suggestions.

For those that were not there, another important thing happened on December 1st. We had an election! The Executive Board make-up did not change although there was a slight shuffle of the positions. Congratulations go out to Dave Peterson who will be President starting January 1st. Since there is a strong possibility I will be retiring this year, I felt I could not stay on as President so I am again assuming the duties of Vice President. I will continue to serve PEA until I do retire and then the Board will be looking for new blood. Anybody out there interested serving? This is a good opportunity for someone to step up to the plate. Contact me or any Board member if you are interested.

There was a Bylaw change approved at the meeting and it is printed in the newsletter. The change allows the Board more flexibility in making cash donations for worthy causes by increasing the maximum amounts.

By now everybody has gone through open enrollment for Health Insurance and you should know what kind of increases there were for each plan. The increases averaged about 20% for 2005. Everybody asks how much will the City be contributing, but we won't know until the new contract is settled. If you want to have an idea of where the City is coming from, go to the Labor Relations web site and look at the Police contract that was settled for 2004 - 2005. We have started negotiations and we had our first meeting with the City on December 9th.

Mike's article summarizes the status of negotiations. The only good news on health insurance I can offer is that increases for 2006 and 2007 will be limited to 8.5% and 9.0% respectively. Isn't it strange times when we think a 9% increase is good!

Finally, I hope everyone's holiday was special and produced many happy memories and as we go into 2005 I want to wish everyone a **HAPPY NEW YEAR.**

Steve Olson, President

Comments from the President-Elect

Submitted by Dave Peterson

At the last PEA General Membership meeting I was elected PEA President effective January 1st, 2005.

This was not a hotly contested election. There were no 527 funds, no TV ads, and no expert opinions. Nevertheless, I do believe that I carried all the blues and all the reds.

I have been a union member for 25 years. I started as an accountant for The City of St. Paul in 1979. I transferred to the school district in 1980, and have been one of the district's accountants since that time.

During 1991, I served as the districts sole PEA steward.

I was elected to the PEA Executive Committee in 1992. I have served on the Executive Committee since then (except for 1 year). My positions have been External Affairs Chair, Treasurer, and Vice-President. My time on the PEA Executive Committee has been a very fulfilling educational experience.

We have dealt with many union issues and concerns: contract negotiation, grievances, civil service rule changes, a proposed St. Paul residency requirement, proposed privatization of services, government budget shortfalls, referendum levy support, labor management committee meetings for health insurance (and other issues), etc

There have also been the nonprofit organization office issues: over the years hiring four business agents, the moving into three office locations, computerizing financial records, IRS reporting, maintaining records, updating procedures, contracts for services, etc.

I am fortunate to become President of PEA at this time. We currently have an exceptional Business Agent in Mike Wilde. Mike quickly grasps complex issues, has a broad experience with labor issues, and is effective in getting the best outcome possible for union members.

The current PEA Executive Board is also noteworthy. Each Executive Committee member has a pertinent list of duties. Nevertheless, the Executive Committee members have repeatedly demonstrated a willingness to volunteer personal time to complete necessary projects.

In addition, PEA has a strong core of reliable stewards and other committed members.

Although other phone numbers remain the same, if you need to contact me directly, my work phone is 696-9626, and work email is david.peterson@spps.org.

I am not expecting an election recount, so I look forward to serving you, the PEA membership

Legal Corner

Submitted by Mike Wilde, Business Agent/Legal Counsel

In previous years PEA has allowed the contract negotiations with the City to proceed for several meetings before making announcements or publishing much detail. The thought has always been that early positions are often drastically different from the end result. Furthermore, mixed messages and incomplete communication have, on prior occasions, left members misinformed. We wanted to analyze positions, modify platforms and learn more detail before making announcements. But this round of negotiations is a little different. Employees City-wide are curious to learn the City's proposal following last year's increase of less than one-half of a percent, specifically 0.45%.

After only two meetings we decided it was important to inform our members of some rather bleak economic news thus far. But keep in mind that we are very early in the negotiations stage. The City's proposal for wages in 2005 is 0%. That's right, no increase. The proposal for the following year is a 1.0% increase across the board. These proposals do not keep up with inflation and, more importantly, they must be considered along with higher health insurance costs to the employee, which are also being proposed. These proposals would result in most of our members taking home less money on the paycheck than in the prior year. Although the line between acceptable and unacceptable is different for every person, going backwards is about as clear of a line as you can find.

At this point you can do one of two things. You can set this newsletter aside and wonder about the possible outcomes for you and your family's earnings. The alternative is to speak out. Let us know what you think. Call Negotiations Chair Sheila Winderlich (651-501-6309) and express your opinion. Review the City's initial proposal that we should have posted on our website (www.peaonline.org) in early January. Also, call your steward to voice your position on the initial proposals. This is not a vote, but instead a sharing of information and opinions related to your job.

We will not necessarily provide up-to-date details after every meeting or development. But we do want to alert you of the initial positions so that you can respond. Keep yourself informed!

On other fronts I can tell you that PEA has had a rise in grievances in 2004. But we have also had a troubling rise in minor economic "take backs" that were arguably not guaranteed in the contract. The reason these matters were not in the contract is because they truly are either minor in amount or affecting very few people. What is troubling is that the City has taken the position on a few matters that are downright petty. Troubling economic times do not justify micro-management that is penny wise and pound foolish.

Our members in the School District should watch closely as negotiations unfold. A recent newspaper article emphasized serious hardship for St. Paul's School District and new leadership in the District might create a whole series of challenges in bargaining. Until next newsletter ... have a Happy New Year.

PEA Bylaw change

Passed by the Membership Dec. 1, 2004

~~Strike through~~ language to delete
Underline proposed new language

ARTICLE XIII

Donations Approval Requirements

No individual member of the General Membership or of the Executive Committee shall be authorized to commit the Professional Employees Association to any donation or donation request until the following applicable procedure is satisfied.

1. Any and all donation requests seeking money or a cash value of ~~fifty dollars (\$50.00)~~ two hundred dollars (\$200.00) or less shall only be approved when a quorum of the Executive Committee has voted and given majority approval for a requested donation. Requests of this size and value need not be approved by the general membership.
2. Any and all donation requests seeking money or a cash value in excess of ~~fifty dollars (\$50.00)~~ two hundred dollars (\$200.00) and less than ~~two hundred dollars (\$200.00)~~ five hundred dollars (\$500.00) shall not be approved without majority approval of a vote of the general membership. Prior notice on the general membership notice or agenda need not be submitted prior to the vote at the general membership meeting.
3. Any and all donation requests seeking money or a cash value in excess of ~~two hundred dollars (\$200.00)~~ five hundred dollars (\$500.00) shall not be approved unless authorized by a majority vote of the general membership after proper notification on the general membership notice or proposed agenda preceding the membership meeting in accordance with these bylaws.

The View From Ike

Submitted by Mike Wilde

"Should any political party attempt to abolish Social Security, unemployment insurance, and eliminate labor laws, and farm programs, you would not hear of that party again. There is a tiny splinter group, of course, that believe you can do these things. Among them are H.L. Hunt and a few other Texas oil millionaires, and an occasional politician or businessman from other areas. Their number is negligible and they are stupid."

President Dwight Eisenhower, writing to his brother, Edgar, in May, 1956.

Wal-Mart elected 'Grinch of the Year' for 2004

January 3, 2005

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<http://www.workdayminnesota.org>

WASHINGTON — The retailing giant Wal-Mart was named 'Grinch of the Year' in a national online poll held by Jobs with Justice.

"Wal-Mart is a fitting recipient of the Grinch title," Jobs with Justice said in announcing the award. "As the United States' largest retailer and largest employer, Wal-Mart is a driving force in setting wage standards wherever its stores are located. Despite nearly \$9 billion in profits, its wages are so low that many employees are eligible for food stamps. Even so, local taxpayers often finance Wal-Mart's expansion through tax breaks and development incentives."

Wal-Mart has created such high barriers to qualify for its health care benefits, that many workers are left dependent on publicly financed medical services, a largely hidden taxpayer subsidy. According to a research study in California, Wal-Mart workers seek \$86 million a year in state aid because of inadequate wages and benefits. In effect, Wal-Mart cleverly shifts a portion of its labor costs to the public.

Earlier this year, Wal-Mart admitted that it routinely locked overnight workers in its stores. Wal-Mart was also sued this year in the largest sex-discrimination case in history, brought on behalf of about 1.6 million current and former employees.

Around the country, Jobs with Justice coalitions have been in the middle of many community-based campaigns calling attention to the impact of Wal-Mart by demanding agreements from this giant corporation to improve its hiring and employment practices. Local Jobs with Justice coalitions in Chicago, St. Louis, Buffalo and New Paltz, N. Y., Washington, D.C., Eugene and Bend, Ore., and Toledo have held rallies and hearings on Wal-Mart, published reports about its potential impact on communities, and pushed for comprehensive 'Big Box' store ordinances to help communities gain more leverage in the development process.

"The overwhelming vote to name Wal-Mart 'Grinch of the Year' reflects the growing concern that working families have with this mega-corporation," said Fred Azcarate, executive director of Jobs with Justice. "Jobs with Justice and our many allies are building a movement to challenge Wal-Mart's low road strategy." Over 60 percent of the more than 2,300 votes cast in this year's election were for Wal-Mart.

Wal-Mart, based in Bentonville, Ark., has more than 3,500 stores and 1.3 million employees.

Cintas, the largest uniform provider and industrial launderer in the nation, was runner up in the Grinch contest. Cintas workers have been injured and killed on the job as a result of illegal and unsafe working conditions. It has been charged with over 100 violations of health and safety standards, many for repeated violations that could lead to "death or serious physical harm." Cintas workers have routinely been disciplined or fired after reporting their injuries or filing worker's compensation claims, a serious violation of workers' rights.

Comcast, the nation's largest cable TV and broadband internet company, won third place in the poll. Like Wal-Mart, Comcast has adopted a low road approach to its employees. "Comcast acts like a bully, refusing to adhere to the rules or community standards," said former maintenance

technician Shannon Kirkland, who worked for Comcast for 11 years. "Comcast uses its disproportionate power to deny workers their rights."

Earlier this year, Jobs with Justice's National Workers' Rights Board released a report "This is Comcast: Silencing Our Voice at Work" documenting its widespread pattern of abuse of workers' rights and illustrating why the United States' 75 year-old labor laws need to be modernized.

Jobs with Justice is a national network of more than 40 local coalitions of unions, community groups, faith-based organizations, and student groups working together to fight for social and economic justice. Over 100,000 individual activists have taken the Jobs with Justice Pledge to be there five times a year for someone else's fight as well as their own.

To learn more about the Grinch awards and the other companies nominated to have most harmed working families in 2004, visit <http://www.jwj.org>

NAFTA REPORT

Submitted by Jaber Alsiddiqui, Schools Negotiation Chair

In January 1, 1994, the United States, Canada and Mexico launched the implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). The agreement promised to create new jobs, increase wages and living standards in the U.S., Mexico and Canada. Now ten years later many critics claimed the agreement has been nothing short of disastrous, especially in Mexico.

The impact on Mexican agriculture is evident. Ten years of NAFTA led to the destruction of over 1.5 million Mexican farm livelihoods and a 70% drop in the real prices paid to Mexican farmers for their corn. The farmers have become economic migrants in search of scarce jobs and making desperate efforts to cross the border into the U.S.

The most serious consequence of NAFTA was its failure to protect the rights of workers. To attract investment Mexican authorities worked with compliant official unions to maintain low-wage economy and reinforce with a system of labor control. According to Martha Ojeda, director of Coalition for Justice in the Maquiladoras, the government-mandated minimum wage for workers on the border is \$4,20 per day, the same as it was 10 years ago when the treaty came into effect. Moreover, the country's new independent union federation, the National Union of Workers, claims more the nine million people are out of work - a quarter of a workforce. Workers have sought to break free in a long labor war waged from plant to plant along the border. They have organized independent unions to fight for larger share of the enormous wealth the factories produce. But these efforts have been met with firings, plant closures and physical violence. According to David Bacon, in 10 years not one fired worker has been returned to their job, and not one independent union has gained legal status.

If Mexican workers are losing their standard of living and the U.S. is losing jobs (over 880,000) due to moving factories overseas, you might wonder who is gaining on all of this. Who else but the large corporations building factories south of the border who have been successful in cutting labor cost and increasing profits. Mexico created a new generation of billionaires during the treaty's lifetime.

2005 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

PRESIDENT	DAVID PETERSON	SCHOOLS - 360 COLBORNE, 55102	696-9626
VICE PRESIDENT	STEVE OLSON	LIEP - 350 ST. PETER ST., #300, 55102	266-9139
TREASURER	RHONDA GILQUIST	SPPD - 367 GROVE ST., 55101	266-5544
SECRETARY	BRIAN KRAWIECKI	LIEP - 350 ST. PETER ST., #300, 55102	266-9134
NEGOTIATIONS			
CITY	SHEILA WINDERLICH	LIBRARY - MMC, 2109 WILSON AVE., 55119	501-6309
SCHOOL	JABER ALSIDDIQUI	SCHOOLS - 360 COLBORNE, 55102	767-8352
PERSONNEL	KARIN ANDERSON	CAO - 550 CITY HALL, 15 W. KELLOGG, 55102	266-8765

STEWARDS

CAO	JIM JEFFERY	500 CITY HALL, 15 W. KELLOGG, 55102	266-8764
FIRE	PAULA PETERSON	100 E. 11 TH ST., 55101	228-6203
LIBRARIES			
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PART TIME	SUSAN McMAHON	HIGHLAND PK, 1974 FORD PKWY., 55116	699-6756
BRANCHES	MARY ANN MILLER	ST. ANTHONY, 2245 CARTER AVE., 55101	642-0411
LIEP	FRANK BERG	350 ST. PETER ST., #300, 55102.	266-9072
OFS	CORRINE HAAS	160 CITY HALL, 15 W. KELLOGG, 55102	266-8815
PARKS & REC	JAMEL ANDERSON	300 CH ANNEX, 25 W. 4 TH ST., 55102	266-6361
P.E.D.	CRAIG O'BRIEN	1200 CH ANNEX, 25 W. 4 TH ST., 55102	266-6636
POLICE	MARSHA PANOS	367 GROVE ST., 55101	292-3781
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	COLLEEN SHIELDS	360 COLBORNE, 55102	767-3472
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