



PROFESSIONAL VIEW

PEA'S NEWSLETTER FOR JULY-SEPTEMBER, 2011

www.peaonline.org

Mission Statement

The Professional Employees Association (hereinafter "Association") is dedicated to bargain, administer and enforce labor agreements in a responsible, prudent and lawful manner for the overall improvement of members' working conditions, with emphasis on general advocacy, education and communication.

3rd QUARTER 2011 PRESIDENT'S UPDATE

Submitted by John F. Blackstone, P.E., President

I believe that a collaborative trusting leader is the most effective. The members of the Executive Committee, stewards and legal counsel are very smart, competent, capable and compassionate professionals who take their jobs very seriously. Hopefully, most of you will never need PEA to step up to the plate to enforce the contract for your individual situation. Some of you will only need to chat with a steward or a member of the Executive Committee. A few will find yourselves in a dilemma that threatens your welfare.

First, if you find yourself in a predicament contact your steward immediately. One of the best problem solving tools available is to explain to someone else what the problem is. Once you understand what the problem is, then you have a much better chance of discerning an answer. Some of you may be familiar with Alcoholics Anonymous and Al-Anon Family Group's fourth and fifth steps. These are tools for understanding. The saying that two heads are better than one is true. A steward is a compassionate listener who can objectively assess the contract issues pertinent to your circumstances.

Members have told us time after time that speaking to a steward brought relief. When an issue reaches the Executive Committee, it is our job to sort out the essence of the contractual issue. This is not always easy. We are compassionate human beings who have members' interests at heart. However, we only have authority to address contract issues. The discussion at the Executive Committee meetings is thorough. Each member clearly states their opinion while the others listen. Here is where collaborative trusting leadership shines. When individuals are encouraged and confident, they will express their candid opinion. Candid discussions provide a clear understanding of the issue and assure a wise decision. This work takes time and trust. I am very proud to be part of PEA. We are and we continue to effectively advocate for our members.

While PEA has been effective in our work in part because of the efforts of those before us and in part because of our strategic plan, we have intentionally avoided the political arena. I am proud of my career as a professional civil servant. The

events in Wisconsin and the recent shutdown of the State of Minnesota cause me to wonder what lies in the future for public employees. The difference between the situation in Minnesota and Wisconsin is the very very fragile difference between the votes for two individuals running for Governor of the State of Minnesota. The recent shut down of the State of Minnesota is an example of these beliefs in action. PEA has been very very effective in contract negotiations and grievances because the law says we can. If the law changes as it has in Wisconsin, I can assure you that PEA will be seriously hampered.

This is a decision that cannot be taken lightly nor can the Executive Committee consider it unless you the members authorize venturing into the political landscape. Unless I hear from you that this is a direction that you want PEA to move toward, then we will continue on the path that we are on at present. If a Governor is elected in Minnesota who is of the same persuasion as the Governor of Wisconsin, it will probably be too late and will not make any difference. I look forward to hearing from you on this topic.

PEA CALENDAR OF EVENTS 2011

Tuesday, Sept. 6 Combined Stewards/Board Meeting
Wednesday, Nov. 30 General Membership Mtg.

THE CORNER

By Mike Wilde, Legal Counsel

The weather has been hot and so has the political and legal environment for public labor unions in Minnesota, and Wisconsin this summer. I want to update you on a few issues that have the greatest impact on you as PEA members.

Minnesota State Shut Down Update

Since July 1, the State of Minnesota has been effectively shut down making this the longest state shut down in the United States in over a decade. Effectively 22,000 state employees were laid off as of July 1.

The reason for the shut down: Governor Mark Dayton and the Republican-controlled Legislature are at odds over \$1.8 billion in state spending for the upcoming two-year budget cycle. The governor has proposed raising taxes on the wealthiest Minnesotans to support future spending, but Republicans have rejected Dayton's plan. The Legislature passed a \$34 billion budget with no tax increases, but Dayton vetoed it.

The Minnesota State Constitution requires a fully-approved budget before the state can spend any money, and so far, only funding for the Department of Agriculture has been signed into law.

So, with the exception of the DOA, the only state employees who are still working are those who perform one of the state government's "critical core functions." Broadly, these include:

- Basic custodial care for residents of state correctional facilities, regional treatment centers, nursing homes, veterans homes and residential academies and other similar state-operated services.

- Maintenance of public safety and immediate public health concerns.
- Provision of benefit payments and medical services to individuals.
- Preservation of the essential elements of the financial system of government.
- Necessary administration and supportive services, including but not limited to computer system maintenance, Internet security, issuance of payments.
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The list of "critical core functions" is not static and has changed slightly over the past two weeks based on court orders and the decisions of an appointed official.

While the state shut down affects citizens and state employees in a variety of ways, it is clear that there is no upside to the shut down. To help

get Minnesota back in business and return all state employees to work, you can sign an emergency petition that's currently being circulated by Minnesota AFL-CIO President Shar Knutson at <http://signon.org/tell-minnesota-republicans>. Please weigh in on this issue.

St. Paul School District Update

In an effort to shave even more off of the St. Paul School District's dwindling education budget, the district has done some reorganizing that has directly impacted several PEA members and their current positions within the District. While PEA and the District must partner to work toward the common objective of maintaining a strong school district in these difficult financial times, PEA members must take a stand against any unfair management practices that unfairly threaten member rights and jobs.

With your help we must **Identify Changes** to help adjust to and assess the appropriateness of changes the District puts forward. PEA relies on our members' communications. We conducted a special luncheon meeting in April to improve lines of communication. Despite this meeting and my request for communication, PEA still only learned of the "hiring during layoffs" (referred to annually by the District as "reorganization") later than we would like. So please **Report Concerns** to your union stewards and PEA leadership to ensure the union is aware of them and can act accordingly. Make sure your facts are detailed and accurate to the extent possible. Also **Get Involved** to ensure that open communication takes place and fairness prevails under the circumstances. Remember, our goal is **Follow Up** to make sure issues are resolved,

preferably in a way that respects the dignity of workers. Your employment rights under the contract are only as strong as your participation. This applies to everyone!

Wisconsin Update

On Tuesday, July 12, 2011, Wisconsin voters headed to the polls to cast their votes in Democratic primary elections. These elections are being held as a result of the recall petitions that were signed and filed to oust Wisconsin state senators, Republicans and Democrats alike, following passage of a Wisconsin law earlier this year that strips most collective bargaining rights from many public employees. The general election for the affected Wisconsin state senate positions is set for August 9.

Speaking of the dramatic labor law changes made earlier this year in Wisconsin, the state's public employees are not taking them lying down. Governor Scott Walker and Wisconsin's Republican state senators may have passed a law to strip most collective bargaining rights from many of the state's public workers, but the unions to which the workers belong have filed two separate federal lawsuits against the State of Wisconsin and Governor Scott Walker claiming that taking collective bargaining rights away from public workers, in the manner Wisconsin did it, violates applicable labor laws. These lawsuits are likely to take months to move through the litigation process toward a final resolution.

Peterson Back on Executive Committee

David Peterson has returned to the PEA Executive Committee, as School District

Negotiations Chair. This return was ratified by the PEA general membership at the Summer general

membership meeting.

David had been a member of the PEA Executive Committee in a number of positions since 1991, but did not run for a position on the PEA Executive Committee during the Winter general membership meeting annual election. Unfortunately, no one ran for the School District Negotiations Chair at that time, leaving a vacancy.

Consequently, David agreed to serve again as School District Negotiations Chair. David has been on the school district negotiation team for the negotiation of 10 bargaining agreements with the School District.

The current bargaining agreement runs through December 31st. A school district negotiation team

will be assembled in late Autumn. If a new contract is not negotiated and approved by December 31st, the terms of the current contract would remain in effect until a new contract is negotiated and approved.

Maia Sierra is the other School District employee on the PEA Executive Committee. Maia is in her third year as PEA Treasurer.

We welcome your questions and comments, especially when the concerns relate to layoffs or reductions.

David Peterson, office phone: 651-696-9626

My Experience with PEA **By Julia Sobania**

When I first started with the City in 2008, I was of the opinion that unions were organizations that did not belong with any group other than Trades. Coming from the private sector if I had a crummy boss or corrupt management, I simply left the job. This was the private sector and if that was how a company was run, I wanted nothing to do with it. If there were something bad environmentally, either OSHA or the Department of Labor would take care of it.

I joined the union because the fair share dues were almost as much as the regular dues and I wanted to have a vote on things that related to me. To me, the difference was minimal because being an opinionated personality if I had to pay dues I at least wanted my say.

My first encounter with the union made me a believer. Just having my steward in the room with

me made a huge difference in how I was being treated. This is a confidential matter but I can tell you that working with Mike Wilde and my steward helped me get through that bad situation without repercussions to me. I am grateful for the assistance I received from them.

My second encounter was because I was denied the negotiated vacation extension. I knew that Accountants in other departments were getting approved. I felt slighted by my department and I could not understand why they felt I was not equal to other Accountants in the City. Paul Hogrefe met with my director and after some discussion they decided I should resubmit the request. I was awarded additional vacation on my second request.

I appreciate the support PEA provides me.

Report to Membership since the last newsletter: May 2011

Totals: 304 Members

City: 235 (36 are fair share)

Schools: 69 (7 are fair share)

Welcome New Members:

1. Barbara L. Hillesland, OFS
2. Brian B. Bell, CAO
3. Martin P. McCarthy, PED
4. Roxanne E. Young, PED
5. Theresa L. Bopp, Schools
6. Alexander T. Nee, Libraries
7. Laura A. Wakefield, OTC
8. Diane White, OTC

Departing Members (Promotion, retirement, resignation or lay off):

1. Peg Doheny, Libraries
2. Thomas Hagel, Parks
3. Amber Adam, Parks
4. Donald Cheney, Water
5. Barbara Morin, Financial Serv.
6. Clifford Travers, Police
7. Kari-Ann Ediger, Schools
8. John Komarek, Schools
9. Paige Mathiowetz, Schools
10. Andrew Mosca, Schools
11. Patricia Lund, Schools
12. Stephen Kane, Parks

2011 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

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VICE PRES.	KARIN ANDERSON CAO - 750 City Hall, 15 W. Kellogg, 55102 e-mail address: karin.anderson@ci.stpaul.mn.us	266-8765
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PERSONNEL	PAGE DELONG RAMSEY CNTY PUB. HEALTH--555 Cedar St,55101 e-mail address: page.delong@co.ramsey.mn.us	266-1321

2011 STEWARDS

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LIBRARIES			
Full-Time			
(Central /MMC)	SUSAN HENRY	MMC, 2109 Wilson Ave., 55119	501-6310
		Central Library, 90 W. 4 th St., 55102	266-7010
	e-mail address:	susan.henry@ci.stpaul.mn.us	
(Branches)	KATHLEEN CONGER	Rondo, 461 Dale St., 55103	266-7431
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