

AFSCME LOCAL 1668

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President's Report

Happy New Year Brothers and Sisters! I hope the New Year finds you all well and that you all enjoyed your holidays!

Over the holidays, our union did some wonderful things for various groups of people. You provided a holiday meal for the Seita Scholars that were on campus on Dec. 22. The turnout was great; there were fifteen of the students who showed up, five of the staff and John Seita and his family also. I have been told the students were very appreciative of not only the dinner, but for all that our local has done for them. Thank you to all of you for funding this event, and thank you to those that volunteered their time to organize, shop and prepare the meal.

Our local also adopted a family for Christmas again this year. The local provided some much needed food items and a few gifts for the children. This

was a very generous act that you did, and your local made a special difference in the lives of a member and their family. You should be proud of yourselves! Isn't it great to belong to an organization that cares so much for their members!

This is going to be an important year politically, and we need to keep on top of what is going on! In Michigan we will elect a new governor, secretary of state and attorney general, among other positions. Now is the time to start researching the candidates and issues. And now is the time to consider becoming a member of AFSCME PEOPLE if you're not already. In case you don't know, the PEOPLE program is the political lobbying arm of AFSCME. The union is not legally allowed to spend any of our dues money for political actions. The way we can make sure they have the necessary

funds to promote our agenda in Lansing and Washington is to give to PEOPLE. You can get the necessary forms for payroll deduction by contacting one of your officers or calling the office.

It is also time to get registered to vote, if you are not already. We can provide the forms for this too, if you call the office. We as public employees have a unique ability. We can elect the people who determine our fate. We can make a difference! AFSCME is one of the biggest unions in the country; we carry a lot of votes, AFSCME matters! So make sure you are registered now, and this fall we can vote to make our state and our country a little bit better.

Keep up the good work you all do on a daily basis and remember.... Western works because we do!

In Solidarity, Dennis

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SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- See Article on Free Tax Prep
- RESCSPO
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VICE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Happy New Year Brothers and Sisters of Local 1668

I trust everyone had a wonderful Christmas and a very happy New Year.

As I look back at 2009 I wonder how or who got me this far at WMU? What was my motivation to stay? And, what on earth caused me to be so active in Union business? The answers to the questions are: My loyalty got me to stay at WMU this long. The loyalty to my family; to the students; and to my family at work. Weather you believe this or not or even like it or not each and every one of us is evolved in each other's lives one way or another. We get to know each other by the longevity of working here. We get to know our

Supervisors, our Managers and our Directors of our departments. After a while we even get to know the people in the buildings we work in, and they get to know us. It isn't something we try to do it just happens. No matter if we are in an area or we move around like we do. It just happens. How I got this far at WMU is the value Western sees in me each time I get a raise or a benefit increasing to make my life better. It's not like there weren't offers outside of Western Michigan University, it was. They just weren't worth it to leave. (And oh yes I did look) finally what got me so interested in being active in union business, the fact that someone has to do it. First of all we all are active in the union weather you like it or not. **Paying** union dues is being active.

By the way, paying for something and not caring, knowing or understanding what you are paying for is not good. I appreciate the vote of confidence people have in me and the few people who actually do come to the membership meetings to make the decisions for the entire local, however you should at least make an effort to come in a few times to make sure we are spending your money right. So for a New Year's resolution try to get involved more with the local by joining a committee and or coming to as many membership meetings as you can. It is only an hour at the most out of a month and you can always leave at any time.

In solidarity,

Valerie R. Armstrong VP

Chief Steward's Report

Chief Steward Report:

Happy New Year everyone! As the New Year begins, we find ourselves working under a brand new Collective Bargaining Agreement. I have no idea when the new contracts will be in your hands, but I can tell you that we have not finished putting together all the changes to the new contract so that we (the whole bargaining team) can comb through them and make sure they are corrected before we print them. We are working under this contract, however, so please refer to your packets with questions and feel free to get a hold of us if you have further concerns.

We have already had some things handled incorrectly and so I will try to address some of these issues now. When it comes to University Closure and work availability on what we referred to as a snow day: If the University closes, and you are already at work and wish to remain at work, you should be sure and tell your Supervisor that you are willing to stay at work. IF they do not have work for you in your department, you may be asked to go over to Landscape services to Shovel Snow or possibly work in Dining Services. The Supervisor or Manager is to contact the

other departments to see where the need is. Most likely you will be shoveling snow, so be sure to bring warm outerwear. You are only promised 4 hours of work per the contract, but may get more hours depending on how bad it is. If you work on these occasions, you will be paid as though it were a Holiday. Also, if you call in due to inclement weather, and the University closes, then you are not charged from the time the University is closed to the end of your shift and paid as though it were a Holiday, same as before. If you call in or you are scheduled to be on A/L or S/L that is what you will get if the University closes, same as before. The only way to change that is to change your previous call in to "leave without pay" and then the rest would be paid by the University.

We had a meeting with Mr. Strazdas about the RECSPO area consultation. He explained the reasoning behind the consultation and the need for input from the employees who work in the area. We then had a meeting with the entire group of employees who work in and

around these areas and where Mr. Strazdas explained the process to the employees and assured them that this was not an effort to privatized their work but merely to determine first, how to best handle the filling for the vacant Manager position and secondly to see if there was anything we could do better. They were the given the opportunity to give their input. There was a lot of good information shared by our members that came out of that meeting. Mr. Strazdas will meet with the Union Leadership again in the near future to discuss any possible changes if there are going to be any changes, before implementing them.

IF you are going to sign up for a membership at SRC, you should consider it now. It looks like they renew their memberships on a calendar year basis, in January of every year.

Be sure to check out the article on Free Tax preparation!

In Solidarity,

Kathi

Don't pay to get your taxes done!

Free tax preparation for individuals or families with a household income in 2009 of \$49,000 or below. This service is provided by IRS certified community tax volunteers from the Kalamazoo County Tax Counseling Initiative. Call 2-1-1, starting January 15th, 2010, to schedule an appointment or go online at www.gryphon.org and click on tax calendar for a list of locations, dates, times and items to bring. E-filing is available at all locations.

THANK YOU THANK YOU THANK YOU!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

January 5, 2010

Sieta dinner December 22, 2009

Re: My Retirement

Thank You for the Card and the check.

It is very much appreciated.

Elinor Zantjer

Let's give a big thanks to the following people for volunteering to help prepare the Holiday dinner for the Sieta kids Carolyn Wiley, Nancy Kablitz, Kim LaViolette, Chris Christoph, Deb Sheppard, Doug Gray Jerry Fulbright Jr., Jan Prange, Jeff and Becky Winkle , John Boss, Tori Kennedy, Rob Kelly, Kathi Cantley and Bryan Sutton.

The PSSO and APA invite you and your guest/s to join your friends and colleagues for a day trip to the Soaring Eagle Casino in Mount Pleasant, Michigan.

The event is scheduled for **Saturday, March 27, 2010**. Transportation is provided by B & W Charters, Inc. The bus will leave **Parking Lot 41 behind Sangren Hall at 9 a.m. sharp** and arrive at the casino at approximately noon. After a day at the casino, the bus will depart at 6 p.m. and is expected to arrive in Kalamazoo at approximately 9:00 p.m.

The cost for this day trip is \$35 per person. The Soaring Eagle offers \$20 in complimentary slot play and a \$5 meal voucher per person. To qualify for this special complimentary offer, you will need to fill out a reservation form. This information will be forwarded to the casino so that your comps will be loaded onto your card prior to our arrival.

Available seats on the bus are limited, thus, reservations are being accepted on a first-come, first-served basis.

To submit your reservation, please contact Gail Kurtz or Nancy Johnson, Investments and Endowment Management, Room 1037, Seibert Administration Building.

Reservations are due no later than Wednesday, February 17, 2010. Reservation fees are non-refundable and non-transferrable.

If you have questions, email Gail at gail.kurtz@wmich.edu or Nancy at nancy.johnson@wmich.edu.

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Dear Kathleen,

Nearly 100 years in the making, today the Senate passed comprehensive health care reform by a vote of 60-39. While this bill isn't everything I wanted it to be, it is a groundbreaking piece of legislation that saves lives, saves money, and saves Medicare.

When I first came to the U.S. Senate in 2001, we tried to pass a comprehensive Patient's Bill of Rights, but our efforts were blocked. The bill we passed this morning includes those protections - a "health care bill of rights" that stops insurance company abuses and discrimination. They will no longer be able to deny coverage because of pre-existing conditions, or drop you if you get sick. They also will no longer be able to charge higher rates because of your gender or your occupation, as well as many other protections.

The bill also makes insurance more affordable for American families. Health insurance reform will lower health costs with reforms to improve care coordination, reduce medical errors, and encourage more efficient health plans. Lower health care costs mean more money to invest in businesses, allowing employers to give workers more in take-home wages. It also includes special assistance for small businesses, many of whom are struggling with skyrocketing health insurance rates. This bill creates new tax credits for small businesses to help them pay for the cost of health insurance for their employees. It also provides tax cuts to individuals and families up to 400% of poverty to help them buy health insurance.

It also saves the country money, by reducing the federal deficit and reducing the growth in federal spending on health care.

Finally, this bill saves Medicare. It closes the "doughnut hole" in prescription drug coverage, provides free preventive care for Medicare beneficiaries, and changes the way we pay for health care to reward quality of care, rather than the quantity of tests and procedures. According to non-partisan budget officials, this bill will extend the life of the Medicare trust fund for years to come.

I have posted more details about this plan on my website, at <http://stabenow.senate.gov/healthcare>. I've included a copy of the bill, detailed summaries about what the bill does, and an interactive feature to explain how this bill closes the gaps in coverage to provide Americans with real health insurance choices.

This has been a long and difficult fight, and while we didn't win every battle, the bill we passed this morning accomplishes the important goals we laid out at the beginning of this debate. It stops unfair practices by insurance companies. It strengthens and protects Medicare for years to come. And it makes health care more affordable for families and small businesses.

The health care fight is far from over. But today we have made extremely important progress on one of the most difficult issues facing our country - an issue that has led to rising costs for our families and businesses and has cost us so many American jobs.

As we continue this work, and in our efforts early next year to continue to address the jobs crisis, I will remain laser-focused on saving and creating jobs in Michigan. As always, please continue to keep me informed about issues of concern to you and your family.

Happy Holidays,

Debbie Stabenow

United States Senator

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