

# Weekly Word

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October 28, 2004

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## Election Day

To many of you, Election Day is just another holiday from work. All of you, however, need to realize how this year's elections can seriously shape your work and personal lives for years to come.

First off, there is the presidential race. Many folks are polarized towards Bush or Kerry for their own personal reasons. Many may think neither candidate meets their needs. As union members or simply workers trying to make ends meet, the labor community is pretty clear in their support of John Kerry. You can log on to the Federation website (above) to link over to the AFL-CIO web page or the CWA web page to get a distinct set of reasons for this choice.

Secondly, there are seven races in Monroe County for the county legislature. Only in the 20<sup>th</sup> district (primarily Ogden and parts of Chili, Henrietta, and Riga) is there no opponent. The six other districts do have challengers to the Republican incumbents. By Election Day, we will have posted to the Federation website all of the FSW supported races, as well as the Rochester Labor Council supported positions. The only races our own COPE committee interviewed and made recommendations to were the county legislature races.

So remember: While Election Day is a holiday, you have a critical responsibility to yourself and the community around you to vote. Not voting is not an option!

## Future Communications

Since most of the Federation membership has email and internet, most of you will continue to receive the *Weekly Word* and *Federation Forum* through that medium. The *Weekly Word* has already been distributed as an attachment to an email. I'm going to try future newsletters with an email notice that says a new issue is available. This email will contain a link to the page on the Federation website. To see how this works, click on the link listed here which will transport you to the latest research we released last week, [A Tragedy Waiting to Happen](http://www.fsw-union.com/tragedy.pdf), at [www.fsw-union.com/tragedy.pdf](http://www.fsw-union.com/tragedy.pdf).

Members who do not have email will continue to receive the *Word* and the *Forum* in the traditional manner.

Please let me know how this system is working for communications so we know if we need to change anything.

## Overtime

I know it's been a month since the last issue came out about the flack over overtime and some of those issues may have been resolved by now. I did want to report that I had a conversation with Patricia Stevens the day after it came out. What she indicated to me was that she did not mean for the overtime to be interpreted the way it was in the *Word* and that I must have misunderstood.

To tell you the truth, I would prefer that I misunderstood the intent of the policy or the interpretations that came out to explain the policy. It undermines the workforce to think the commissioner believes some people are stealing time when they work overtime.

As workers, you need to understand that the county has control over when to offer/approve overtime. Once it is offered, the contract determines whether it was offered and distributed appropriately. If the county chooses not to offer overtime, for whatever reason, it is their right. If we can't get all of the work done in seven hours, then that's a choice the county has taken into consideration when overtime was taken away.

## Follow up to Walczak Article

In the July Federation Forum, the front page article concerned words Mel Walczak said in a Services Reorganization 2 meeting and how those words were interpreted. We had a subsequent meeting with Mel, Joe Martino, and some concerned members to try to establish intent of those words. We believe that Mel did not intend the words to be interpreted in the manner that they were interpreted and have offered him an opportunity to respond. His response is on the back of this issue.

## Contract Mobilization

I want to extend supreme thanks from the Mobilization Team and the Executive Board for all the participation in the rallies, balloon days, red shirt Thursdays, and especially for the two busloads-plus that came to the press conference last Thursday. These activities clearly show the membership support for a fair contract. Keep up the good work!

## *Walczak responds:*

### Federation Forum

In the July 2004 Federation Forum, there appeared an anonymous article entitled “A Service Worker Reaching Out to Financial Care Path”. Since the article, in its first paragraph, attributed some quotes to me, I thought it best to provide some clarification.

First, let me say, I am grateful to the Federation leadership for allowing me to use the vehicle of the Federation Forum to share my thoughts. When the Phase II process was initiated in the FCP (February 04), town meetings were resumed, work teams were formed, facilitators volunteered and many good suggestions/recommendations came forward. Even while you are reading this message, many of those are being implemented. In June, the same Phase II process was initiated for Child and Family Services and that process still continues, with suggestions/recommendations expected by the end of September.

The Town Meeting has been a unique experience for me in that many of our staff took the opportunity to share their thoughts and ideas in a very public way. My challenge was to be able to answer many difficult questions and comment on the varied opinions shared. It truly was a learning experience. The difficulty with these types of exchanges is the “listener doesn’t always hear what the speaker is intending to say” and “the speaker doesn’t always communicate in a way to be best understood by the listener”. That, I believe, is what has happened in the case of the Federation Article. I can’t recall if I used the words “the majority of Financial Care Path workers are not overworked, and they feel satisfied with their caseload”. Or, if any of the other remarks attributed to me by the anonymous source were actually spoke by me. I do know our caseloads are high and that our workers put forth an extraordinary effort to manage them. Many have made the adjustments necessary to provide clients with the best service possible under the circumstances. Still, others are having a more difficult time getting a handle on the current work processes. Mentioned in the Forum article was a reference to “problem teams”. These teams were identified in the FCP Phase II process as having a caseload that was much higher than other teams. The creation of new teams, as a part of Phase II, was the suggestion to lift the burden and ease the problem.

I promised John Vasko and Richard Hutchings I would be brief and I may have gone beyond that point already. But, I don’t want the good opportunities for ongoing dialogue to be lost. If I say something at a Town Meeting that seems totally outrageous or that needs further clarification, please feel free to ask further questions or see if what you heard is what I intended to say. That is, I believe, the best way for us to work together and share information with each other.

Finally, I’m sorry for whatever misunderstandings might have occurred. Let’s keep moving forward so that we can, as an agency, provide the best service for our clients, get a sense of fulfillment from our work and be as fiscally responsible as we can for the people of Monroe County.

*To the reader: This is the full content of the letter Mel emailed to m..., I have not changed the words. I appreciate the candor Mel has expressed and hope this will resolve any conflict people feel. While the letter is addressed to the Federation Forum, I have put it in the Weekly Word since we have not had a Forum published yet and I did not want to delay any further the clarification that Mel has sent. John*