

# Weekly Word

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## Work Attire Guidelines and Internet Policy Reissued at DHS

The agency has reissued the Work Attire Guidelines and Internet Policy as a result of negotiations with the Union. The issue with both was related to the signature requirement at the bottom of each and what recourse the County could take with "violators." The Union feels comfortable with employees signing the amended documents since the signature merely means you have received these documents, understand what is being said, and not that you necessarily agree with what you have signed.

The Work Attire Guidelines outlines how the County feels you should be dressed for the job taking into consideration the work that you do. Guidelines are different than a dress code. A dress code would be mandated and enforceable. Guidelines are not. I remind everyone that the Union won a very important arbitration case that said there was no dress code in Monroe County.

With that said, I believe that workers should dress appropriately for the job since we are professionals and need to project a professional image to our client population.

The issue with the computers and our access to the internet/email is slightly different since these are tools of the job provided by the employer for efficiencies of work. The state has very strict guidelines on the use of the internet because of the possibility of viruses and worms, etc. that can severely harm our ability to work and meet client needs. Per Tom Kirkpatrick at our last labor-management meeting, Monroe County is the only county that has the ability to access the internet without restrictions. We don't want that taken away.

As we have learned from a few investigatory interviews, the county has the ability to view internet sites that individual workers have accessed. I suggest you do your personal emailing and internet journeys from your home computer.

## Work Ethics Policy

Most of you at DHS should have also recently received the County policy on work ethics. You probably received this during training, which, if you're like me, was a million years ago. This distribution was also subsequent

to investigatory interviews and being reissued as a reminder. Again, the signature section certifies that you have received, read, and understand but not that you agree or disagree. This also should be signed and returned to your supervisor.

## Negotiations Impasse

Most of you know that the Union declared impasse in our contract negotiations last January. I know that most of you also don't really understand impasse. Jean Zimmer, our IUE-CWA staff representative, offered to write an article about impasse to try and clear the air and help you understand our strategy...

## Impasse

What is it?

What does it get us?

by Jean Zimmer

We declared impasse in January when it seemed we could get no further in negotiations with Monroe County.

Impasse is the procedure set up under the Public Employees Relations Board (PERB) within negotiations. It is a procedure that calls for the appointment of a mediator/fact-finder to facilitate negotiations.

The mediator/fact-finder appointed to us is Dennis Campagna from Buffalo. He can meet with the parties three times to assist any possible movement. If that fails, he can get the positions from the parties and issue a fact-finding report to the parties in the hope that his recommendation will propel the parties toward settlement. That report is first given to each party (the county and the Union) and then made public five days later. The mediator/fact-finder has NO AUTHORITY over either party and his recommendations carry no authority.

The law states that should mediation/fact-finding fail to produce an agreement, the legislature can impose a contract for up to one year. The imposed contract cannot take away or alter anything in the 'current' agreement, and it is unlikely to add anything either (then there would be no incentive to bargain). The imposed agreement would be effective for one year. In our case, that would be 2004, and we would immediately be back at the bargaining table.

Impasse, therefore, gets us nothing except a return to the table. It gets nothing for the County except a return to the table as well.

The Federation has been to mediation/fact-finding a few times in its history. A contract has never been imposed although we have gotten up to that stage of the procedure. No legislature wants to impose. Imposition gains nothing for the County or for the Federation membership.

We have historically gained an agreement because we negotiated it. That is the only way we will gain an agreement this time, which will be presented to the membership for ratification. Technically impasse could revolve on itself until the sides (County, Union) get to their point of change. Neither side gets what it wants.

The law and the procedure are such that they are intended to not replace bargaining. Obviously, they do not. Eventually the forces of life are such that each side must move- members can divide over the need for wage increases from life pressures; the County need for fiscal recognition of the crisis that health care costs will only continue to grow.

The relationship between the parties continues because it must. Negotiations is the only way to get an agreement.



The work of this Union depends on faithful volunteers who donate their “free” time to make all that is done successful. The Mobilization committee is made up of many volunteers, but I want to take a moment to acknowledge and thank a particular individual.

Lorrie Boyce has been creating the flyers that you have been receiving on Thursdays. She does this at home in her spare time on her own computer (see...I’m sensitive to the Internet policy and protecting Lorrie). Lorrie’s special strength is the graphics, so I needed to thank her in kind.

Lorrie...we are so much better because of your efforts! Thanks!

## Katrina and You...

Many organizations and folks around the world are coming to the aid of survivors of this most disastrous of hurricanes. CWA donated \$4 million to help out. IUE-CWA locals across the country are doing their part, too. The Federation of Social Workers is also working on a project in conjunction with DHS administration to do our part.

Rosanne Homzie and Michelle Alaimo have met with Joe Martino and are in the process of developing a

way to help the evacuees that have landed in Monroe County. Most of you know that the services and assistance we can provide is fairly limited. The approach we are trying to take is to provide those little extras that can help a family rebuild their lives.

The initial concept is that we would adopt families/individuals and provide extra clothes or other needs that aren’t covered by the allowances available under state guidelines. Not all of the details are pieced together yet, but I wanted to give you a “heads up” that something is in the works.

## Human Services Worker of the Year

A couple of weeks ago, I announced in this newsletter that the Federation is sponsoring a first of, I hope, many annual awards recognizing the efforts of a private sector worker and public sector worker in the human service field. Additionally, there is a lifetime achievement award.

This year we designated Richard Schauseil, former director of this department, as the recipient of the Lifetime Achievement award. We are soliciting until 9/23 nominations for the public sector and private sector. Any of you can make this nomination by going to the Federation website...[www.fsw-union.com](http://www.fsw-union.com). Any worker in the human service field is eligible for nomination, whether social worker, medical social worker, childcare worker, caseworker, examiner, case aide, clerk, etc.

The awards luncheon is at the Riverside Convention Center on October 20<sup>th</sup> from 11:30 to 1:30pm. The FSW executive board authorized today a subsidy of \$10 for each member and retiree ticket. The total cost would be \$15 for members and retirees to attend. Tickets need to be purchased by October 14<sup>th</sup>. Spouses/partners and companions of members/retirees would still need to pay \$25 for their tickets. Current workers will need to request time off to attend this event.

Sorry about the time of day but costs and news coverage are better at this time.



## Time Card Corrections

I have received the County’s list of people who need time card adjustments for the previous two pay periods. The only way I can think to contact all of you to see if their proposal is correct is to email you their solution and get your response. I can meet with you individually if you think this is still not correct. Please respond quickly, since the County is waiting for me to say the correction is adequate before making the adjustments/payments. If I don’t hear from you by next Friday, 9/30, I will advise the County to proceed with their correction. If you do not receive an email from me and believe your card was inappropriately changed, you need to email me ASAP!