

Weekly Word

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By-Laws Update

Last night we held the first membership meeting to review and approve the draft By-Laws. From that meeting, there were changes that need to be updated for the second meeting to be held next Tuesday, February 7th. Please amend your copies to reflect these changes:

Page 1: Add to opening statements after Non-Discrimination Policy:

COPE

We the Federation of Social Workers believe that the best way to protect the rights of working people in this country is to take an active role in the political process. This role can be, but is not limited to:

- Provide support for the elected officials who support working people in this country;
- Be knowledgeable about the laws affecting working people in this country;
- Take an active role in developing laws that benefit the FSW membership
- Stay on top of laws that affect the clients that we serve in our daily work lives.

A member contribution to COPE (Committee on Political Education) is the only way Unions have to support these efforts on a local, state or national level. Members seeking to serve as stewards, officers or executive board members must make every effort to support COPE recruitment in the membership and are encouraged to serve as role models by their own contributions to COPE.

Article X- Local Committees

- A. 8. add the word "Committee" after retiree
E. 3. change "domestic violence" to "domestic orientation"
8. change "national policies" to "national policy"

Article XIII – Securing Records

Correct last sentence of paragraph one to read, "Therefore, such records should be kept under direct local control."

Article XV- Nomination and Election of Local Officers and Stewards

Section 4. B. Add sentence "Any member requesting an absentee ballot for elections should refer to Article XX.c.1 and c.2."

Date Correction

The correct date for the next membership meeting to approve the By-Laws is Tuesday February 7th at 5:30pm at the Union office. The notice on the back side of the last Weekly Word stated the date as Tuesday February 8th.

IUE-CWA News

I hope you all noticed the article in the last national newsletter regarding our contract settlement. Also listed in that issue was the notice regarding upcoming officer and steward elections.

The nomination meeting for officers will take place at our membership meeting scheduled for March 16th at the Union office at 5:30pm. Nominations will be accepted for the offices of: President, Vice-president, Secretary, Treasurer, Grievance Co-chair for Service, Grievance Co-chair for Certification and 2 Trustees. [The IUE-CWA News incorrectly stated there are 4 trustee positions.] Steward nominations will also be accepted at that meeting. Any member wishing to compete for any of these offices can be nominated at that meeting by any member or they can nominate themselves.

Elections for Officers will take place on Tuesday April 11th. Steward Elections will take place on Tuesday May 9th.

UNUM Short Term Disability, Life insurance and Arndt Asset

Management Meetings set:

Monday 2/13 Westfall Rd Room 301

UNUM 8am to 4pm; Arndt 10:30-2:30

Tuesday 2/14 St Paul Room 126
UNUM 8am to 1pm; Arndt from 12-2pm

Friday 2/17 CSEU Conf. Room
UNUM and Arndt from 12-2pm



Thoughts to Ponder...

I occasionally get submissions from members that speak from the heart and are relevant to the worklife we experience. I am including in this issue thoughts from one of your fellow members...

I was recently engaged in a conversation with a Temporary Assistance administrator. Although rambling, the conversation eventually wound around to the subject of the sharing of information at this agency (between front line staff and administration) and accountability. I was bemoaning my perception that front line staff had little input in the decision making process at DHS, although we have much valuable insight into problems and solutions. The administrator's response was essentially that it was the role of administration to make those policy type decisions, and that "the buck" (a la Harry Truman) stopped on the administrator's desk.

As I have ruminated on this conversation it occurs to me that some "bucks" do, and necessarily should, stop on an administrator's desk. But in this agency, like all organizations, the reality is there are many "bucks" and they are stopped at many places.

For example, the case aides stop "bucks" all day long in our waiting rooms: interacting face-to-face with irate clients, dealing with long lines, deftly handling unexpected issues as they arise; clerks stop "bucks" all day, everyday, processing voluminous piles of mail, answering phones, relaying messages from client to worker to client...; examiners throughout this agency are overtaxed, overburdened, and overwhelmed but daily "bucks" are stopped by them, dealt with and dispensed, only to begin the process all over again the next day; senior examiners have been given more and more responsibilities (in addition to reviewing cases and supervising) and again with agility and grace (smile) "bucks" are stopped and disposed of; and supervisors, being between a rock and a hard place, carry out the dictates of administration while working towards the best uses of their team's resources....

"Bucks" stop all over the place in a well functioning organization. The acknowledgement of this fact by front line staff and administration is an indication of a well functioning organization.

In this post-Altreya environment here at DHS many administrators have less than 5 years of experience as administrators (prior and up to the mid 1990s there were 4 administrators in Temporary Assistance, there are currently approximately 8).

There are many examiners with less than 3 years experience in their positions, and turnover is horrific. These two elements alone (without the stresses and strains of the County's financial predicament and our workloads) could lead to the perception of a lack of appreciation on the part of the workers, and a "do it because I said do it" on the part of some administrators.

Steven Covey, in his book "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People" shares that "You manage things and lead people." Perhaps that is where the "buck" needs to start: the leading of people. If the culture and environment here at DHS is to become less toxic, and more exhilarating; if front line staff is to feel appreciated, respected, and valued; if the goal is to move our clients towards self-sufficiency through a user friendly system, one piece of the puzzle must be meaningful, two-way dialogues that build upon the experiences and expertise of some front line staff and the desire to serve (and lead) attitude of most administrators.

When we all work together, towards the same goals, with open lines of communication, the client benefits, the worker benefits, administration benefits, and the community benefits....and "the buck" can be tossed in the trash.

Robert Snead 1/25/06