

# UNION ORGANIZER



AFSCME LOCAL 3800 NEWSLETTER

MARCH 2009

WWW.AFSCME3800.ORG

## MESSAGE FROM THE UNION PRESIDENT

### Don't Balance the Budget on our Backs!

by Phyllis Walker, Local 3800 President

**H**ow do we solve our current economy problem? Is it by cutting public services, laying off public employees, or reducing state spending? Our governor would have us believe it is by doing all of the above. He would have us believe the only way to solve our \$4.8 billion budget deficit is by tightening our belt.

At first glance this sounds logical. After all, if we are experiencing a deficit in our personal finances, we attempt to spend less. That may work for individual finances, but it will never work for state government.

If state government cuts public services, lays off public employees, or reduces state spending, it will only make the economic crisis worse. A reduction in public services and fewer jobs means more hardship for working people. This economic crisis will not be solved by cutting government spending.

To repair Minnesota's economy we need to balance the budget, put middle class families first, and focus on the right priorities, such as reducing government waste, eliminating programs that don't work, fixing our broken health care system, and restoring fairness to our tax system. In short, investing in state and local communities is the answer.

Instead, Governor Pawlenty is proposing drastic, unnecessary cuts that harm victims of the poor economy. He, like George W. Bush, is putting politics before people, failing middle class families, and trying to outsource jobs. He is proposing cutting corporate taxes in half. This will add \$1 billion to the deficit. In addition, he has hired 131 highly paid state administrators since the wage freeze was announced.

How did a progressive, prosperous state like Minnesota end up with a \$4.8 billion deficit? In the late 90's the highest paid people received a tax cut. This has resulted in a working mother whose salary

is \$38,000 paying 12.6% in taxes, while a billionaire CEO pays only 9.3%.

If people earning \$250,000 paid their fair share in taxes, it would result in more than \$1 billion in revenue. A 1% tax hike on the wealthiest 1%, would result in an additional \$600 million in revenue. The wealthiest Minnesotans should pay the same percent in taxes as the middle class. If the wealthiest citizens paid their fair share, we could afford the public services that Minnesotans deserve, want, and need.

**Working Mom  
Will Pay 12.6%**



**\$38,000**

**Stanley Hubbard  
Will Pay Only 9.3%**



**Billionaire CEO  
DirecTV**

*continued on page 3*

# The University Budget, Layoffs and

By Cherrene Horazuk, Chief Steward

**W**e have all heard about the economic crisis and its impact on the University budget. Rather than looking for real solutions to the economic crisis, Governor Pawlenty and others are using it to attack the vital services that public employees provide. AFSCME members make Minnesota's land grant University work by providing critical support to students and faculty. AFSCME 3800 will continue to stand up to defend our public University, and to defend the services our members provide. We are fighting for economic justice at the University, through workplace organizing, contract negotiations, legislative work, community outreach, and education.

The University administration has instituted a hiring freeze (though they call it a "pause") in an effort to deal with the budget cuts through attrition rather than getting rid of employees. However, as we see employer after employer choose to respond to the economic situation by laying off hard working employees rather than cutting the bloated salaries of upper level management or eliminating perks, we know that layoffs will be the next budget-

ing option departments begin to look at.

## What to do if you get a layoff notice

Any employee who has received a layoff notice or who is hearing talk about potential layoffs in your department should get in touch with a union steward immediately. Stewards can provide information and assistance, and see that your rights are protected and that the process is handled fairly. The Contract between the University and AFSCME also states that the department is required to meet with our union to discuss possible layoffs and alternatives. Many times, however, departments don't inform us until they've given lay-off letters to employees. The sooner we find out about possible layoffs, the more options we have. So please contact us as soon as you hear any rumblings of layoffs in your department. As soon as our local is made aware of potential layoffs, we will immediately meet with management in the department. We will work to stop (or delay) the layoffs if possible, and if we are unable to stop the layoff from taking place, we will ensure that the rights of our members are being respected.

## Contractual Rights

None of us wants to think about getting laid

## Contents:

Don't Balance the Budget on our Backs!	1 & 3
The University Budget, Layoffs and Union Rights	2 & 3
Contents	2
Union Contacts	2
Hiring Pause, EFS, Students & Temp Workers	4 & 5
Students doing Clerical Work	5
Updates	6, 7 & 8
AFSCME Joins Rally at Capitol for a "People's Bailout"	7
Upcoming Union Activities	8

Insert 1: Day on the Hill

Insert 2: Pawlenty Wants to Freeze Your Wages!

Insert 3: Real Cuts, Real Pain, Real People!

Insert 4: Share Your Ideas with Legislature re Budget

## Local 3800 Contacts:

President, Phyllis Walker, 612-251-9987

Chief Steward, Cherrene Horazuk, 612-625-3522  
cherrene@afscme3800.org

Vice President, Mary Lou Middleton (Garza), 612-626-1074  
marylou@afscme3800.org

Treasurer, Brad Sigal, 612-625-3871, treasurer@afscme3800.org

Secretary, Amy Selvius, 612-624-6517

Please visit [www.afscme3800.org](http://www.afscme3800.org) for a complete list of E-Board members, stewards, and trustees.

# Union Rights

off, but it's important to be aware of our contractual rights just in case it does happen. Everybody should know the legal rights you have under the Contract, should you receive a layoff notice. Remember that "the union" doesn't have the power to stop every lay-off—but YOU have power when you have information. If you think something isn't right—speak up! Ask a steward! We are the union, and we have negotiated a Contract that gives us rights that we didn't have before we were unionized workers. Make sure, if you are in a layoff situation, that it is being handled properly.

AFSCME 3800 stewards have created a summary of the contract language dealing with layoffs, as well as a flow chart of options available to somebody being laid off. If you'd like a copy, please contact a steward, or call Chief Steward Cherrene Horazuk at 612-940-0660.

Our Contract with the University states, "The employer shall not lay off a bargaining unit employee and subsequently assign the majority of the work of that position to students or supplemental employees." If you are aware of somebody being laid off and being replaced by students or supplemental employees, please call a steward immediately!

**The following sections of the AFSCME 3800 Contract with the University of Minnesota provide detailed information on the procedures for layoffs:**

- ✓Article 5: Recruitment and Employment
- ✓Article 6: Temporary Appointments
- ✓Article 7: Probationary Period
- ✓Article 24: Seniority
- ✓Article 25: Layoff and Recall
- ✓MOU: Alternatives to Layoff

## **Important note regarding seniority**

University seniority is one of the most important factors affecting your rights if laid off. Seniority is calculated by hours worked. Twice a year, seniority rosters for each department are posted, listing all unionized employees and their departmental and university seniority, as well as the job classifications in which they have passed probation. New seniority lists are posted on January 31 and midyear on July 31, and should be posted in each department. All employees should look closely at the rosters to ensure your seniority is correct. Seniority rosters can be viewed online at <http://www1.umn.edu/ohr/er/rosters/unit6/>. If there are errors, contact your Human Resources person and a union steward immediately.★

---

## **Don't Balance the Budget on our Backs!** *(from page 1)*

Cutting public services means layoffs of public employees. Now is not the time for layoffs. Good jobs create an economy that works. Governor Pawlenty needs to follow President Obama's lead by protecting and creating living wage jobs. Instead he is looking for more ways to help wealthy CEOs, while working families are losing their jobs, their homes, and their health care. His priorities are simply wrong.

Minnesota's public sector workforce is one of the leanest and most productive in the nation, yet

Governor Pawlenty is advocating a wage freeze. Governor Pawlenty can't mandate a wage freeze for public employees. Remember, our salary is negotiated by our Union—it is not mandated by the governor.

Every time Governor Pawlenty cuts state spending, he takes dollars out of Minnesota's economy. Public investment creates good jobs. Fair taxes is how we put money back in the pockets of hard working families. Fair taxes is the way we jump start the economy.★

# Hiring Pause, EFS, Students & Temp Workers

By Phyllis Walker, President

**O**n November 11, 2008 the University of Minnesota announced a “systemwide hiring pause” which for all practical purposes is a “hiring freeze.” The economy is clearly in trouble as this type of cost saving measure is being implemented nationwide. Only positions “deemed essential” and approved by a senior vice president, vice president, or chancellor of the unit can be filled. “Positions must cover work that is essential to U operations, including critical health and safety functions, or those functions that ensure that the U meets its academic and fiduciary responsibilities.” The U announced earlier the mandatory approval of hires replacing Retirement Incentive Options (RIO) participants. The only exceptions to this mandate is the hiring of undergraduate and graduate student workers, temporary workers hired through temporary agencies such as Adecco, and temporary/casual non academic staff and P&As positions. Both categories of temporary workers may work less than 67 days without further approval. The fact that the U has implemented additional approval encourages departments to hire student workers or temp employees with few benefits to fill the gap.

At first glance this may seem to be a reasonable plan of action, but the implementation may be problematic. How does the U plan to meet its obligations? The hiring freeze is meant to leverage the normal attrition of employees, reduce the level of non-voluntary workforce reduction, and challenge offices and units to consider ways to reorganize work.

## **Students/Temps & EFS**

What does it really mean to slot students/temp workers into clerical jobs that work in the Enterprise Financial System (EFS) accounting system? To answer that question we have to consider, not only what our work is, but what is expected of students whose main focus is their education and temp workers who are hired to do our work.

## **Benefits of Hiring Clerical Workers**

Clerical workers who labor with the U’s EFS system are expected to maintain an extremely high level of accuracy, to process documents as quickly as possible, and to work with a new system that to date has many problems that the University has not been able

to reconcile. In addition, clerical workers have access to confidential data such as social security numbers and thus are required to maintain a high level of security.

As clerical workers we take great pride in our ability to navigate the U’s complicated accounting system. Our jobs are our main focus every day and we bring to our jobs the experience that we have gained by doing this work day in and day out. We receive the proper training before we are given access to certain areas of secure data. We know we will be here tomorrow because this is our life’s work. This experience—coupled with the fact that our jobs are our daily main focus—enables us to make the contribution to higher education that is critical in keeping the U’s accounting system functioning.

## **What about student workers?**

Yes, students need jobs to keep themselves afloat during their college years, and what better place to work than at the U where they go to school. Student jobs have existed at the U for a long time as they should. But, exactly what jobs are appropriate for student workers? To answer that, we have to ask ourselves several questions. Should students be expected to have the same focus, the same dedication, and the same responsibilities as full-time, permanent clerical workers? Shouldn’t students be encouraged to make the most of the short time they have to spend on their higher education? In short, what should a student’s focus be, their education or their job?

By hiring students to work with EFS, students are being asked to focus on their job—not their education. If students juggle their education with our demanding clerical jobs, it is their education and overall student experience that suffers. The very students whose families gave land and money so that their families could have a quality, affordable higher education are being asked to make great sacrifices.

Over the years the U has added job duties to student worker job descriptions that include our clerical work. If student duties allow access to secure areas of U information, be it financial or human resources, they should be paid and afforded the same protections, choices in health care insurance, tuition benefits, and not be denied the contributions the U should be making to their futures by the lack of a retirement

*continued on page 5*

# Students doing Clerical Work

By Cherrene Horazuk, Chief Steward

President Bruininks proudly proclaimed at a recent House Higher Education Committee hearing that the University of Minnesota has a higher percentage of student workers than any other university in the Big 10.

As Phyllis mentioned in her article, AFSCME members are proud of the work we do and the services we provide to the students and faculty of this University. Our jobs are careers, and we do them well. We are also proud of the student workers who assist us while they are here to further their education. However, we are concerned that there are some at the University who think that they can solve budget shortfalls by exploiting students and not valuing the professional work we do. Our jobs cannot be, nor should be, replaced by students and temporary workers without the skills, knowledge, and experience necessary to make the University run as well as it does. Doing so not only hurts us, it hurts students (who should be focusing on their academics), and it hurts our departments, who lose out on the skills we provide. We welcome student

co-workers, but demand on their behalf, that if they are expected to do our work, they be given our wages and benefits.

## Local 3800 filed several grievances to protect our jobs

AFSCME stewards have filed a number of grievances on job vacancies that are posted as student jobs, when the duties clearly are for professional clerical workers and not “light duty” and “strictly supportive.” We will continue to challenge postings that we believe are filed incorrectly. We have also filed an information request on student positions that are currently filled to determine if there are student workers who should by law and contract be represented by AFSCME. Again, we welcome and thank our student co-workers for the job that they do. If you believe that students have been hired to do work that has historically belonged to AFSCME members, or if students or temps are being hired to do the work of someone who was laid off in your department, call Chief Steward Cherrene Horazuk immediately at 612-940-0660 or email her at [cherrene@afscme3800.org](mailto:cherrene@afscme3800.org).★

## Hiring Pause, EFS,... (from page 4)

plan, all in accordance with the AFSCME Union Contract. This doesn't benefit the students, the U, or the citizens of Minnesota.

Federal and state protections are in place to protect student workers whose work is “light duty” and “strictly supportive” in nature. Our jobs require a high level of accountability and it is not meant for student workers to be held to that same standard. Students need time to study and to go home for the holidays, but if they are holding down clerical jobs, this is compromised.

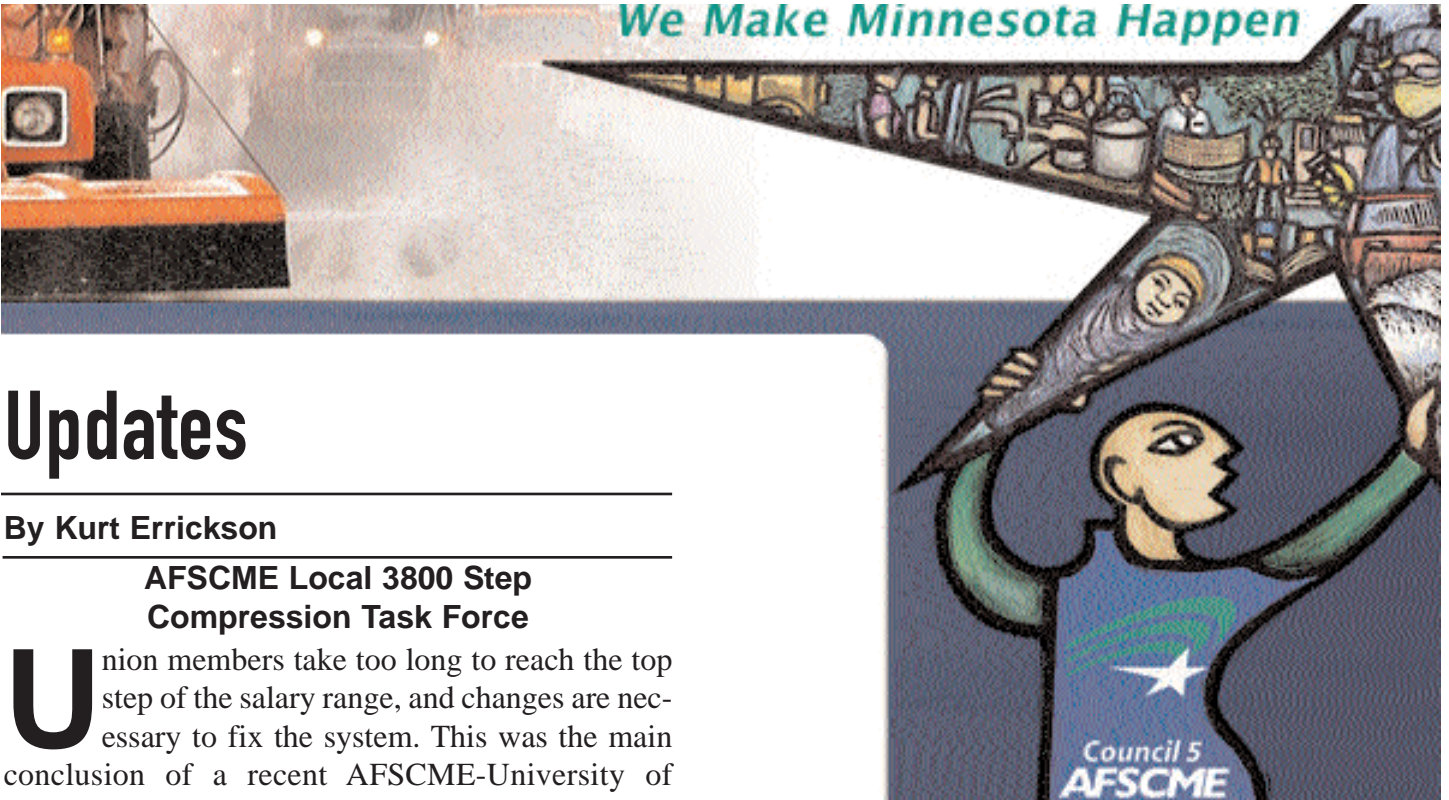
## Save our jobs!

Clerical workers at the U fought to organize and build our Union as well as our wages and benefits. The U must uphold what we built and support the student educational experience, by not hiring students to do our jobs and denying them a living wage and Union benefits. Union work must be reserved for full-time, experienced, permanent clerical employees—for the good of the U, the students, and all Minnesotans.★

*Kelly Zimmersheid and Rick Castillo contributed to this article.*

***“If there is no struggle, there is no progress”***

**~Frederick Douglass**



# Updates

By Kurt Errickson

## AFSCME Local 3800 Step Compression Task Force

Union members take too long to reach the top step of the salary range, and changes are necessary to fix the system. This was the main conclusion of a recent AFSCME-University of Minnesota task force on the step system. The task force used an alternative to traditional negotiation styles called “interest-based problem solving.” In the process, facilitated by staff at the Minnesota Bureau of Mediation Services, union and management representatives looked at their common interests in employee pay and brainstormed solutions to current problems with the step system.

Employees receive a step every year on the anniversary of their employment. Steps are worth approximately two percent of the annual hourly wage, so for someone making \$16.00 per hour, a two percent step is \$.32. Steps are listed in the back of the Union Contract. For about two thirds of AFSCME members, it takes 27 years to reach the top step. For most of the rest, the system has 20 or 21 steps.

In ten day-long meetings lasting through the Summer and Fall, members of the task force shared detailed information on employee compensation and examined a number of specific options to improve the step system. Although the parties did not agree on specific changes, they discussed and costed-out a number of specific options to reduce the number of steps dramatically. Specific changes to the step system will be bargained in contract negotiations. Union and University leaders did agree to work together at the state capitol to find the new money necessary to fix the step system.

## Legislative Update

Protecting funding for higher education is a top priority for Local 3800 members at the capitol in 2009. Top staff at AFSCME learned recently from University leaders that Governor Tim Pawlenty wants the U to plan for a ten-percent cut in legislative funding. This means intense pain for both students and the workers who help educate them.

Despite the tough economic times facing the state, advocates for higher education still have options. According to Council 5 political staff, the Obama administration is intent on providing an aid package to states early in 2009 that could go to help the University. And raising new revenue for higher education is an idea supported by many Minnesotans.

Throughout history, periods of economic turmoil have motivated labor activism. The labor movement sprang to life during the great depression of the 30s. Now, as storm clouds gather on the horizon, is another opportunity for U of M workers to work together to protect the services they provide.

While some may seek to cut higher education funding, regardless of the cost to students and workers, many still believe in the land-grant mission of the University to educate all citizens, not just those who can afford high tuition. *continued on page 7*

# AFSCME 3800 Joins Rally at Capitol for a “People’s Bailout”

By Brad Sigal

On January 6, the opening day of the Minnesota legislative session, 20 members of AFSCME 3800 joined with 200 people from other unions and organizations to rally on the capitol steps against budget cuts and in favor of a “people’s bailout.” The Minnesota Coalition for a People’s Bailout organized the rally, and is fighting to pass the People’s Bailout Act of 2009 during this session.

The state is facing more than a \$5 billion deficit rooted in the worldwide financial crisis. In response to the crisis, Governor Pawlenty and many legislators have talking about deep cuts to social services and state agencies that serve working class and poor people. Gov. Pawlenty is in favor of a wage freeze for state workers. The U of M budget is also seriously threatened by the state crisis.

But nobody has ever cut their way out of a recession. Unions and other organizations are organizing to challenge this agenda of cuts, and instead support a massive “people’s bailout” for working and poor Minnesotans. Instead of cuts, the Coalition proposes to increase taxes on the richest Minnesotans and on big corporations to solve the budget crisis.



The People’s Bailout Act is being introduced in this legislative session. It contains a variety of measures that would help working and poor Minnesotans get through the economic crisis. These include extending and making more workers eligible for unemployment benefits, creating a public works program that puts people to work, putting a moratorium on the 5-year time limit for public assistance, rejecting cuts to programs that serve working and low-income people, placing a moratorium on home foreclosures, stopping evictions for renters in foreclosed buildings, rejecting attacks on immigrants, protecting public education and stopping layoffs and attacks on wages of state and U of M workers.★

## Updates (from page 6)

You can join the fight to protect funding for the University today by joining your AFSCME brothers and sisters in calling your state legislators and the governor, and by reaching out to your friends and family to do the same. Ask them to call their state legislators and the governor, and to tell them to protect funding for higher education.

### AFSCME Research Project on the EFS System

Safeguarding confidential information, protecting university funds, and preventing unfair discipline are among the goals of an AFSCME research project on the Enterprise Financial System (EFS). EFS is a new software package used by hundreds of union members for a variety of finance-related

duties. Union leaders are currently analyzing the results of a recent internet survey on the EFS system. Two initial concerns of union members, however, were regarding the assignment of students to EFS duties and the potential for discipline as workers struggle to master the complex new system.

Depending upon their level of access, EFS users have access to confidential information of both students and staff, including social security numbers. Users of the system also have access to important financial information. Many members are concerned that these important responsibilities are best reserved for Union workers, whose first commitment is to their job, as opposed to students, whose

*continued on page 8*

## UPCOMING UNION ACTIVITIES

- 3/10 & 11 AFSCME DAY ON THE HILL**  
To sign up, contact Marie R. Milsten-Fiedler [m-Fied@umn.edu](mailto:m-Fied@umn.edu)
- 3/12 MONTHLY MEMBERSHIP MTG 5:15 PM**  
see [afscme3800.org/calendar](http://afscme3800.org/calendar) for location
- 4/9 MONTHLY MEMBERSHIP MTG 5:15 PM**  
see [afscme3800.org/calendar](http://afscme3800.org/calendar) for location
- 4/22-24 Minnesota Union Women's Leadership Retreat** at Rutter's Bay Lodge near Brainerd for more info visit [www.csom.umn.edu/Page5946.aspx](http://www.csom.umn.edu/Page5946.aspx)
- 5/14 MONTHLY MEMBERSHIP MTG 5:15 PM**  
see [afscme3800.org/calendar](http://afscme3800.org/calendar) for location

**CHECK [WWW.AFSCME3800.ORG](http://WWW.AFSCME3800.ORG) TO VERIFY ALL INFORMATION & FOR MORE ACTIVITIES**

## Minnesota Union Women's Leadership Retreat, April 22-24, 2009

Women active in their unions—and those interested in getting active in labor organizations—will learn new skills at the Minnesota Union



Women's Leadership Retreat April 22-24, 2009 at Ruttger's Bay Lake Lodge near Brainerd.

This unique event is sponsored by the University of Minnesota Labor Education Service in coordination with a group of women from a variety of unions across Minnesota. Participants will learn skills for organizing, mobilizing, and building union power. The retreat will also be a venue for women at all experience levels to share what they know and mentor new leaders.

Local 3800 is sponsoring a few slots for members to attend the retreat. Contact Phyllis Walker, if you are interested.

## Updates *(continued from page 7)*

top priority is their education. While AFSCME supports student employment as part of the educational experience, student workers can not substitute for the professionalism of union members.

Because of the EFS systems complexity and the often chaotic nature of its implementation, some Union members have voiced fear about being disciplined for failing to meet unfair or unreasonable standards. In response to concerns from members, Union leadership have assembled a team of stewards to respond to and investigate concerns from Union members about EFS. Stewards will respond on a case-by-case basis to concerns and complaints from members about the EFS system.

The Union's first goal is to learn about issues, identify potential problems and solve them before they start. If necessary, Union stewards will use the grievance procedure to protect members from unfair discipline.★

### *AFSCME Local 3800*

1313 5th Street, Suite 332-B  
Minneapolis, MN 55414