President’s Corner

After attending today’s membership meeting it is very clear to me that folks are feeling frustrated and dejected about the retroactive monies that are due and the delays we have been facing. I too, feel this frustration but I know that if we just give up and do nothing then we will never ever see these monies. Let’s face some facts here folks, collective bargaining is under attack not only by the Governor of this Commonwealth but if President Bush has his way then collective bargaining and all of the rights that accompany it will be lost to workers forever. Allowing the politicians to slowly erode our rights is a death sentence to unions and all they stand for. While I know many people equate their contract with their wages it is so much more. Our contract protects many of our rights—without a contract and the language that it provides we would not have seniority rights, we would be at will employees that could be fired upon the whims of our supervisor’s (imagine how scary that would be), we wouldn’t have personal time, vacation time, sick time and so much more. Please remember that YOUR contract guarantees you certain rights that cannot and should not be taken away from you. The only way to stop this is if we all join together in solidarity and fight for what is rightfully ours. I know it isn’t easy but I would like you to remember the words of the following poem and ask yourself if not you then who? If I look away when will they come for me? Please think about the future of unions and this union in particular, help us to fight to keep the rights that many before us have died for so that we may enjoy the rights we have...like the weekends. Enjoy this poem but please give it serious thought.

UMASS Administrators Lament

First they came for the janitors, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a janitor.
Then they came for the clerical workers and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a clerical worker.
Then they came for the professors, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a professor.
Then they came for me, and by that time there was no one left to speak up for me.

If you wish to work with us to keep our rights then please contact Jane at the USA office at 545-0165 or contact me at 5-5459 or at djohnson@english.umass.edu. The Union begins with “U” and it needs your help. Together we can win this attack on collective bargaining.

In solidarity,
Donna Johnson
President USA

What To Do if You Are Injured on the Job

Don Taylor

All workers run the risk of job related injuries or illness. These include cuts, broken bones, and other direct, physical trauma. But other injuries are also possible as a result of your work or conditions in the workplace: respiratory problems such as asthma; ergonomic or repetitive-stress injuries such as carpal tunnel syndrome; emotional or mental health problems due to stress or other factors; infection or communicable disease; chemical sensitivity…. The list is a long one. Injuries are considered work related if they occur anywhere on employer property, from the time you park your car or get off the bus until you return.

If you are injured on the job, or if you suspect conditions in your workplace might lead to injury or illness later, you should report it to your supervisor immediately. She or he is required to file a First Report of Injury form within 48 hours to UMASS Human Resources (HR), who will then report it to the state HR office. The supervisor has no discretion in reporting; all reports of injury must be filed with Human Resources. You should also fill out and send to Human Resources the Authorization for Release of Medical Records form. Although this form is not required unless you seek medical attention and file for medical benefits, it is a good idea to do so right away. This form allows the state to ask your medical
providers for records related to your claim; it does not allow a fishing expedition through your medical records. In all cases, make copies of both forms and keep the copies for your records. In addition, check with Human Resources to be sure your supervisor filed the First Report of Injury form as required. For information, to request forms, or to check if forms have been filed, call the UMASS HR Workers Compensation office: 545-6114.

If you are injured and require immediate medical attention, you should get it at University Health Services or through your own medical provider. You have 24 hours to seek emergency medical attention before notifying the state office. Within that time, or before seeking any non-emergency care, you or your doctor should call the state Utilization Review office: 1-800-266-7991. They will ask if you have filed the Notice of Injury form and Authorization for Release of Medical Records and you should tell them that they have been or are being filed with UMASS HR. Soon after that you will receive a letter notifying you that your claim has been accepted (with information you’ll need to submit medical bills) or rejected. If your claim is rejected you can appeal.

If you have questions about any aspect of this process, call the UMASS HR Workers Compensation office or your USA steward. If you file a claim and it is denied, call your USA steward immediately and she or he will put you in touch with an MTA legal representative for help.

In the next Newsgram we’ll cover injuries that cause time away from work and involve the Workers Compensation system.

Volunteerism
Dan Kibe

For those of you that don’t know me, I am Dan Kibe and I work here at the Food Science Department at the University. I also am a member of the 439th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron out of Westover AFRB. I have just returned from a 120-day tour for the Air Force stationed in Ramstein, Germany. I was assigned to a Squadron that airlifted the sick and wounded out of Afghanistan, Kuwait and Iraq and we were very busy in this task.

While I was working, whether it was with cargo or returning sick and wounded patients home, many of my comrades remarked about the spirit we were feeling of being part of something important. By volunteering we felt we did our part to help others involved in the war. Upon my return to UMASS I was struck by this notion. Many people volunteering their time, their sweat and lives for an admirable purpose and for the betterment of all is what the University is all about too.

One question I get a lot is why I volunteer for this kind of job? My reply is that we all need to volunteer. This is the field I have chosen and others choose differently. But we all need to volunteer. Just like all the people that contribute their time for USA union. We are all better off if we stand together.

Please make the time to volunteer your time for the union and other worthy causes.

USA Elections

Please take a moment to vote for Executive Board members and delegates to represent USA at the MTA Annual Meeting and the NEA Representative Assembly. Ballots must be returned by March 16th. The multiple envelopes insure that your vote is confidential. If you do not receive a ballot in the mail please contact the office at 5-0165 and Jane will send one to you. USA has almost 900 members. Let’s have a vote from every member.

Progress—Power—Struggle—Liberty

"The whole history of progress of human liberty shows that all concessions yet made to her august claims have been born of earnest struggle. If there is no struggle there is no progress. Those who profess to favor freedom, and yet deprecate agitation, are (those) who want crops without plowing up the ground, they want rain without thunder and lightning, they want the ocean without the awful roar of its many waters. This struggle may be a moral one...but it must be a struggle. Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will. Find out just what any people will quietly submit to and you have found the exact measure of injustice and wrong, which will be imposed upon them, and these will continue till they are resisted . . ."

--Frederick Douglass,
Freed slave and Abolitionist (1857)

WILD in the WINTER

Women in Leadership Development hosts a conference called “Hang in There: Political Education and Mobilization for the Long Haul” Saturday, March 19, 8:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at the Labor Center, Gordon Hall 3rd Floor, 418 North Pleasant Street, Amherst.
Cost is $35 with pre-registration (by March 17th), $40 at the door (fee includes materials and lunch). A $25 childcare reimbursement is available with pre-registration. Workshops include “Basic Unionism” “Saving Social Security” and Talking Politics”. For registration and information contact Dale Melcher: 413-545-6166 or dmelcher@lrrc.umass.edu.

FYI: Minutes for the Executive Board meetings will be posted on the U.S.A. website in order for members to be kept informed about the business of the union.

U.S.A. Newsgram Contributors: Irene Dzioba, Donna Johnson, Dan Kibe Aggie Mitchkoski, Sylvia Snape, and Don Taylor
If you would like to serve on a committee, be a steward, a building rep, or contribute articles to the Newsgram, please contact the USA office at 545-0165.

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110 Hampshire House tel.: 413-545-0165/email: usa@external.umass.edu /
Communications Committee:
Donna Johnson, Sylvia Snape