**NEWS AND NOTES**

--The USA office summer hours will change slightly. The office will be open 11:30-3:30 as usual, Monday through Thursday, but Friday the hours will be 8:00-12:00. This will be through Labor Day. It’s always a good idea, however, to call first before going over. Remember that Jane is only part-time!

--This has been said in past newssgram but is worth repeating. If you feel that something is not right in your job please call your steward. If you are not allowed a break – call your steward. If you aren’t allowed to take lunch because of office coverage – call your steward. If you’re doing the work of someone in a higher grade – CALL YOUR STEWARD! The contract is in place to protect you. You cannot lose your job for calling to talk to a steward or an officer. Find out what your options are and then make your decision.

--Jim Plaza is chairing a newly formed committee to study our constitution and make proposals for language changes and other means of strengthening it. If you want to contact him regarding any suggestions for the committee, his email address is plaza@com.umass.edu, and his phone number is 545-6337.

--The USA NEGOTIATIONS TEAM is working on formulating proposals for bargaining, based on the results of the survey that many members took back in April. Thanks for your participation in this process, and look for membership meeting dates when we’ll be updating members.

**CLASSISM EXAMPLES**

The University recently held a reception to honor the professionals and faculty who recently retired.

An administrator or faculty member brings in their diaper-clad child for you to babysit while they teach and/or go to a meeting.

Our contract tells us that we are allowed to take University classes with the agreement of supervisors. Many are not allowed to take the time.

Some USA officers and stewards are refused release time for doing union business, both by management and by supervisors. This is also a contractual right.

University policy provides Peoplesoft training to very few, preventing the possibility of advancement for many of our members.

Members tell us that their supervisors yell at them and sometimes they feel physically threatened by them. (If this happens call the police!)

You share an office or occupy the same work environment as a professional, faculty member or administrator and they ignore you, never acknowledge your existence except to ask you to do something for them or they are dismissive when you do talk to them.

Evaluations, instead of being used as tool, are being used as a way to reprimand members. Along with custodial staff we are the only ones that have performance evaluations.

USA and AFCSME have the shortest amount of time in which to report a grievance after the occurrence of the alleged contract violation. MSP and SEIU have 60 days, USA has 20 days, and AFCSME have 10.

The health and safety concerns of classified staff are often ignored. We are the frontline staff and are here all the time – day in and day out. When decisions are made to do construction or renovations we are not told.

If there was a very famous speaker from South Africa and attendance was strictly for certain people and you were told at the last minute that attendance was low and now they are inviting classified staff, would you go?
**RE-WRITING JOB SPECIFICATIONS**

As you all know our job specifications are archaic – they were written in 1978. Re-writing them will be a huge project that will take time and money and we are exploring how we might be able to make this happen. There would have to be an assessment written for each title in the Commonwealth and, from those, a standard set of specifications would have to be created. Given the technological advances in the past 26 years there will be many changes to our job specifications.

You can help us with this project by providing us with a copy of your Form 30. We would like to gather as many of these as we can so we can make our case to the state. While you are looking at the Form 30, feel free to make a list of the changes to your job. This is for your benefit as well as ours. Send it to the USA at 110 Hampshire House.

**JUST THE FACTS**

Ever wonder if those tax cuts are helping us?

- Percent growth in corporate profits, 2001 through 2003: **62.2**
- Percent growth in labor compensation, 2001 through 2003: **2.8**
- Growth in private wage and salary income (total labor compensation, including health care and pension benefits), 2001 through 2003: **-0.6**
- Percentage of Americans who will save less than $100 on their 2006 federal taxes as a result of the 2003 tax cut: **88**

And on education:

- Percent of average public university tuition covered by a maximum Pell Grant award in 1976: **84**
- Percent of average public university tuition covered by a maximum Pell Grant award in 2003: **39**

And here is one that really gives us the creeps:

- Amount that federal money going to the average Democratic district exceeded that going to the average Republican district in 1995, the last year the Democrats controlled the budget process in the House: **$35 million**
- Amount that federal money going to the average Republican district exceeded that going to the average Democratic district in 2000, a year in which Republicans controlled the budget process: **$612 million**

And the rich get richer:

- Median weekly wage of full-time workers in 2003: **$620** ($32,240 annually) - % increase from 2002: **2**
- Median annual comp. for CEOs of Fortune 500 companies in 2003: **$4.6 million** - % increase from 02: **27**

**EYE ON ROMNEY**

In an incident that truly disgusts this writer, Romney had Worcester Department of Mental Health director Elaine Hill suspend case manager and union steward Sheelagh O’Connor, without pay, for Sheelagh’s forwarding of a union email critical of Romney’s pension plan to 87 workers. One month later Romney refused to do anything about the state email from National Guard General George Keefe, who in it had a joke comparing Democrats to terrorists and flag-burners. Union leaders have demanded that Romney must restore O’Connor’s pay and apologize for this double standard. Romney spokeswoman Shawn Feddeman called it a “personnel matter,” perhaps implying an internal matter of personnel confidentiality issues, and said that “every situation is different.”

At the FleetBoston Pavilion, Suffolk University, Romney gave the commencement address as keynote speaker, where he was given an honorary degree. Some of his speech included, “…every dimension of your life can be held to the shallows or taken into the deeper water…” and “There are currencies more lasting than money.” He elaborated on his meaning of deeper water as “draw you into…service and sacrifice, into selflessness” and “challenging ideas, opposing opinions, and uncomfortable battles.” Some of the 1,100 students booed, turned their backs, and held up armbands in support of gay marriage. At least 3 people were escorted out by the police. Several students called the Governor “biased” and “hypocrite.” Approximately 100 students held their own commencement in protest of Romney’s attendance.

Romney hosted a Republican candidate recruitment at the Park Plaza complete with confetti, strobes, music. 131 candidates will be trying for the 121 Legislature seats in the fall. This is the largest Republican recruitment since 1992. The governor wants to break the Democratic majority in both House and Senate. 15% of Massachusetts voters are registered as Republicans, 40% are Democrats.

Romney chose Medford-resident and Cambridge License Commission chairman Benjamin Barnes to be the new Palmer District Court clerk magistrate, and encountered opposition from Holyoke lawyer Aaron Wilson and Wilbraham Democratic Representative Gale Candaras. Candaras pointed out that the $88,000 per year job opening was only posted online for one week, and hence many highly-qualified people currently living in western Massachusetts didn’t discover this opportunity in time.
**MTA ANNUAL MEETING**

I thought the MTA Annual Meeting went well. The speakers were great; they got everyone inspired with a sense of dedication and humor. The first day I was a bit surprised that things were voted on so smoothly. Being a past Amherst Town Meeting member, I have been through some trials. The second day was a bit more trying. I understood what people wanted, but when debate kept going, I found myself just wanting to be done with it. I was there with some good people so I found the entire weekend well spent.

Carol Steele, UHS

**ELECTED OFFICIALS**

Incumbents Cathy Boudreau and Ann Wass were reelected as President and Vice President of MTA. Of local interest, Donna Johnson was elected for a two-year term to executive board, representing Region H, and Sylvia Snape was elected for a three-year term as district director for 48H, representing USA.

**DUES INCREASE**

Of course our contingency voted against the measure, but the majority voted an increase of $9/year in MTA dues. This reflects the loss of MTA members due to Massachusetts education budget cuts. Fewer members must pay more to make up for the loss. Let’s hope we can turn this around when we get a pro-education leader in the state house.

**PAID MEDIA**

The budget for continuing the paid media campaign was passed, happily with no increase over last year’s budget.

**MTA PRESENTATION**

A stirring presentation was given by Page Melton, President of The Source Group. She noted a book, *Stripping the “Public” from Public Education*, as a resource for information about a republican right-wing effort to seize funding intended for public education and funnel it into the private sector. Melton’s group is researching the formation of groups and activities of the key players in this effort. She reported that large amounts of money have been received from a group supporting California’s efforts to install charter schools and divert state funds for use in private schools.

**WALMART — THE EVIL EMPIRE?**

Walmart is in the news often. Lately, though, you can read about communities that don’t want Walmart in their neighborhood. People are finally starting to catch on in California and all of the Walmart millions haven’t been able to get their super-centers built. Local governments are seeing that when Walmart comes to town, poverty starts to rise. Walmart workers make so little money that they are eligible for food stamps and Medicaid. This raises health insurance costs for everyone. They also drive other businesses out of town with their “lower prices” and, in turn, put more people out of work. This increases unemployment. We all want to pay lower prices but is it worth it? These lower prices that Walmart demand from their suppliers have created lower wages and decreased benefits for employees of these companies. They seem to be creating a world in which no one can afford to shop anywhere else but Walmart.

On an extremely positive note, a federal judge in California has issued an order that Walmart must stand trial for company-wide discrimination. This is the largest civil rights class action suit ever. Walmart will now face the combined power of 1.6 million women in a court of law. Up to 2/3 of Walmart employees are female and they have not been receiving their fair share of pay and promotions. Some of those sales reported to be in excess of $256 billion may finally be given to the people that made them their money.
NEA NEWS AND NOTES

From July 2nd through the 7th, five of our local members, Frank Olbris, Donna Johnson, Jim Kierstead, Rosemary Riley and Dave Litterer, will represent us at the NEA Representative Assembly in Washington DC.

This will be the 142nd Annual meeting of delegates and 83rd Representative Assembly. It's convened in July for 6 days. The first two days are devoted to discussions, conferences, and exhibits and the highlight is the four-day “RA,” the NEA’s highest decision-making body. Delegates from around the country meet and debate issues that impact American public education, elect top officers and set policy for the 2.7 million members.

One event we are anxiously awaiting is the election of Rosemary Riley to the executive board of NEA. If elected, she would be the first ESP member to be elected to the executive board. Our fingers are crossed, Rosemary.

From the website: The NEA Board of Directors passed a motion encouraging delegates to wear or bring items showing their own or family members’ participation, past or present, in the armed forces service of our country. The items should be worn in the Representative Assembly on July 4th.

University Staff Association
110 Hampshire House
University of Massachusetts