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AFSCME Council 5 Locals 34 • 552 • 1719 • 2822 • 2864 • 2938

May 27, 2009

PREPARE THIS SUMMER, NEGOTIATE THIS FALL

Hennepin County recently opened our contract for negotiations, but there's no reason for AFSCME members to rush to the bargaining table until this fall. Too many economic uncertainties are still in flux. Will President Obama's stimulus improve the economy? Can we stop Gov. Pawlenty from unallotting another \$10 million in county program aid?

We do the work that makes Hennepin an excellent, full service county for its residents. As members of these locals, we need to get involved this summer to make sure our employer reciprocates with a fair contract before our current contract expires December 31, 2009. Once again, that means pushing for a responsible levy so the county can afford to give us a fair contract while maintaining the vital public services we provide.

- Local 34 – Social and Health Services
- Local 552 – Probation and Parole Officers
- Local 1719 – Adult Corrections Officers
- Local 2822 – Clerical and Related Services
- Local 2864 – Professional Librarians
- Local 2938 – Legal and Essential Units



HENNEPIN COUNTY'S BUDGET

- AFSCME is analyzing the county's budget. Stay tuned for our findings.
- Gov. Pawlenty cut \$10 million in program aid to Hennepin County in 2008; now he's threatening to cut another \$10 million in 2009. A pending lawsuit could stop this year's cut.
- Hennepin County says it has to reduce its budget by \$20 million to offset cuts in state aid.
- By reducing service contracts, travel and conferences, county departments are cutting costs by \$15.2 million.
- To save another \$4.5 million, the county board is inviting every employee to voluntarily take 32 hours of special leave without pay.
- 73 positions are being eliminated; at least 50 of them are vacant.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED: SPECIAL LEAVE WITHOUT PAY

Faced with a \$20 million shortfall earlier this year, Hennepin County figured it could save \$4.5 million by forcing all county employees to take 24 hours of unpaid leave. Tight finances and heavy workloads made that plan harmful for many union members. Fortunately, AFSCME's Policy Committee convinced the county board to forget the forced furloughs.

Instead, the employer has created a **voluntary special leave without pay program**. If enough employees volunteer to take unpaid leave and the county reaches its \$4.5 million target by June 30, then a mandatory program won't be needed.

Here's how special leave without pay works:

- 1) Employees may request special leave in increments of one hour up to 160 hours a year.
- 2) Vacation, PTO and sick leave benefits will continue to accrue.
- 3) Seniority and stability pay eligibility will also continue to accrue.
- 4) The employer will continue to pay its contribution to health and/or basic life insurance.
- 5) Pension benefits will also be protected and the county will pay the employer contribution to PERA once the employee contribution is paid.

Many union members have asked what they can do to prevent additional layoffs and service cuts. AFSCME recommends this voluntary option for members who can afford it.

Directors, managers and supervisors have been encouraged to be flexible and grant requests for special leave. If you have problems, please contact your union steward for assistance.

ACT NOW!



1) CONSIDER TAKING SPECIAL LEAVE WITHOUT PAY.

For details, read the article above.

2) HELP SAVE THE COUNTY MONEY.

Frontline workers know how to deliver the best services for the best price.

Are there ways that your department could do business more cost effectively?

Get ready because AFSCME will be collecting your ideas with an online survey.

3) CALL GOVERNOR PAWLENTY AT 651-296-3391.

Urge him to stop the painful cuts to Hennepin County and HCMC.

Don't cut the services people need most during tough times!

Use your own phone and call on your own time.

4) VISIT WWW.AFSCMEMN.ORG FOR BARGAINING UPDATES.