

# talk...table talk...tab

AFSCME Council 5 Locals 34 • 552 • 977 • 1719 • 1726 • 2474 • 2822 • 2864 • 2938

August 20, 2007

## HENNEPIN COUNTY PROPOSES HARMFUL TAKE-BACKS

Our employer's proposal would:

- Force us to pay more out-of-pocket for health care.
- Threaten full coverage under our health plan.
- Convert some of our jobs to part-time employment with reduced health benefits.
- Weaken our job security by allowing supervisors to bump into union positions.
- Pit union member against union member by denying benefits to future members.

## WE DESERVE A FAIR RAISE AND AFFORDABLE HEALTH CARE

**A**  
*Full  
Service  
County  
Made  
Excellent*



Why is it our time for a fair contract?

- We're working harder and doing more with less.
- Our wages are falling behind inflation.
- The high cost of benefits may be increasing compensation, but not take-home pay.
- We do the work that makes Hennepin an excellent full service county for its residents.

# ACT NOW!



## 1) WRITE COUNTY COMMISSIONERS BEFORE AUGUST 31.

Share your personal story about how your work delivers quality services to Hennepin County residents. When writing, don't do it on work time and don't use your work computer.

- District 1      Mike Opat
  - District 2      Mark Stenglein
  - District 3      Gail Dorfman
  - District 4      Peter McLaughlin
  - District 5      Randy Johnson
  - District 6      Linda Koblick
  - District 7      Penny Steele
- Address:  
Hennepin County Government Center, A-2400  
300 South 6<sup>th</sup> Street  
Minneapolis, MN 55487

## 2) RALLY FOR A FAIR CONTRACT

**Government Center Plaza**  
**Tuesday, September 18**  
**12 noon**

- ✓ Wear green and AFSCME stickers to the rally and on days we're negotiating.
- ✓ Bring co-workers, friends and family to build a crowd.

## 3) VISIT WWW.AFSCMEMN.ORG FOR BARGAINING UPDATES.

# YOUR NEGOTIATING TEAM

**Business Agents:** Jeff Dains ▪ Steve Marincel ▪ Matt Nelson

**Local 34:** Jean Diederich ▪ Andrea Lazio-Rice ▪ Patrick Regan ▪ Clifford Robinson ▪ Laurie Simon ▪ Wesley Volkenant ▪ Shannon Wesley ▪

**Local 552:** Tim Turrentine ▪ Rhonda Bode ▪ Patrick Guernsey ▪ Dennis Porter ▪

**Local 1719:** Dean Enge ▪ Dale Blom ▪ Steve Franks ▪ Aaron Printup ▪

**Local 2822:** Molly Malecki ▪ Janna Carlson ▪ Alice Kelly ▪ Genae Nicole ▪ Lynn Stetler ▪

**Local 99:** Dirk Schot ▪ Marilyn Bell ▪

**Local 2864:** Jan DeSirey ▪ Caron Chapman ▪ Lisa Kjellander ▪ Holly Rakocy ▪

**Local 2938:** Ernie Dial ▪ Deb Bernard ▪ Laura Floistad ▪ Cliff Poehler ▪

**Note taker:** Rhea Hickerson-Taylor ▪

# NEGOTIATOR'S REPORT

We've received the County's proposal. It includes significant take-backs. It sets up situations where employees will eventually lose rights and benefits. And it potentially sets future members against current members rather than uniting us. This proposal would create a slippery slope that will do harm to our members later, if not now.

## HARMFUL TAKE-BACKS

### Health Insurance

All employees with single coverage must pay something toward their health insurance premium. A majority of AFSCME members would pay more. And the employer is likely to push for a bigger contribution from all employees in future contracts.

To receive the same employer insurance premium contribution as an employee working 80 hours a pay period, a new part-time employee (or a current employee who becomes part-time) must work at least 64 hours a pay period instead of 40 hours a pay period. In the future it would encourage the employer to prorate the employer's health insurance contribution for all employees not working 80 hours. This will also incent the employer to convert to more and more part-time positions to save money on health insurance.

The Early Retiree Health Insurance Program (ERHIP) will not be offered to future permanent employees. Unless a current employee chooses to retain ERHIP, the employee would be automatically enrolled in a Health Care Savings Plan (HCSP). The employee would contribute 1% of salary per pay period and the employer would contribute \$0, \$100, \$200, or \$300 per year based on an employee's years of service. Again, current employees are automatically enrolled in the HCSP unless they opt out. ERHIP will disappear over time and employees who are eligible and who could afford to retire early under ERHIP will lose a benefit that is better than the HCSP.

The proposal would create four HealthPartners insurance pool categories instead of two. Under the four pool categories, the "single" and "family" premiums would likely increase and the "employee plus spouse" premium and the "employee plus children" premium would decrease as compared to the current two insurance pool categories.

Alongside the current HealthPartners Distinctions plan, the proposal would offer a high deductible health plan called a VEBA. The premium would be less and an employee with single coverage would receive a "to be determined" annual contribution (e.g., \$750) from the employer to use for medical expenses. After the employee exhausts this contribution, the employee must continue to pay for all expenses up to a "to be determined" amount (e.g. \$1500) and then, for example, 20% of all medical expenses up to \$3,000 plus 100% of expenses thereafter in a year. If the contribution was not spent, it could be carried over by the employee from year to year. Note that the numbers used here help explain the concept of a VEBA. The employer has not made a specific proposal with real numbers. Over time, this plan could attract more healthy and moderately ill patients driving the premium rate for the Distinctions plan to the point where virtually none but the highest paid County employees could afford it. As a result, many employees would end up paying more out of their own pockets.

### **Stability Pay and Severance Pay**

The proposal would establish a Health Care Savings Plan (HCSP) that would be funded by 100% of an employee's Severance Pay and Stability Pay. This money could only be used for medical expenses after an employee no longer works for the County and would be tax free. All employees eligible for severance and stability pay would no longer be able to take these benefits as cash.

### **Vacation and Sick Leave**

The proposal would create a Personal Time Off (PTO) benefit as an option for current employees in place of vacation and sick leave. All new employees would be required to participate in the PTO benefit. This would result in more days available for an employee to take off for any reason. PTO reduces the total number of vacation and sick leave days. Sooner or later PTO would lead to the elimination of vacation and sick leave as it currently exists.

### **Job Security / Layoff Protection**

The proposal would allow an employee promoted to a supervisory position to displace an employee in the bargaining unit based on seniority as defined by the union contract, in the event of a layoff of the supervisor. Supervisors who aren't paying dues can displace someone who has been paying dues.

## **OTHER UPDATES**

### **Employer's Health Insurance Contribution**

The employer did not make a proposal on the amount it would be willing to contribute toward the cost of health insurance, though there was an indication that they may do so in the near future.

### **General Adjustment**

The employer's proposal for a general adjustment is a 1% increase for all salary steps except the top step which would be increased by 1.25% in each year of a two year contract.

### **Local Supplemental Proposals**

The employer has not responded to individual Local supplemental proposals, but will. Except for the two items listed above, if you don't see a response to a Union proposal in the county's proposal, then the county's response is "no."

## **VIEW CONTRACT PROPOSALS**

Visit [www.afscmemn.org](http://www.afscmemn.org). Look for "Bargaining Updates" on the right side of the page and click "Hennepin County."