



Help us build a strong Adjunct Faculty Organization and a better College!

Adjunct Faculty Organization News

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| <p>HFCC-AFO AFT Local 337 AFL-CIO</p> |
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Get Active: Block that 5% Pay Cut!!!

By Glenn O’Kray

Vice President and Chair of the PAEC

In case you haven’t noticed, the State of Michigan is suffering from a “structural deficit.” We can argue about the reasons for this problem, but the bottom line is that something has to be done about it. If your household expenses consistently exceed your household income, you either have to cut your expenses or find a second or third job to increase your income. Some politicians seem to think otherwise, but the state is not exempt from that fiscal reality.

While we understand that something has to be done to address the state’s structural deficit, both the AFO and AFT-Michigan are strongly opposed to the approach being championed by the “blame the teachers” crowd. Too many legislators look at public education as a nuisance. Rather than viewing public education as an investment in the state’s future, they view our “rich” contracts as the underlying cause of the state’s annual deficits and a prime target for cost-cutting measures.

Help Us Block Joint Resolution U

Only weeks after amending the Michigan Public School Employees Retirement System in a way that does more harm than good (see separate article on page two), the “blame the teachers” crowd has demonstrated their continued willingness to go after our paychecks.

Exhibit A is Joint Resolution U which was sponsored by State Senator John Papageorge (R-Troy) and was approved by the State



Get Active! AFO Vice-President and Political Action and Education Committee Chairperson Glenn O’Kray is asking more adjuncts to get involved on his committee. If you have an interest in politics and even a little bit of time, contact Glenn at lglennokray@cavtel.net.

Senate Reforms and Restructuring Committee on May 25th. Joint Resolution U calls for an across-the-board 5% pay cut followed by a three year wage freeze for all public employees in the State of Michigan. Rather than cutting fat, this proposal will cut into bone by slashing and freezing the wages of every public employee, including HFCC adjuncts, regardless of whether or not the employees are overpaid.

While some public employees are overpaid (state senators and representatives come to mind), many of us are not. An across-the-board pay cut doesn’t take into consideration the issue of just compensation or the value of the work performed and it is the wrong way to go about the business of addressing the state’s fiscal problems.

Joint Resolution U may be a long way from becoming a reality, but to keep it from becoming law, you need to GET ACTIVE! To become law, Joint Resolution U must

be approved by the full Michigan Senate and then by the Michigan House of Representatives. From there, it would go on the ballot as a constitutional amendment. It is too late to make the August 3 primary ballot, but Papageorge and his blame the teachers crowd will continue to push this measure as a means for addressing Michigan’s structural deficit.

You Need to Get Active!

Complaining about Lansing isn’t enough. We must do more to block the blame the teacher crowd’s plans to balance Michigan’s books on our backs.

As AFT-Michigan President David Hecker said in his “State of the Union” address, “The challenges we face as a state, as a union, as citizens are so tremendous that we cannot continue to fight the ‘good’ fight, we must do more. We must do more as professionals and we must do more as activists.”

The first and most important thing you can do is contact your state senator and state representative and ask them where they stand on Joint Resolution U. Most of us don’t know who our state legislators are, but don’t let that excuse keep you from doing what is necessary to help keep this wrong-headed resolution from becoming part of the state’s constitution.

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MPERS Retirement Revisions Do More Harm than Good

Despite strong opposition from those who care about public education, the “blame the teachers” crowd was successful in passing Senate Bill 1227 (Gilbert, R-Algonac) into state law. This law (Public Act 75, 2010) amended the Michigan Public School Employees Retirement System and affects us because, unbeknownst to a number of AFO members, as Henry Ford Community College employees, we are covered by the MPERS.

As a current community college faculty member, you are covered by either the MPERS Basic Plan or the Member Investment Plan (MIP). All public school employees newly hired after January 1, 1990 participate in the MIP; those hired prior to that were covered by the “basic plan” (and some still are) but had the option of opting into the MIP plan when it was first introduced. You should visit the Office of Retirement Services website (www.michigan.gov/ors) to learn more about your MPERS benefits.

Prior to July 1, 2010, nothing was deducted from the earnings of individuals covered by the Basic Plan while the earnings of those covered by the MIP were subject to a 3.9% deduction. At the ORS website, you can view a chart which compares the benefits that accrue to individuals covered by the two plans.

While there are differences, employees covered by both the basic and MIP plans can retire at age 60 if they have accumulated ten years of service. You accrue one year of service when you teach at least 30 credit hours in a single year; if you teach more than 30 credit hours, you only earn one year of service. If you teach less than 30 credit hours, you earn a partial year of service. If you are teaching at more than one MPERS participating employer, your hours and earnings at all MPERS employers are combined.

To become “vested,” an employee covered by either the Basic Plan or the MIP must accrue a total of ten

years of service. Being vested means that you will eventually be eligible to collect a benefit from MPERS. Employees covered by the MIP who leave the MPERS system before becoming “vested,” can roll their MIP contributions into an IRA or other “qualified” plan or, by paying a tax penalty, receive a cash payment.

Under both plans, your retirement benefit is determined by a formula that includes final average compensation times years of service times a constant (1.5). Depending on which plan you are covered by and your total years of service, a MPERS retiree may be eligible to participate in health, dental, and vision benefit programs.

Public Act 75, 2010 Amendments

The Public Act 75, 2010 amendments included a slight improvement on the multiplier (1.6 times years of service times final average compensation, as opposed to 1.5) used to determine the monthly benefit for individuals eligible and choosing to retire by September 1 (the decision to retire had to be made by June 11). This provision was designed to encourage higher paid retirement-eligible employees to retire so that they could be replaced by younger, lower paid teachers. This incentive, in and of itself, is not a bad thing.

However, also included were four provisions strongly opposed by the AFO and AFT-Michigan: (1) a new requirement that all MPERS employees contribute 3% of their compensation into an irrevocable trust for retiree health care (MPERS employees who earned less than \$18,000 in FY 2009-10 will only have to contribute 1.5% in FY 2010-11, but after that the contribution will be 3% for all employees); (2) all school employees newly hired after July 1, 2010 will be moved into a hybrid pension and defined contribution plan; (3) members who retire on or after July 1, 2010 will be limited to earning less than one third of their final average compensation if they work directly for a MPERS re-

porting unit—this provision is particularly unfair to adjuncts because our earnings are so low to begin with; and (4) charter school employees are excluded from participation in MPERS which will weaken the MPERS system as more and more public school jobs are shifted to publicly-funded charter schools.

AFT Michigan Files Lawsuit

Challenging Public Acts 75 and 77

AFT Michigan filed a legal action challenging the constitutionality of parts of the recently enacted retirement legislation, PA 75 and PA 77.

AFT Michigan considers PA 75 indefensible because it requires school employees, and only school employees, to pay 3% of their salaries into a trust to pay for benefits which they may never receive. PA 77 says that retiree health benefits are not guaranteed and may never be paid, a statement which was repeated frequently by the blame the teachers crowd in the state legislature when the bill was being discussed.

According to AFT Michigan, PA 75 unconstitutionally removes every person hired after July 1, 2010 from the existing retirement fund and places them into a fund which is not described or explained.

In a prepared statement, AFT Michigan President David Hecker said, “Rather than enact further take backs from the women and men who educate our children, the Legislature should support a graduated income tax, a move that would benefit the lower 85% of wage earners and bring in \$1.1 billion for education, police, fire protection and other services; extend the sales tax to non-essential services; and decouple from the federal estate tax, which would impact only the top 10 percent of the wealthiest households and bring in \$100 million.”

If you agree with Mr. Hecker, we urge you to GET ACTIVE! You might begin by reading Glenn O’Kray’s front page article.

Joint Resolution U Points to Need to Get Active

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To find out who your state legislators are simply visit AFT-Michigan's website — www.aftmichigan.org. You can find a link to this website from our own website, www.hfcc-af0.org. Once at the AFT-Michigan website, look for the "take action" button on the top left-hand side of the page and link to the "legislative action" center from the pull down menu. Then look on the left-hand side of the page for the "Find Your Michigan Representative" and "Find Your Michigan Senator" tabs.

Once you enter your county and zip code, you will be taken to the website of your elected official. Note, if you live in a zip code that straddles two or more districts, you may be given a choice of two or even three representatives or senators. You can contact any of their offices to determine into whose district your address falls.

I suggest that you write to both your state representative and your state senator, but you can also call their offices or send email messages. Your message will have the most impact if you express yourself in your own words, but besides asking the legislator how he or she views Joint Resolution U, you should point out that HFCC adjuncts are among the lowest paid community college teachers in the country (this is so even after the healthy raise we received in our first contract) and that any attempt to balance the state's books on our backs is not fair to us or to our students.

Further, I suggest that you save the AFT-Michigan and American Federation of Teachers (www.AFT.org) websites to your favorites and visit them on a weekly

basis. Make a habit of keeping abreast of goings on in Lansing and Washington that affect us and regularly reach out to your elected officials in both capitals to ask them what their positions are on the issues and to let them know where you stand.

You can do more and you can

PAC Contributions Needed

In recognition of the fact that it takes money to elect officials who share our views, the AFO Executive Board recently approved the establishment of a Political Action and Education Committee Fund. We are asking every AFO member to voluntarily contribute \$20 per year to this fund.

Our brothers and sisters in Local 1650 (the HFCC Federation of Teachers, the union that covers full-time faculty) are known for their generous support of HFCC millage campaigns and for being the largest single contributors to the AFT-Michigan PAC fund. While we won't be able to match the full timers a dollar for a dollar, we do need to show our own muscle.

If you don't think you can afford a \$20 contribution, imagine what it would be like to get hit with a 5% pay cut and a three year wage freeze. If you really can't make a \$20 contribution (we know that some of our members can't) consider making a donation of \$10, \$5 or even \$1 because every dollar will make a difference.

AFT-Michigan is targeting legislative districts where it is possible to elect (or re-elect) a representative or senator who understands the value of public education and a portion of our PAC fund dollars will be pooled with AFT-Michigan's PAC fund. We will also reserve a portion to be used in local elections especially for HFCC millage campaigns and school board elections.

If you haven't done so already, you can contribute by writing a check to "AFO PAC Fund" and sending it to our office through either interoffice mail or U.S. mail (our address is on the back of this newsletter).



Get Active: We are not going to block Joint Resolution U by idly wishing that it will go away. A number of AFO members as well as contingent faculty at other Michigan schools participated in the Social Forum march on June 24. We need your help to increase the pressure on the "blame the teachers" crowd!

make a difference by becoming pen pals with your state representative, your state senator, your U.S. representative, and your U.S. senators.

You may not think that your message is that powerful, but believe me, a few hundred letters and emails will make a difference to any elected official. However, it does take more than a letter or even a few hundred of them to influence those stubborn legislators who have committed themselves to the "blame the teachers" movement. We need to elect a governor and other state officials who see the value in public education at both the K-12 level and in higher education.

State Convention Re-Elects Hecker and Lofton Doniver

Delegates to AFT Michigan's 71st convention held in downtown Detroit on May 15, 2010 re-elected the team of David Hecker and Lois Lofton Doniver as president and secretary-treasurer of the state federation. Also notable was Local 1650 President John McDonald's re-election to AFT-Michigan's executive council as higher education vice president.

AFO President Mary Beck said that "the Hecker-Lofton-Doniver team has been a net positive for AFT Michigan. Despite a difficult economy, their tenure has been good for Michigan teachers and Michigan families. It is quite possible that the AFO wouldn't exist without their whole-hearted support. We were also very glad to see John McDonald re-elected to the executive council. He has been an ally of the AFO from the day we began our organizing drive."

The AFO was represented at the convention by a large delegation that heard a rousing keynote speech by AFT President Randi Weingarten. Gubernatorial candidate Virg Benero thanked AFT-Michigan for endorsing him and promised the convention that he would support public education and union rights if elected.

Besides the officer elections and speeches, delegates approved a slate of resolutions that affect Michigan teachers and residents.



AFT Michigan President David Hecker and Secretary Treasurer Lois Lofton Doniver were re-elected by acclamation by delegates to the state convention on May 15, 2010

Member News and Notes

- *The AFO Executive Board has formalized its policy of not sharing personal contact information of any member with anyone other than affiliated organizations (i.e. the American Federation of Teachers) without the member's express written consent. Whenever emails are sent to AFO members, the list of recipients is "blind copied" to prevent dissemination of email addresses.*
- *If you are not receiving AFO messages, please send us your current private (non HFCC.edu) email address—you can reach us at HFCCAFO@gmail.com.*
- *Congrats to Business Adjunct Kristen Calder-Bowman for being May's High Hawk Flyer Award winner. Kristen was nominated by a student who received help from Kristen in finding a job, "On her free time she (Kristen) was editing my resume, cover letter, reference page and prepared me for my first interview."*
- *Political Science adjunct and public speaker Jackie Martin is interested in becoming the next Oprah. Jackie, a published author, believes her 20 years experience of educating, entertaining, and inspiring others makes her an ideal candidate. Visit <http://myownoprah.com> to vote for Jackie.*
- *Political Science adjunct Robert Yahrmatter is running for the Dearborn Heights city council. If you live in Dearborn Heights vote for him in the August 3 primary—we can use a friend on the Dearborn Heights city council—the HFCC district includes a portion of Dearborn Heights.*

Asbestos Report Cause for Concern

A report that asbestos dust was found in a faculty office is a cause for concern not only for adjuncts, but also for all HFCC employees and students. The problem stems from the fact that the tile floor in older campus buildings that have not been renovated, particularly the Liberal Arts and Science buildings, is composed partly of asbestos.

While we do not want to minimize the very real concerns of many adjuncts, we are satisfied that the College is addressing the problem in a responsible manner. The College has hired two environmental companies, EKS Services and ASTI Environmental, to monitor the air quality in the affected buildings and to take steps to ensure the safety of the buildings. Both firms are highly regarded and ASTI is an industry leader. The measures being taken are consistent with Michigan Occupational Safety and Health Association guidelines.

To ensure safety until the building is renovated next year, the floor in the Science Building will be sealed with a heavy duty floor finish. Since there are no immediate plans to renovate the Liberal Arts Building, the College is in the process of applying vinyl tile over the old tile in that building. The environmental firms will be testing the air quality weekly in affected buildings as long as a potential problem exists. Tests conducted to date have shown that there is no air born asbestos which means there is no asbestos in the air of the buildings.

The College has said that any teacher uncomfortable working in either build-

ing will be moved to another building. Accordingly, if you wish to be moved, let your Associate Dean know or contact the AFO office.

**HFCC-Adjunct Faculty
Organization-AFT Local 337
AFT/AFL-CIO
A-024 Learning Technology
Building
5101 Evergreen Road
Dearborn, MI 48128
Phone: 313.845.9707
E-mail:
HFCCAFO@gmail.com**

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HFCC-AFO.org

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Adjunct Faculty Organization
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