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HIGHEST COST OF LIVING IN MARYLAND

LOWEST PROPERTY TAXES IN STATE

COUNCIL VOTES ALTER ARBITRATION PROCESS

GO

TAXES 4 TIMES SINCE 2005
COUNCIL VOTES TO REDUCE  
SILVER SPRING LIBRARIES
$3 MILLION FROM
MONTGOMERY COUNTY
MONOPOLY

WASHINGTON POST
FURLough
WORKERS
WALSHINGTON POST
WORKERS
BLASTS COUNTY

FORGIVE LOCKHEED
MARTIN $450K IN TAXES

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Local 1994 Welcomes Carlos Mellott

Local 1994’s new Field Representative/Organizer Carlos Mellott joined Local 1994 over the summer. Mellott comes to Local 1994 from the Department of Correction and Rehabilitation (DOCR) where he served as a resident supervisor and a CS III work release coordinator.

“I’m very excited to be given the opportunity to fight for our members,” said Mellott.

Prior to his time at DOCR, Mellott worked as a program coordinator at Identity Incorporated, creating and facilitating gang intervention programs. He also worked at Amnesty International as an organizer of student and local groups, and as a substitute teacher with Montgomery County Public Schools. Mellott also served his country as an urban youth development volunteer for the Peace Corps in Paraguay.

“Carlos brings a variety of experience as well as a passion for activism,” said Local 1994 Gino Renne. “He shows a tenacity for engaging in struggle and fighting for those he represents. He’s a good addition to our team.”
Montgomery County’s Real Problem: Low Taxes, Falling Revenues, Weak Politicians

I’m sick and tired of seeing public employees maligned in the press or by the idiots who dominate the talk radio scene. Let’s face it, the agenda of the folks behind those attacks is to destroy government—as one of them once said: “shrink it to the point that it can be drowned in a bath tub.”

That’s one of the fundamental principles of the far right in America. They want to dismantle those parts of government that serve the people—such as agencies that keep banks and investment companies from ripping people off and the agencies that keep drug companies and food producers honest. They like those big government agencies that operate like ATMs for contractors—Homeland Security and the Pentagon, for instance, that dole out funds in important congressional districts.

Most of the super rich don’t like sharing. They want their fortunes protected against folks like us. They like the agencies of government that protect them from the riff raff, but they hate, hate, paying taxes for anything that they don’t see as an immediate and direct benefit for themselves. Now that right-wingers have expanded their foothold in the U.S. Congress, we will see more of those sentiments. Unfortunately, lots of ordinary Americans have been duped into believing the claptrap peddled by the right wing and they project those same attitudes on state and local government. Of course, that infects the dialogue in our own county government.

It wouldn’t be so difficult if the source of these attacks was just the lunatic fringe in talk radio as was once the case. Today, however, journalists and media outlets that once proudly proclaimed their “objectivity” have dropped their standards and become part of the lunacy too. And, the media stampede has made it nearly impossible to communicate sanity and facts to the public.

That’s why your union has taken the time to develop some facts to help you defend yourself and your job. You can find a more comprehensive presentation on our website. Here, in a question and answer format, are just a few points you should remember:

Q. Why does Montgomery County have so much difficulty with budgeting?

A. It’s not because of rising costs. Last year, personnel costs for our county declined by 4.7% and the full-time county workforce dropped by 3.8%. Since 2009 the county has shed nearly 500 jobs. Yet, the county says it needs to find another $300 million to balance the budget.

Q. Don’t we pay a lot of taxes to live in Montgomery County?

A. No. In fact, Montgomery County has the lowest real estate and commercial property tax rates of the eight biggest counties in the state. The county council is hamstrung by a 20-year old requirement for a super majority vote to raise either of these taxes. The recession and declining property and business tax revenues have cost Montgomery the ability to provide first rate services to its residents. We can thank Robin Ficker and the arch conservatives who imposed a super-majority vote rule in 1990 and went a step further in 2008 to require a unanimous vote rule for changing the charter. Now, property tax revenue is capped at the rate of inflation by law unless the County Council unanimously votes to approve an increase. Ironically, the same standard doesn’t apply to reducing tax rates—which the council voted to do four times in the past five years!

Why don’t we hear elected officials talk about raising taxes (see table on next page)—especially when the need is so great. It’s because they are AFRAID of the Post. Raising the property tax rate by 1 cent, would cost the average home owner from $35 to $70 per year; Raising the taxable assessments for commercial property would cost the average commercial property owner $276, but those increases would yield $17 million, according to the Office of Legislative Oversight.

Don’t see a clamor in the county council for those options? Remember, the average cost to individual workers for last year’s furlough was $461.53. So much for “shared sacrifice.”

Q. Should we expect concessionary bargaining to be a permanent condition in Montgomery County?

A. No. We can expect the county and our elected officials to continue to beat the drums for cuts to our wages, benefits and jobs, but I personally believe in the biblical mandate: “The last shall be first and the first shall be last.” MCGEO will insist that when fiscal balance is restored to our county we expect to be first in line to recover what has been taken away. Maybe management doesn’t see it this way, but our givebacks are investments in our future. We expect eventual dividends when it’s time to collect.
Substitute School Nurses & Aides Win Grievance Against DHHS

In February 2010, Snowmaggedon pounded the Maryland area – forcing area schools to shut down for six days. Substitute/Temporary School Health Nurses and School Health Room Aides (who are hourly employees of the Dept. of Health and Human Services, not MCPS) couldn’t go to work.

DHHS excluded them from compensation during the snow storms. Local 1994 filed a grievance against the Department, arguing that the decision represented a change in established practice that could only happen if management bargained with the union.

Local 1994’s Secretary/Treasurer Yvette Cuffie, who worked on the grievance, pointed out that over the past 15 years, DHHS has granted administrative leave to temporary employees in weather emergencies if they couldn’t fill other assignments.

“Even if the budget woes plaguing the County are their excuse for excluding them from pay,” said Cuffie, “they didn’t let the Union or even the employees know they weren’t going to get paid until they received their paychecks. That’s not the way to do business.”

Local 1994 won the grievance, and the substitute/temporary school health nurses and school health room aides will be awarded back pay for their lost compensation.

“For the past 15 years, the County had been paying the substitutes for their snow days, and then with no notice, the Dept. decides otherwise,” said Patty Vogel, a shop steward at IHHS. “These folks could have gone to other jobs if they knew they were going to lose a week’s pay. They are ecstatic that they won.”

Defend Yourself

Montgomery County is Maryland’s largest County, and has the lowest residential ($0.8110) and commercial tax rates ($1.17470) among the state’s eight largest counties. Montgomery has the highest average weekly wage and the highest cost of living of the eight largest counties in the state. Four times since 2005, the Montgomery County Council has voted to REDUCE taxes. Personnel costs for county government dropped 4.7% last year and the number of full-time county workers is down 3.8% over last year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Local Income Tax Rate</th>
<th>Real Estate Property Tax Rate</th>
<th>Business Tax Rate</th>
<th>Avg Weekly Wage</th>
<th>CPI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Montgomery</td>
<td>971,600</td>
<td>3.20%</td>
<td>$0.8110</td>
<td>1.17470</td>
<td>$1,201</td>
<td>133.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prince George’s</td>
<td>834,560</td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>1.0720</td>
<td>2.400</td>
<td>959</td>
<td>118.9</td>
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<td>Baltimore County</td>
<td>789,814</td>
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<td>2.7500</td>
<td>908</td>
<td>107.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Baltimore City</td>
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<td>3.05</td>
<td>2.3800</td>
<td>5.6700</td>
<td>1,029</td>
<td>101.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anne Arundel</td>
<td>521,209</td>
<td>2.56</td>
<td>0.9920</td>
<td>2.200</td>
<td>947</td>
<td>120.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Howard</td>
<td>281,884</td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>1.1260</td>
<td>2.5350</td>
<td>1,049</td>
<td>125.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Frederick</td>
<td>227,980</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>1.0480</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>872</td>
<td>114.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Carroll</td>
<td>170,089</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>1.1600</td>
<td>2.6200</td>
<td>684</td>
<td>112.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Library employees in the Montgomery County Library System recently negotiated a reinstated shift differential after the system’s hours were pared back by budget cuts. The library system changed its hours in July eliminating the differential payments for many. The employees previously received a differential for hours worked after 2 p.m. if 75 percent of their scheduled hours were between 2 and 10:59 p.m. But in order to qualify, employees had to start their shifts at 12 p.m. or after.

The amended agreement will now grant the differential for employees whose shifts begin on or after 11:30 a.m.

Employees who were affected by the change in the differential will also receive eight hours compensatory time.

Shop Stewards Michael Marx and June Fitzmeyer helped negotiate the differential. They pointed out that in the MOU negotiators agreed that any savings the library had realized over the summer should be “used to supplement the department’s substitute pool account” instead of retroactive pay.

“The libraries are so short-staffed that no one can take leave,” said Marx. “Our priority during this negotiation was to negotiate a differential, but also to lighten the load by getting substitutes.”

Excellence in Humanities Award Goes to Eve Burton

Local 1994 member and Quince Orchard Library employee Eve Burton was recently awarded the County Executive’s Excellence in the Arts & Humanities, Education Award. Eve was honored because of the work she has done with storytelling and poetry at Montgomery County Public Libraries. Library budget cuts forced the libraries to shut down these programs, but the storytelling program has found an outside sponsor thanks to the Dogwood Dogs 4H Club.

Kris Tuckerman, Executive Vice President, Retires

Montgomery County Library Employee and Local 1994 Executive Vice President Kris Tuckerman started working for Montgomery County Libraries in 1973 as a Desk Assistant, at that time a non-merit position reserved for college students.

After finishing her studies in 1975, Tuckerman accepted a full time merit position in the library, a good job with better pay and benefits than one in her field of study – medical laboratory technology. Tuckerman held several positions through the years, the last as a Library Associate II before retiring June 1.

In the pre-union days the Library Department had a strong Staff Association that worked cooperatively with management on library issues. Tuckerman was a representative from her branch to the Association in the early 1980s, about the time that the County was proposing drastic cuts in pay and benefits. Several other departments had staff associations, notably the sheriffs and nurses, who banded together to explore unionization.

“I still remember standing in the hallway with Gino awaiting the results of the first union election,” Tuckerman says. “We won and you know the rest of the story. If you don’t, read about it on the MCGEO homepage.”

Tuckerman remarked how the Union was really needed a few years later after the Library’s employees suffered through a hard-fought reclassification study. Almost a year later, HR had not developed the new Class Specifications nor promoted her to a new grade. President Renne stepped in and got the process moving along.

Though always a strong supporter of the Union and a conduit for information between the Union and members, Tuckerman did not become an official steward until 2004. In 2006, she was appointed to fill a vacancy on the Executive Board then later elected to another term to which she served until her retirement.

“I cannot stress how important it is to be involved with your Union,” remarked Tuckerman. “President Renne, his staff, the stewards and Executive Board do an outstanding job representing the membership but they are not the Union, YOU are the Union. They can only be successful if Management knows this leadership and staff have the full support and backing of the membership.

“Public employees are under attack like never before and we must stand strong to preserve a fair and equitable workplace and the wages and benefits that working families deserve,” she adds.

“Though retired I am not gone. The next time President Renne rings the bell, and I’m sure it will be soon, I’ll be there with our ‘gang’ colors on. I BETTER SEE YOU THERE!”
Alan Hepler, Chair of PAC, Retires

Alan Hepler, who for many years has been the Chair of Local 1994’s Political Action Committee, has retired. Alan was one of MCGEO’s founding members. He joined the Department of Housing and Community Development (now DHCA) in 1981 as a Housing Code Inspector. He had been teaching in the University of Maryland’s Chemistry Dept.

Alan has vivid memories of the Dept. before the Union.

“[DHCA] was good money with good benefits,” said Alan. “But it was apparent that the morale and treatment of employees was open to whatever management wanted to do. For many, it was sport to make the workplace a miserable and vindictive atmosphere...almost toxic and filled with favoritism and abuse.”

Alan tried to balance that view with his family obligations, reasoning he had no choice other than to work as best he could and stay under the radar.

Eventually, he and his colleagues heard talk about union representation and saw it as a means for restoring their dignity on the job and protecting their benefits and wages. It was clear; organizing would be the solution to get back to a level playing field.

“In spite of harassment for being vocal and supportive of a union, it was worth the effort,” said Alan. “I made it to retirement this October of 2010 because the Union has been there to intercede if managers wanted to play games.”

At first, worker support of the union was limited to a small, unorganized group, not getting much attention from management, Alan recalled. “Then the first vote came, and yes, we were warned by management to stay away and not vote.”

The threats didn’t work. Eventually “we became UFCW Local 1994 under the skills and leadership of Gino Renne, who was determined to bring our workplace into the 1980s and to protect the embattled county employee.”

Alan was a shop steward from day one, calling his role “one of my biggest honors.” He later became chair of Local 1994’s Political Action Committee (PAC) weathering some fierce storms along the way.

“Alan has stood by our Union through thick and thin,” said Local 1994’s President Gino Renne. “His loyalty and devotion have been clear all these years, and he will be missed.”

While Alan plans to spend more time with his family, he vows to continue his union activism, too.

“My union is my other family, and one which I will not leave or retire from,” said Alan. “Times are tough. I promise to continue to be active and support the workers I left behind, as the future in front of us is filled with the unknown and real problems for all.”

“Stay united and support your Union. After all, it is your future to keep or lose.”

Prince George’s Activist Uses IT Skills on Baker Campaign

Prince George’s County Memorial Library System Shop Steward Steve Dutky volunteered his IT skills for Rushern Baker’s campaign. Dutky is a strong union supporter and democratic activist who lives in Takoma Park.

For the past five years, Dutky has helped run the IT operations for PGCMLS.

His skills came in handy when he volunteered for the Baker campaign. The campaign office needed networking help for their desktop computers and their printers, said Dutky. He also helped them stretch their WI-FI network, which was not designed to support the 16 or more VOIP (voice over IP) phone lines they had set up for phone banking, a complex task.

“I even worked one day with their internet service provider to get them back online,” said Dutky.

Dutky has worked on other campaigns before, he said, but this one was different.

“This was a really motivating campaign,” remarked Dutky. “Most of the time campaign managers and their other paid workers don’t engage much with the volunteers. But Baker’s people were really focused, really smart. It was very satisfying.”

Dutky says that all MCGEO/UCFW members have special skills that can turn the tide in 2012. “For our country, for our state, for our coworkers and families, we need to pitch in to keep what we have and take back what we have lost.”

Library Steward Warns Community of Consequences of Budget Cuts

Montgomery County Library System employee and Local 1994 Shop Steward Mike Marx wasn’t immune to the upheaval the Libraries recently faced. He just recently transferred to a new position at the Kensington Park Library.

In an article about the library that ran in the July Kensington Patch, Marx was highlighted among the library’s many new faces, in recognition of his 28-years experience.

Marx didn’t miss the opportunity when interviewed by the Patch to highlight how budget cuts have affected Montgomery County’s libraries. The library has suspended some of its online subscription services and books, he pointed out. This affects children doing school research, especially.
Welcome to American politics 101. On December 13th a federal district court judge who was named to the bench by George W. Bush declared significant portions of the Health Care Reform Act to be unconstitutional. Like many of you who worked tirelessly over the past two or three years with your union to get that law enacted, I was sorely disappointed over that development. Obviously, the Obama administration intends to fight on by appealing this ruling.

For almost a century, Americans have been calling for health care reform. Franklin Roosevelt, Harry Truman, John Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson, Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton, all tried. Johnson had limited success with the enactment of Medicare. The others got nowhere.

Full-scale reform didn’t happen until Barack Obama came along. The Republican minorities in both the U.S. House and in the Senate did everything in their power to derail health care reform. They professed to be opposed on principle to the idea that government might require individuals to purchase health care. The real reasons for their opposition lie in their unholy alliance with health insurance companies and their determination to frustrate President Obama’s agenda for the American people.

I recall just two years ago the euphoria that we shared at Obama’s inauguration. After George Bush, most of us believed that the long eight years of do nothing government was over. The Republican opposition wasn’t ready to concede. They have continued to frustrate the majority by exploiting the rules of the Senate and derailing initiatives for change. They tried but failed to kill reform of the nation’s financial industry. They demanded bailouts for Wall Street but watered down efforts to give financially distressed homeowners a break. They held the unemployed hostage and refused to budge until President Obama agreed to their tax breaks for millionaires.

Now, some are angry with President Obama for yielding to Republican demands. Shouldn’t we be more angry at the Republican leadership for their underhanded exploitation of the unemployed?

Lest anyone think that the battle lines between America’s plutocrats and the rest of us have just recently been drawn, I call your attention to some remarks by another U.S. president who faced an even more hostile Republican opposition almost 75 years ago.

In 1936 President Franklin Roosevelt, as he was scrambling for a second term in the face of implacable Republican resistance, made a campaign speech that would work just as well for Barack Obama today.

Under his Republican predecessor, Roosevelt said, America was “afflicted with hear-nothing, see-nothing, do-nothing government.” (Sound familiar?) “The nation looked to government but the government looked away.”

Roosevelt went on to list the excesses of the Herbert Hoover years with Wall Street out of control while the unemployed lined up for bread. Yet, there remained “powerful forces” striving “to restore that kind of government with its doctrine that government is best which is most indifferent.”

Here’s déjà vu: Roosevelt charged “that government by organized money is just as dangerous as government by organized mob. Never before in all our history have these forces been so united against one candidate as they stand today.” But he stuck out his chin and stood ready to battle. “They are unanimous in their hate for me—and I welcome their hatred.”

Roosevelt had a pretty good sense for what ordinary Americans needed:

“What was our hope?” Americans, he said, want peace of mind to replace “gnawing fear”… “security in their homes; safety for their savings, permanence in their jobs …

“The peace that springs from the ability to meet the needs of community life: schools, playgrounds, parks, sanitation, highways—those things which are expected of solvent local government. They sought escape from the disintegration and bankruptcy in local and state affairs.”

He went on to list other aspirations, such as fairer wages, shorter hours, and the elimination of speculation.

One recurrent theme that I’ve noticed throughout President Obama’s brief time in office is that commentators continue to describe voters as angry. I would say that’s accurate, but angry at whom? Should they be angry at the guy who just got in the game after the other side has run up the score? Or, should they be angry at the folks who have bent the rules and tied the home team’s hands. My advice, as always, is “let’s keep our eyes on the prize.” It’s okay to criticize the coach or the captain inside the locker room, but once we get back on the field, let’s remember who the opponent is.
Ride-On Operator Critically Injured in Crash; First Concern is Passengers

Ride-On bus operator and Local 1994 member Therese D’Anton was severely injured in a crash of her bus earlier this year but despite her severe injuries, she stayed on the scene to help her passengers.

The EMT Captain who was on the scene at the accident called Local 1994 President Gino Renne to alert him to her crash and told President Renne: “She’s unconcerned about herself; she just keeps asking me to ‘make sure my passengers are okay.’”

D’Anton was in pretty bad shape. Her nose was nearly severed in the accident. She had a broken eye socket, broken ribs and a sprain in one of her legs.

D’Anton was hospitalized for quite some time, and is plagued with memory issues since the accident, but has completed an initial round of therapy and may have some more therapy.

“Therese showed the type of concern for others that we should all aspire to when in dire consequences,” said President Renne. “We wish her a speedy and complete recovery.”

Council Votes to Alter Arbitration Process

In one of her first moves as the new Montgomery Council President, Valerie Ervin introduced expedited legislation that would alter the arbitration process in the County. The legislation was a blow to the unions who have long backed Ervin for office.

The Washington Post’s constant bashing of Montgomery County’s public employees and their unions in the past few years probably spurred this legislation, noted Jos Williams, Metro Washington Council AFL-CIO president, in his testimony.

Council President Ervin bristled at this notion and claimed that she had prepared the legislation long before the Post’s most recent barrage of negative editorials; but Councilmember George Leventhal noted that he had just seen the legislation on his desk the Friday before Council’s public hearing on it.

The amended bill that passed Council requires that an arbitrator “must first determine the ability of the County to afford any short-term and long-term expenditures” needed in the contract. But the arbitrator must not assume a reduction in government services or increase in taxes in his decision.

“We still aren’t happy with the bill,” said Local 1994 President Gino Renne. “But the bill that passed was more palatable than the bill that went before the Council previously, and that is thanks to our remarkable solidarity.”

Ride-On’s Severe Understaffing Restricts Schedules

Ride-On employees continue to suffer from understaffing. The hiring freeze has caused many employees to have issues scheduling their home lives.

“Our drivers can’t get a day off to schedule a doctor’s visit, for themselves or for a family member,” said Nelvin Ransome, Local 1994 Executive Vice President and Ride-On employee. “This causes their work and home life to become unbalanced leading to unplanned illness and unplanned sick leave.”

There’s no resolution in sight, said Ransome, unless Ride-On lifts the hiring freeze.

Local 1994 is working with Ride-On management in a focus group to work through the scheduling issues, and the County has contacted a third party mediator to help with the problem.

“These types of problems are the ongoing casualties of the budget,” said Ransome. “But, we will continue our fight to resolve the issue.”
AMBULANCE FEE LOST IN BARRAGE OF MISREPRESENTATION;
COUNTY SCRAMBLES TO FILL $14 MILLION FOR EMERGENCY SERVICES

A campaign of lies, misinformation, scare tactics and posturing led by Montgomery County’s Volunteer Firefighters and County Councilmember Phil Andrews defeated Question A, the Ambulance Fee Referendum, on the November ballot.

The issue was fraught with controversy from the beginning. The County Council and the County Executive had enacted the ambulance fee to recoup an estimated $14 million in lost revenue annually (approximately $170 million over 10 years) that was needed to fund emergency services. It appeared the matter was resolved and the fee would go into effect early in 2011. But opponents of the measure—led by volunteer firefighter organizations—mounted a petition drive to get the issue on the county’s ballot. A lower court ruled that the volunteers had not secured a sufficient number of valid signatures to qualify for the ballot, but an appeal panel reversed that ruling, providing supporters of the fee a mere three weeks to launch an education campaign for voters.

“An acknowledged complaint was that the fee would hinder their fundraising efforts. ‘By fighting this measure, they selfishly robbed the county of revenue just to line their own coffers,’” noted Stewart.

The volunteers also claimed that the fee would discourage the public from calling 9-1-1 in the event of an emergency, but data from other nearby municipalities that have a fee refuted that argument.

County Executive Leggett has proposed that at least 89 frontline positions—firefighters and other rescue personnel—be cut, along with taking 11 ambulances out of service to make up for the $14 Million loss.

“We ran a strong campaign,” said Local 1994 Executive Director Bob Stewart, “but we had limited time. If the County Executive and other members of the County Council who supported this measure had engaged in educating the public about this fee earlier, we would have been successful. In fact, some short-sighted members of the Council failed miserably to support the County in our time of greatest need.”

Stewart pointed to Council members Valerie Ervin and Nancy Navarro who also actively opposed the fee.

“They profess to be active supporters of public services, but come up short when it comes to supporting them,” added Stewart.

In fact, the Vote FOR Question A Committee, which was made up of The Professional Firefighters Union, the Fraternal Order of Police, along with Local 1994 and other concerned groups, handbilled local communities, Metro stops and participated in other Get Out the Vote activities. But, the volunteer firefighters had successfully been rallying against the fee for the past three years. The Vote FOR Question A Committee faced an uphill battle to overcome their din of propaganda and ultimately lost the battle.

The volunteer firefighters’ acknowledged complaint was that the fee would hinder their fundraising efforts.

“By fighting this measure, they selflessly robbed the county of revenue just to line their own coffers,” noted Stewart.

The volunteers also claimed that the fee would discourage the public from calling 9-1-1 in the event of an emergency, but data from other nearby municipalities that have a fee refuted that argument.

County Executive Leggett has proposed that at least 89 frontline positions—firefighters and other rescue personnel—be cut, along with taking 11 ambulances out of service to make up for the $14 Million loss.

“The public just doesn’t understand how eliminating this fee is going to cost them in the long run,” Stewart said. “We’ll see even greater cuts to public services again. How those cuts are going to be distributed across the county remains to be seen, but the budget shortfall is ominous.”

Thank you for working with us on Question A.

Whether you worked the polls, spread the word, or otherwise contributed to the effort, we appreciate your help.

We faced an uphill battle with little time to organize, mobilize, and educate. And although the results were not what we had hoped to see, we can be proud of our efforts.

During the holiday season, we wish you all the very best.

Sincerely,

Vote FOR Question A Committee
M-NCPCC Spends $800K Rehiring Seasonal Workers

Local 1994 Files Grievance

Local 1994 has filed a grievance against the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission challenging a management decision to rehire seasonal workers despite furloughs and a wage freeze. In negotiations for the 2011 wage re-opener contract, the Commission claimed that it had no money for raises and enhancements to the contract. The negotiations not only resulted in a wage freeze, the contract also imposed furloughs for the commission’s Montgomery County employees.

In November, the Commission spent $800,000 to re-hire seasonal employees.

Patrick Moran, a shop steward for M-NCPCC who sat on the bargaining committee, is outraged.

“They’ve ‘found’ the money to pay for these seasonal workers, but they couldn’t scrape up enough money to avoid furloughs?” said Moran. “It’s unconscionable.”

Moran, along with the other members of the committee, feels that the Commission should have, at the very least, set aside the funds for a “rainy day.”

The M-NCPCC Seasonal Worker Committee is Patrick Moran, Antonino Fama, Bobby Walker, and Patricia Cheatham.
Bargaining Committee
Work Underway

Just before the holidays, members of the Montgomery County bargaining committee took a full day of training in bargaining techniques, with assistance from Bill McFadden of the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service. The committee is a good mix of veterans and newcomers, with representation from almost every unit we represent in the county. Thanks to the 22 members who have agreed to serve on the committee. The executive board and the membership appreciate your service and your commitment to the union. Your interest and concern for your fellow members will help us deal with whatever management throws at us in the weeks ahead.

PGCMLS Bargaining

Local 1994 members who work for the Prince George’s County Memorial Library System have been in bargaining since late last spring. Primary issues facing the bargaining committee are enhancing the quality of work life for employees without straining the library system’s fragile budget.

“We know we are working with limited funds,” said Candyce Offer, a member of the bargaining committee. “We are trying to find ways to lighten the load for staff, and reward them for their hard work, but it’s a struggle in this budget.”

Working conditions – especially concerns about security and understaffing – have been a major issue for a while in the system.

The PGCMLS bargaining team is:

Steve Valentich    Candyce Offer
Joseph Dickson    Myra Katz

MOCO Bargaining Committee Members

Patrick Beam        DOCR
Frank Beckham       DGS
Dianne Betsey       DPL
David Drury         DGS
Craig Ferguson       FRS
Carrie Headen       REC
Katrina Hood        DOCR
Lois Kinder         MCPD
Karen Lamb          DHHS
Michael Marx        DPL
Maureen McCormick   MCPD
Sandy Minear        DHHS
Ron Milberg         DPS
John Morris         DOT
Mark Myrick         DOCR
Carla O’Gwin        MCDP
James Rowe          DOCR
Mike Trigiani       MCSO
Patty Vogel         DHHS
Ronnie Walker       DOT
Dianne Ward         DLC
Gilberto Zelaya     BOE
By Amy Millar, Organizing Coordinator

Bargaining Survey Returns Are Best Ever

During this crucial time, check us on Facebook (www.facebook.com/Local.1994) or www.mcgeo.org

It’s been a busy Fall, culminating in our latest bargaining survey. This year, the bargaining survey was available online and in print. Multiple options for returning the survey resulted in a record number of results.

Additionally, while the results were revealing and helpful, the overall outcome is neither new nor surprising. We’re still seeing the same priorities as we faced last year – preserve jobs and benefits.

You overwhelmingly agreed. Protecting and preserving jobs and benefits will remain our primary objective. Those who responded to the survey indicated an awareness that management will again be coming after our jobs, wages, benefits and health care. The one thing in our favor is that it will be difficult to cut much further without crippling public services and without compromising the ability of current staff to effectively perform their jobs.

Our priorities are set by the survey: Preserve pay and benefits at current levels and fight layoffs and takebacks at all costs.

This is when communication with your bargaining committee members becomes crucial. Ask them questions about their experiences as bargaining progresses. Believe me, it will be enlightening! (To see a list of the bargaining team, see page 10, or visit our website/Facebook page.)

This is when calls to action must be heard. Look at our website and our Facebook updates. Read emails we send and share them with your coworkers. We will be asking for your support on issues as negotiations progress. We’re working to get a good text messaging system in place. Now is the time to sign up, either through the website (www.mcgeo.org) or call us at the union office (301) 977 2447.

We add updates nearly daily to our Facebook page, including links to relevant news articles affecting our members or reminders of upcoming events. The benefit to Facebook is that you can interact with our site: Tell us what you think, positive or negative. Add a link yourself. Tell a friend and coworker.

Right now, we have fewer than 250 “friends” following us on Facebook. And probably fewer visiting our website on a regular basis. We need to increase this number, especially during this crucial time of negotiations.

More of you need to take action than ever before. Nearly everyone who turned in a bargaining survey also agreed to take action when needed. And we had significantly more applicants for our bargaining team than we had slots – a first. So we know that you’re willing to help. That means going to Council meetings when necessary, that means attending rallies, press events, writing letters to the editor, talking to your friends and neighbors about Council priorities, calling your Councilmembers, and more.

You’ve set our priorities. And we won’t sway off course. But your voice, your action, your support, and your communication with us during this time will help immensely.

Who are you gonna call?

Got an organizing lead? Someone you know—a neighbor, friend or relative—stuck in a rut on a non-union job? Call Local 1994 Organizing Coordinator Amy Millar (301) 977-2447, or e-mail: amillar@mcgeo.org. Give us the particulars and we’ll follow up.

Call Local 1994 today! 1-800-948-0654
Field Services Report

by Doug Menapace, Field Services Coordinator

Under Staffing, Over Scheduling No Way to Manage

Many of the grievances we are dealing with can be traced back to cuts in staff. In Montgomery County, they’ve cut every department down to the bare bones and they want to cut more. People can’t take leave. They’re stressed and they are getting sick as a consequence.

For example, we’ve got a grievance in the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (DOCR) that deals with sick leave usage and “patterns of abuse.” The grievance is to determine if presenting a doctor’s note when taking sick leave removes the occurrence from being considered part of a pattern. This “pattern” is the determining factor that the department uses to initiate a sick leave restriction on members who have frequent occurrences of sick leave. The Union argued that restriction is for patterns of abuse and that a doctor’s note validates the occurrence. The Department maintains that a doctor’s note is not sufficient to remove the occurrence as part of the pattern. The parties expect a decision from the mediator in the near future.

Managers at Montgomery County’s Department of Highway Maintenance terminated the employees’ compressed schedules without notice or explanation to the union. We’re working with the Dept. and a mediator to amicably resolve the issue.

Scheduling is also at the forefront in DOCR. Members are working together to explore improvements to the proposed schedules affecting uniformed personnel within the department. Corrections employees pick their shifts based on seniority. Many employees wait up to 10 years for the opportunity to select a shift with weekends off. Many of the junior officers were unhappy with the prospects. Members formed a committee and solicited schedule options. It was apparent that weekends off was a big issue. The committee presented two options to the membership for their consideration: a 12-hour plan that would give all the employees every other weekend off; and an eight-hour plan that would give employees rotating weekends off. Members voted their preference earlier this month with the 12-hour option coming out on top. The committee will present the particulars of a 12-hour option to the membership early next year and ask for their preference via secret ballot between this option and the current schedule.

HOC Grievance Against Regional Manager

Local 1994 has submitted a grievance on behalf of employees in the Housing Opportunities Commission. A regional manager at the Commission has created a hostile environment at HOC, asking employees to do unreasonable, non-job related activities like help another commissioner move; engaging in bitter arguments with employees in front of co-workers and even mistakenly submitting a memo to the accounting department that contained racist and hateful language. The memo was from a local housing developer to the HOC manager. It was printed out and stapled to the back on his expense report.

“He’s a liability to the Commission,” said Local 1994 Field Representative/Organizer Carlos Mellott. “His misbehavior has contaminated the workplace and infuriated the employees.”
Secretary-Treasurer’s Report

Bullying Public Employees Doesn’t Solve the Problem

by Yvette Cuffie

Remember the refrain from the old Coasters tune, “Charlie Brown,” “Why’s everybody always picking on me?” That’s how public employees are feeling now in this third long year of economic crisis. More than 25 million people are unemployed or they’ve given up trying to find work. People have lost their homes to foreclosure. In Main Street America, all of our incomes have been dropping for the past ten years. The quality of our life today isn’t even close to what it was in the 1990s. When we take our problems to the politicians they say, “Oh, we’d like to help, but we’ve got this deficit thing and you’re just going to have to sacrifice.”

It doesn’t matter that it wasn’t you or I that let the bankers on Wall Street take the bottom out of our economy. We’ve got to help them out because they were “too big to fail,” but not you or me.

It doesn’t matter that the politicians got us into what appear to be never ending wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. We’ve got to have those tax breaks for millionaires—at the cost of $700 billion—but, when you need help paying your mortgage, forget about it.

Got a problem living on $32,000 a year? Suck it up! We need to make sure those millionaires get their tax breaks or else how are they going to create the jobs you want?

So, everybody’s in a bad mood.

Your neighbor who lost his job when his company moved to China—he’s mad. The lady across the street who is about to be thrown out of her home because she can’t make the mortgage—she’s mad. In the morning when they see you headed out to work for the County, they think you’re the lucky one. When they watch Fox News or Glenn Beck, they believe it when they’re told YOU are the problem. If it wasn’t for your cushy job, fat retirement, health care and yeah, that nifty work shirt, things would be a whole lot better.

“Never be bullied into silence. Never allow yourself to be made a victim.”

—Harvey S. Firestone

Don’t blame your neighbor, or the lady across the street. Blame our ugly broken political system where one man, one vote has become—any one man with a million dollars or more gets lots more votes and lots more influence than you. Glenn Beck, Rush Limbaugh and the folks who pull their strings don’t care about the unemployed, the soon-to-be-foreclosed and they don’t care about you except as an audience they can manipulate. The din they’ve created is the only thing the politicians can hear, and the only thing too many of them want to hear.

And, just because you’ve been lucky so far, don’t think you can’t become just like that unemployed neighbor or that soon-to-be-foreclosed lady. Now, the bad guys are coming after you. One key reason that you’ve got that job, that salary, those benefits and that pension is because you’ve got a union fighting for you.

So, when a politician rolls out a proposed law to water down collective bargaining, you’ve got to stand up and fight. Public employees have been able to defend ourselves because while the other side was busy selling off the jobs of our friends and neighbors, and killing their unions in the process, we have been able to increase our union strength. So, now they’re coming after us.

The best thing we can do for our friends and neighbors is to keep our union strong and help our friends and neighbors rebuild unions for themselves. Nobody wins in a race to the bottom.
Season’s Greetings

President Renne, Secretary-Treasurer Cuffie & Recorder Ransome along with the Executive Board and Staff of Local 1994 wish you and yours the best during the holidays.