The Privatization Challenge: Infiltrating the Public Sector One Department at a Time

See article page 8
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United Food & Commercial Workers
Local 1994
Municipal & County Government Employees Organization

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Good and Welfare

When you are sorrowful look again in your heart, and you shall see that in truth you are weeping for that which has been your delight.
-Khalil Gibran

Local 1994 is sad to report the loss of members Leo Brooks of Highway Services, Glenda Cambiosa of HHS, Maryam Abdullah of the Silver Spring Urban District, Kirk Dean a fleet mechanic in the Dept. of General Services, and Darlene Young and Michael Evans both from Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission.

Brooks was killed on the job in an accident on the Inter-County Connector. His death is the first fatality on the ICC since it opened in 2011.

We send our deepest condolences to all their family and friends.
Privatization of Public Services for the Public Good is a Lie

A report from Good Jobs First has said that the privatization of the functions of economic development agencies “is an inherently corrupting action that states should avoid or repeal.” Yet, once again, we’re fighting the privatization of not just one, but at least four government departments: The Department of Economic Development, the Department of Liquor Control and the Department of Transportation (along with RideOn) and some functions of the Housing Opportunities Commission. It seems that there’s not a piece of government owned property or public service that private companies are not eyeing as potential sources of revenue.

Economist Milton Friedman is the original disaster capitalist – he basically created the idea of privatization as a way to cure any and all woes and his ideas are what have brought us here today. He claimed that the business world is more “nimble” than the government world and more able to adapt and change to provide better service to the consumer.

I’m not an economist, but I do know one thing: **privatization of public services for the public good is a lie.**

It hasn’t sorted out problems like Friedman claimed it would.

In the world of state and local economic development corporations, privatization has been scandalous: overpaying their executives, misusing taxpayer funds, grossly overstating job creation numbers, failing in accountability to the public and awarding questionable subsidies. In the world of privatized liquor control, recently privatized Washington State’s problems have run the gamut: increased theft, increased sales to minors, increased taxes imposed on consumers, etc.

In transit and transportation, there have been unmitigated disasters when private corporations have taken over transit planning and building. P3s – public-private partnerships – like the one proposed by County Executive Ike Leggett – have been seriously problematic. One project involved construction of a toll road for a ten-mile section of highway in Orange County, Calif. Apparently, the design-build approach more than doubled the cost. A non-compete clause in the lease was intended to ensure that tolls would be adequate to pay for the increased cost as well as a return on investment and profit but, because of that clause, the public agency was prohibited from improving transportation facilities elsewhere in the corridor to reduce congestion. Ultimately, the public agency had to buy the project back for $207 million.

In the world of privatized prisons (like Governor Hogan has proposed), it hasn’t reduced incarceration rates, nor has it improved safety in prison. Privatization has instead perversely cut costs: decreasing personnel, offering inferior medical care, providing substandard food, and then they even fail, in many cases, to save any money.

Other privatized agencies have been riddled with similar problems.

While the decision-makers may claim that privatized agencies will still be accountable to taxpayers, I see nothing in the various bills privatizing these agencies and departments to ensure their accountability. In fact, the privatized version of the Economic Development Agency can “have closed-door sessions for sensitive discussion related to certain businesses and prospects during negotiations.”

“Rather than be at the table, I’ve decided to literally give you the table.” Those were the County Executive’s words in April when he revealed this plan to privatize DED.

Those closed door, unaccountable agencies will be able to do what they want and with less government oversight.
In December 2014, Marc Perrone, a labor leader who has committed four decades to fighting for hard working families, was elected UFCW International President. He succeeded retiring International President Joe Hansen.

Perrone has long fought to organize more members, bargain the best contracts possible, and hold irresponsible corporations accountable. His values as a labor leader have been defined by the belief that every worker has the right to a decent living, a reliable schedule, quality affordable health care, and respect on the job.

“The choice we face today is whether we will stand together and build an economy that lifts up all families, or watch as even more workers fall further behind and struggle to make ends meet,” Perrone said. “Cynics may believe that these divisions and inequities are irreversible. I do not. We, as a union, do not. I strongly believe that by uniting together we can give workers across North America the opportunities they deserve.”

“The ideas to build a stronger union do not lie within any one individual,” Perrone said. “They lie within all of us. They lie in the collective wisdom and strength of 1.3 million UFCW members who work hard every day to support their families. I want to hear their ideas. I want to hear their vision. I want to hear what we can all do to become an even greater and stronger union for the decades ahead.”

Other New UFCW Officers Elected:

The UFCW International Executive Board also elected former Executive Vice President Pat O’Neill as International Secretary-Treasurer, Esther Lopez as Executive Vice President, and Stuart Appelbaum as Executive Vice President. Paul Meinema currently serves as Executive Vice President and National President of UFCW Canada. Executive Vice President Bill McDonough retired on October 31, 2014.
Local 1994 Welcomes New Staff

Thanks to the dues increase approved by membership vote last Spring and internal reorganizing at union headquarters Local 1994 has been able to supplement its field staff with new hires all over the office.

Joining Local 1994 is Raymun Lee. Lee comes from RideOn where he was a bus operator for nine years. Lee has been a shop steward, has served on a number of bargaining teams and has joined Local 1994 in Boston and other locations to participate in organizing efforts with the International Union. Lee will work primarily as an organizer but will also work as a field representative.

New Field Representative Ryan Conlon also joins Local 1994’s staff from Jamestown, Rhode Island, where he was an elected member of the Jamestown School Committee. Conlon has experience working with the Rhode Island Dept. of Human Services and has worked as a community organizer. He also interned for United States Senator Jack Reed.

“We’re excited to have brought in new staff to work with our membership and grow our union,” said UFCW Local 1994 President Gino Renne. “I’m confident that Ryan and Ray will help us strengthen our union.”

Additional staff will help Local 1994 visit more facilities on a regular basis. They will also be able to respond to member needs more quickly.

Goodbye to our Board Retirees, Welcome our New

Local 1994 has had to say happy retirement to quite a few of our staunchest supporters this past year. Tony Thomas and Sedearia Wilson-Jackson left the Executive Board and were replaced by Tara Huber from Health and Human Services and Andre Dejarnette from the Dept. of Liquor Control.

“We’ll miss Tony and Sedearia, and thank them for their service” said Local 1994 President Gino Renne, “but Tara and Andre will bring a fresh perspective to board meetings. So we welcome them and look forward to working with them.”

Newly elected UFCW International President Marc Perrone attended the first official meeting of the new board and conducted their swearing in, followed by a question and answer period focused on the International’s priorities under his leadership.

Ransome Retires from RideOn

After 26 years as a RideOn Bus Operator, Local 1994’s Recorder Nelvin Ransome has officially retired from the system.

Ransome started his career with RideOn in 1989. He became involved with Local 1994 at that same time. Just a few years later, Nelvin became a shop steward.

“Nelvin has been a tireless advocate for his fellow workers since he became involved with his union,” said Local 1994 President Gino Renne. “I’m so happy he can continue to work with the union, but I’m certain that RideOn is going to miss him.”

Ransome says that he will continue to represent Local 1994 members as a full time employee but is also looking forward to “raising a garden, and spending more time with my grandkids.”

Ransome will also continue in office as Local 1994 recorder.
Local 1994 Secures Agreement on Montgomery County Contract

Local 1994’s bargaining team announced in February that it was able to reach a tentative agreement with Montgomery County Government for the third year of the existing collective bargaining agreement.

The agreement calls for:

- Wage increases for all members
- Technical changes to Disability Leave (no changes to benefits)
- Enhancements to the Public Safety Retirement for sworn deputy sheriffs and uniformed correctional officers
- A joint labor management committee to discuss placement of correctional officer salaries on the Correctional Officer Uniform Salary Schedule
- A joint labor management committee to discuss addition of new step at top of the Deputy Sheriff Uniform Salary Schedule

The agreement has been ratified by membership and approved by the County Council. General wage adjustments are effective the first full pay period after July 1.

Sheriffs Office Negotiates New Working Conditions Contract

Executive Board member and Sheriff’s Office member Bob Lehman, with assistance from Local 1994 Organizing Coordinator Doug Menapace, led negotiations with the Sheriff’s Office on their working conditions contract. The new agreement calls for improved uniform requirements, enhanced language on transfers, and better leave opportunities for some units.

“We are very pleased with the new contract language,” said Lehman. “Negotiations were very successful.”

Lehman pointed out how much better the new uniforms will be for the officers.

“The new uniforms are utility uniforms, making them much more comfortable and safe,” said Lehman.

The new uniforms will have more pockets and will have badges sewn into them. They are also more fire retardant with a stronger fabric.

The contract also calls for more collaborative approach to safety and health.

Members of the bargaining team were Bob Lehman, Shannon Songco, Mike Trigiani, Jose Rodriguez, Tanya Bettis, Shane Scott, Chad Aloi, and Larry Garms.

Look for Bargaining Survey for Next Montgomery County Contract

Contract negotiations for the next full term contract in Montgomery County are set to begin in November. Plans are to conduct a bargaining survey in the fall to help set negotiating priorities. If you are not receiving Local 1994 communications via email, please submit your email address to the union. Visit our webpage at http://www.mcgeo.org/emailblast.

Wage Reopener at PGCMMLS Results in Wage Gains

A memorandum of agreement negotiated in June for employees of the Prince Georges County Memorial Library System grants members 1.25% cost of living increases in 2015 and 2016. Employees will receive the first increase effective for the first full pay period in November 2015 and the first full pay period in March 2016 totaling a 2.5 percent COLA.

Negotiations for the full contract are slated to begin in the Fall.

Fierce Negotiations at M-NCPPC Results in Strong Contract, Wage Increase

Seven months of long, often contentious negotiations for members working at the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission finally produced a strong three-year agreement calling for wage increases and enhanced language on working conditions.

Even with Prince George’s County employees looking at furloughs and RIFs, the union the life of the agreement (for employees who aren’t at the top of their grade) with a wage reopener in the third year of the contract. The team also tightened up accident language in the contract and formally codified a proficiency advancement program.

“These negotiated increases lead the region in Prince George’s County and are extremely competitive in Montgomery negotiating team managed to secure a 7 percent total wage increase over County,” said President Gino Renne.

“We have a strong wage package because of our members hard work and the tremendous spirit of the bargaining team.”

The next wage reopener is scheduled for March 2017.

Bargaining team members were: Kevin Anderson, Guy Broyle, Aaron Crawford, Stevie “G” Harrell, Jimmy “JJ” Harris, Brian Souders, Patricia Steck, and Bobby Walker.

The Local Link • Summer 2015
MCGEO Cup Brings Together Members for Basketball Rivalry, Solidarity

The first annual MCGEO Cup Event, a Basketball Tournament this year, took place in May, with the Montgomery County Department of Recreation team taking home the Cup. Kwambima Coker, a player for the Dept. of Rec., took home the MVP trophy for his spectacular play. In all, eight teams of Local 1994 members and staff, along with members of the Montgomery County Young Democrats, participated in the inaugural event.

The event took place at the Upper County Community Center and featured a picnic lunch for participants and their families. Part of the focus of the event was also the new joint County-Union wellness initiative along with a fundraiser for the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society.

After losing in the championship game to the Dept of Recreation, Nicholson Court RideOn Bus Operator Thomas Coulter said, “We’ll be ready for them next year.”

“This event exceeded everyone’s expectations,” said Local 1994 Organizer Raymun Lee, who helped organize the event. “Around a hundred members from 10 different departments participated. It was an awesome day!”

The annual event will return next year but organizers have not decided on the activity.

“We’re thinking softball, kickball, or some other sport,” said Lee. “Whatever it is, we hope it will be as successful as this year’s Cup.”

Local 1994 Member Awarded Purple Heart

Retired Maryland National Guard officer Jerry Godwin, who is a Local 1994 member working at the Department of Economic Development, was recently awarded a Purple Heart for wounds received in Iraq in 2007.

Maj. Gen. Linda Singh, the top officer in the Maryland National Guard, presented the medal to the Chief Warrant Officer 2 Godwin at a ceremony in February.

Godwin was serving as a helicopter pilot when he suffered a traumatic brain injury and hearing loss after rockets were fired on a U.S. base in Baghdad.

Godwin is the Maryland National Guard’s first Purple Heart recipient since the military started awarding Purple Hearts to soldiers who suffered traumatic brain injuries.
UFCW Local 1994 has joined 350MoCo in Fossil Fuel Divestment

UFCW Local 1994’s Executive Board passed a resolution recently calling for divestment of MCERS pension fund assets from fossil fuel investments.

350.org has launched a nationwide fossil fuel divestment campaign – based on the successful divestment campaign that helped end apartheid in South Africa. The fossil fuel divestment campaign is active on over 300 college campuses, in over 100 cities – and in Montgomery County.

MoCo’s Employee Retirement System pension plans have over $65,000,000 invested in 65 of the world’s 200 largest fossil fuel companies including Exxon Mobil, BP, Chevron, Mitsubishi and other major oil and gas companies as well as the two largest publicly traded coal companies in the world, Peabody Energy and Arch Coal (which practices mountaintop removal mining).

The fossil fuel industry already has proven oil, gas and coal reserves five times the amount that can be burned and still hold the earth to the amount of temperature rise (2 degrees Celsius vs. preindustrial levels) that is the maximum that scientists consider safe. Yet they continue to search for more regardless of the consequences to our climate. Divestment by respected institutions withdraws the “social license” from the industry, thus weakening its grip on our lawmakers and allowing a price on carbon pollution and promoting clean, renewable energy like solar and wind.

Importantly, divestment will not hurt retired County workers. An analysis conducted for the Associated Press showed that pensions would have been better off had they divested 10 years ago. Calculating the total returns of the broad U.S. market with and without the companies singled out by Fossil Free, a pension fund of $1 billion would have done 5% better excluding fossil fuels.

Supreme Court Ruling Will Impact County Budgets

The U.S. Supreme Court has ruled against the state of Maryland on a tax case that will have repercussions on county revenues. The case, Maryland State Comptroller v. Wynne, dealt with an issue relating to income tax collection on income earned outside the state of Maryland. The ruling will reduce Maryland’s revenues by more than $40 million annually.

A Howard County couple, Brian and Karen Wynne, challenged Maryland law that allowed the state to collect taxes on some income earned outside the state and distribute it to counties. The case argued that to pay income tax in other states and then pay some of it again in Maryland amounted to illegal double taxation.

The Supreme Court agreed, finding that Maryland’s law improperly penalized interstate commerce.

Maryland now owes about $200 million in refunds and interest to the Wynnes and other residents who claimed a credit on refunds and interest to the Wynnes and other residents who claimed a credit on income earned outside the state. The annual tax impact on Maryland in future years will be in excess of $42 million, with approximately one-half of that affecting Montgomery County taxpayers.

What does that mean for Local 1994 members working for the County? A reduction in revenues will have to be recovered somehow but the budget process has not determined this yet.

“This is an unfortunate ruling,” said Local 1994 President Gino Renne. “How this ruling will play out for local budgets has yet to be determined, but given the track record of all the players, we are worried.”

Renne said he was especially concerned about the ruling’s impact on contract negotiations with the County and other agencies that are set to begin this Fall.
The Privatization Challenge: Infiltrating the Public Sector One Department at a Time

Montgomery County Department of Economic Development

In May, Montgomery County Executive Ike Leggett unveiled his plan to privatize yet another department of county government when he presented his ideas to replace the Department of Economic Development with a nonprofit managed by private sector business leaders. His proposal passed the County Council in July, despite strong efforts by Local 1994 members and others to stop the plan.

He claims that the move will make the County more competitive in attracting new businesses to the area. A CEO will lead the nonprofit with an 11-member board appointed by the county executive and approved by the council. The entity will receive county funding, but will also have the authority to raise money independently.

When visiting with County Council members, James Moody, a DED employee and a shop steward for Local 1994, points out that the County Executive's plan is akin to “dealing with a leaking roof by replacing the whole house.”

“Privatization of economic development in other states and counties have been less than successful,” said a report by Good Jobs First, a national policy resource center that promotes corporate and government accountability in economic development.

The report deems the latest efforts in Ohio and Wisconsin as “costly failures.”

“Privatized development corporations have issued grossly exaggerated job creation claims. They have created appearances of insider dealing and conflicts of interest. They have paid executives larger salaries than governors. They have resisted basic oversight.”

“We still believe that privatization of the department is unnecessary,” wrote Moody in a letter to County leadership. “The goals Mr. Leggett wants to achieve could better be met by reorganizing the department without the complicated process of privatization: reduce the number of managers, put more boots on the ground and adequately fund the operation of the department rather than continue to fund the Montgomery Economic Development Corporation, which by the CAO’s own assessment, has failed to produce any measurable success.”

Amendments added to the legislation privatizing the DED were watered down...
by the County Council, leaving the accountability of the department still in question.

“This new entity will create a ‘pay to play’ mentality,” said Amy Millar, Local 1994 Growth and Strategic Planning Coordinator. “We’re disappointed by the Council’s decision, and also disappointed that they wasted the opportunity to add accountability and transparency to the new organization’s structure.”

After the DED privatization bill’s passage, Councilmember Roger Berliner made a commitment to introduce legislation following the summer recess that would create a publicly owned Office of Business Services. This new entity would provide public support for smaller businesses, and a way for UFCW 1994 members to keep their positions as government employees. Joslyn Williams, president of the Metro Washington Council offered his support to the union, saying, “The Metro Washington Council hopes that Councilmember Berliner will follow through on his promise to create the Office of Business Services that would remain in the county and would primarily serve the small minority and women-owned businesses. We will be working with the Councilmember and tracking the reintroduction and progress of this bill.”

Housing Opportunities Commission

The privatization of functions of the Housing Opportunities Commission show that battles are not only limited to Montgomery County. HOC’s Executive Director Stacy Spann contracted out functions of the HOC two years ago.

Seven inspector positions were eliminated in 2013 due to “sequestration” during the federal budget crisis and now the HOC is outsourcing that function along with many of the functions of management (not represented by Local 1994).

Local 1994 is actively pursuing bringing some of the contracted work back into the Commission. One example is the effort to create a trades maintenance worker III to give upward mobility to HOC employees and help them pursue advanced certifications in building maintenance work.
After fierce opposition and a huge showing by Local 1994 members at a hearing at the end of January, Montgomery County Executive Ike Leggett pulled back state legislation that would allow the creation of a Montgomery County Independent Transit Authority (ITA).

“We question the need to create another agency in our county to deal with issues in transportation and transit,” said Local 1994 President Gino Renne, in testimony on the bill. “This bill has not had enough public scrutiny … and its impacts warrant a collaboration and study among all the stakeholders.”

Despite the early defeat of the enabling legislation, the idea of the ITA is still very much alive. The proposed ITA would be responsible for the county’s existing Ride On bus service and planned Rapid Transit System. It would do so through a new transit tax and by issuing its own bonds.

In carving out this agency, said Renne, the ITA would also become the employer of at least a thousand of Local 1994’s bargaining unit members currently employed by the Montgomery County Government.

“And we don’t know what [splitting this agency off] will mean,” said Renne. “Our members deserve to have a say in any change in their employer.”

Local 1994 agrees that the County needs new sources of revenue for transportation projects and for improving the transportation system’s current infrastructure, “but, we don’t need another bureaucracy,” said Renne.

“The plan got a wary reception … from council members, concerned about ceding control and accountability for a major public works project,” said a January Washington Post article. “They were also irked that they received little notice from Leggett before the measure was introduced in Annapolis on Jan. 23. Filing of the bill touched off a small firestorm among neighborhood activists.”

In June, the County formed an ITA task force to study the issue and bring the Union, the public and the Council together into talks about the agency. The Task Force is holding public forums on the issue.

Local 1994 has hired a consultant who has experience with the establishment of public-private partnerships (P3s) like the ITA. The consultant is examining the ITA legislation and other plans put out by the County Executive’s office to determine how Local 1994 members will be affected by the new agency.

“Moving forward, we’ll be working with experts and our lawyers to determine how we frame our feelings on the ITA,” said Local 1994 President Gino Renne. “The first rule should be that the Agency ‘do no harm’ to our existing members. The second should be that any changes to mass transit should benefit the end users more than it lines the pockets of developers.”

The ITA legislation will likely move forward in the next legislative session.
The Department of Liquor Control

In Pennsylvania, a local newspaper put it best - You can’t sell an asset twice, “Once you sell it, it’s gone.” But still, there are Montgomery County Councilmembers who are still trying to sell off the Department of Liquor Control and force 350 members of Local 1994 into the unemployment line.

Why? Because, according to the Office of Legislative Oversight, the Department has problems with distribution and flexibility. Councilmember Roger Berliner made the case in a letter to the editor of the Gazette claiming that “Our restaurants complain of poor service and poor choice; microbreweries hesitate to locate here; and young and old spend entertainment dollars elsewhere that could be spent at home.”

But the OLO report is flawed. It was based on a survey of half of the 1,000 liquor licensees in the County. Of the nearly 500 surveys sent out, only one quarter responded. Those responses are what supposedly shaped the OLO’s report. The lack of responses contradicts Berliner’s claim that there are strong feelings about changing the current control system. Strong feelings would certainly garner a higher response rate.

OLO did not even survey retail customers – the true stakeholder who would be most impacted by any changes to the DLC. In an informal conversation about the wants of younger residents of Montgomery County, residents said that primary issues for them in the County was lack of affordable housing and lack of reliable public transit. Liquor control issues weren’t even mentioned.

The OLO’s report is most certainly written from a skewed perspective, with many of its citations coming from George Mason’s Mercatus Center, a Koch brothers-funded think tank, and from the Commonwealth Foundation, a group that actively promotes deregulation, and who, as pointed out by Timothy Firestone, Montgomery County’s Chief Administrative Officer, in his response to the report, is not an alcohol research group. Both groups have created reports on privatization at the behest of their wealthy donors, who want to deregulate industry primarily to line their pockets. The use of these sources, the lack of respondents, the thin evidence in many of the sections calls into question the credibility of the report. Further, the OLO touts Washington State’s privatization as a success, but media reports and many other studies show the opposite to be true.

Sharon Frost, the outgoing Liquor Control Board Chair in Washington, said the privatization of the state’s liquor sales is “the dumbest thing we ever did in our state.” And she oversaw the legalization of marijuana in the state. She points to higher prices and increased shoplifting of alcohol, much of which is done by minors. A study by the Joint House Committees on Early Learning and Public Safety in the Washington State Legislature backs up her claim, noting “dramatic increases in alcohol thefts reported by multiple departments from 5 in 7.5 years to 83 in 10 months, many by juveniles.” Still public Oregon, in contrast, had a theft rate of .003% in the past year.

While Washington State has enjoyed an initial windfall from the sale of the state’s liquor assets, they are no longer reaping those same benefits. Sales have slowed, taxes have had to increase to make up for lost revenue and the predictions of lower prices have not come to fruition.

Any immediate economic influx realized from privatization will be offset by increased consumption, increased costs from the resulting harm (hospital visits, drunk driving arrests, and other public health issues), and reduced revenues over time. In short, the proponents of privatization seek to put their own financial self-interests before that of the public’s physical wellbeing and our economic stability.

Unbiased reports from Washington State’s deregulated system when compared to Oregon’s control system show that just two years after liquor was privatized in Washington, liquor prices are the highest in the nation.

After deregulation, major retailers like Costco and others who pushed for deregulation are able to enjoy the benefits of it – being able to buy in bulk and undercut their competitors’ prices – while small, niche liquor stores are already disappearing. Before deregulation, many of those who stood ready to run the smaller liquor stores believed that deregulation would bring them lower prices than the state’s monopoly was able to, but because they had less purchasing clout, distributors won’t discount their prices. Yet another report pointed out that consumers thought they were going to get more selection at a cheaper price, but they were wrong as well.

Montgomery County’s liquor sales provide $30-40 million in revenue that is transferred to the general fund. Montgomery County Departments outside of DLC use those revenues to bolster their budgets and ask for less from county taxpayers. Once that is lost, it’s lost – You can’t sell an asset twice.

In addition, four out of the five of the OLO’s recommendations would cost Local 1994 members’ jobs – full privatization leaving 350 members without their decent, union wage jobs. Few liquor stores that take over, no matter how large or small are going to offer commensurate wages and benefits.
Local 1994 Staff Participating in LLS’s ‘Light the Night’

Local 1994 staff members Lisa Blackwell and Shaconda Monk, along with Local 1994 President Gino Renne and other staff, are going to “Light the Night” in the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society’s annual fundraiser in October. The fundraiser will be held at the Rockville Town Center on October 10.

The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society’s Light The Night® Walk funds research to find cures and ensure access to treatments for all blood cancer patients. It brings together families and communities to honor blood cancer survivors and those who lost their battles with the diseases.

Nearly 200 communities participate in Light the Night Walks across North America. Funds raised through The Light The Night Walk:

- Fund breakthrough therapies for blood cancer patients.
- Provide Free educational materials, support programs and events.
- Power advocacy to ensure access to treatments.
- Help provide personalized assistance through our Information Resource Center.

The UFCW International is a partner with the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society and helped raise over $250 thousand last year alone to help the organization in their efforts to eradicate blood cancers. Over the years, UFCW has contributed over $60 million to LLS.

To join the team or contribute to Local 1994’s fundraising efforts, visit http://pages.lightthenight.org/nca/Montcomd15/ufcwlocal1994mcgeo

Legislation on MGM Video Lottery Revenue to benefit PGCMLS

Up to $25 million in annual revenue generated by the new MGM National Harbor Casino’s video lottery may be allocated to PGCMLS, Prince George’s County public schools and the Prince George’s County Community College, thanks to legislation presented by the County Council in May.

“We’re excited that PGCMLS was included specifically in this legislation.”
—Joe Dickson

“During the referendum debate on bringing gaming to the County, our residents were told that this new project would generate revenue, in large part, for education. This legislation makes the County Government fiscally accountable for that commitment,” said County Council Chair Mel Franklin, the sponsor of the legislation.

“We’re excited that PGCMLS was included specifically in this legislation,” said Joe Dickson, UFCW Local 1994 Executive Board Member and an employee with the library system. “This revenue could definitely go a long way to improving some of the library system’s offerings.”
Union Challenges Contracting at RideOn

Local 1994 has challenged Montgomery County on its contracting practices at RideOn for its bus cleaning operations. An Unfair Labor Practice charge points out that the County is undermining Local 1994 in violation of the Collective Bargaining Agreement.

Fleet Wash has been contracted to clean buses at three RideOn locations. The County contracted out the work in order to save money, but then placed the contractors in the same workplace as County employees who receive better wages and benefits. They share break rooms. They share tools. They even share County supervisors, and are supervised by some MCGEO-represented employees.

The bus cleaner contractors even perform some of the same duties that are performed by the MCGEO member and County employee mechanics that work on the lot, such as changing tires and headlights.

Fleet Wash employees have been instructed not to interact with Local 1994 representatives.

“This sends an unmistakable message to the employees that MCGEO represents and that message undoubtedly undermines the Union in the eyes of its members,” reads the ULP.

Additionally, these contractors are being forced to work off the books on occasion, which is wage theft, uncovered under the Federal Fair Labor Standards Act. By forcing them to work under the table, the contractor can continue to undermine the County’s contracting policy, as well as steal from his employees. These 40 Fleet Wash employees are entitled to be made whole.

“The contractor employees serve as a stark and unmistakable reminder to MCGEO-represented employees that their jobs, too, may be contracted out,” continues the grievance. “And the existence of these contractor employees—under these particular circumstances—undermines MCGEO in the eyes of its members by serving as such a reminder and by making MCGEO look powerless or weak to its members.”

A hearing on the ULP is pending.

If you know of a wage and hour violation, in your workplace or elsewhere, call the union offices, we will help file an FLSA complaint. We are also looking at similar types of violations at DLC.

Volunteer as an Election Worker

- Earn up to $180 for serving
- Sign-up today online at www.777vote.org
- Click Election Judge then click Application/Questionnaire
- Training available mornings, evenings, and weekends
- Individuals with bilingual skills, especially Spanish, encouraged to apply
- Make sure you are registered to vote when you sign-up

- You can submit a voter registration form at the age of 16 in Maryland
- 25 Student Service Learning hours available for Montgomery County high school students
  Must be 17 years old by April 26, 2016 or November 8, 2016 to serve

Questions? Call the Montgomery County Board of Elections at 240-777-8533
Lobbying is not a dirty word and it’s a completely necessary activity to keep our budgets in tact. Our members’ raises depend on lobbying, our members’ benefits depend on lobbying and, unfortunately, even our members’ jobs nowadays depend on lobbying.

Since March 2015, we lobbied the Prince George’s County Council to protect the FY16 PGCMLS budget. Our conversations with the PG County councilmembers were productive as our message was rather simple but measured:

- “We are urging you to keep funding for the Prince Georges County Memorial Library System at its current levels.”
- “The library system’s funding makes up less than one percent of the County budget. We’ve made great strides in moving our libraries forward since economic recovery began. The plans to open new branches show the citizens of Prince Georges County how important a strong library system is to our community. We must keep their trust.”
- “Our libraries can’t effectively serve the community if you were to roll back its current funding levels.”
- “Libraries are vital to the education system. Our young people use the libraries to finish their schoolwork. Mothers and fathers bring their toddlers and preschoolers to our branches to foster an early love of learning. Our elderly visit us to engage their minds.”
- “PGCMLS cannot provide the county with these services if they must sustain more cuts. Please keep PGCMLS funding, don’t cut it.”

Revenue shortfalls and a structural deficit in the County did not make our job easy. The FY16 budget also called for budget reductions, furloughs and layoffs.

But at the end of May, the Council adopted the FY16 PGCMLS budget that maintains its current levels, does not force PGCMLS to place 2% of their operating budgets into a reserve for a contingency fund; and will allow FY16 wage package to move forward.

Additionally, the Council has introduced legislation that would award funds from the MGM Casino’s “Video Lotteries” to PGCMLS, along with Prince George’s County Public Schools and Prince George’s County Community College.

This is a significant development regarding future funding for the library system. Our lobbying, along with help from our ally Council Chair Mel Franklin, definitely brought us to this positive conclusion.

You have given the political structure a face to the libraries. Vice President Joe Dickson and Lead Shop Steward Steve Valentich both advocated tirelessly on your behalf during this difficult budget cycle to make certain that the FY16 PGCMLS budget and our members would be protected.

In this past year, our members put in countless hours lobbying their delegates, councilmembers and city councils on behalf of our union. We saw testimony delivered by Board member Bob Lehman and Shop Steward Mike Trigiani to the state legislature against changes to the Law Enforcement Officers Bill of Rights. We saw our Cumberland Bargaining Unit members show up with testimony at City Council meetings. We have seen members James Moody and Jerry Godwin visit Montgomery County Leaders to fight against privatization of the Department of Economic Development.

The truth is, lobbying is more effective when the Councilmembers, the delegates and other leaders see real people, the people who are going to be affected by whatever changes could be happening, doing the lobbying. Sure, when you think about lobbying, it could be associated with a dirty word, especially when you think about slick Washington lobbyists, but the best lobbyists are you, the regular person, talking to your representatives and the wins we’ve secured at PGCMLS and elsewhere prove that. Thank you.

Montgomery County Passes Landmark Paid Sick Leave Bill

At the end of June, the Montgomery County Council approved one of the best paid sick leave bills in the country, with seven paid sick days for employers with five or more workers, and four days paid, three days unpaid for employers with less than five employees.

“Assuring that workers have the basic right to care for their health and the health of their family members without the worry of losing pay has a profound impact on the financial wellbeing of families,” said Local 1994 President Gino Renne. “Regrettably, the United States is the only country among 22 developed nations that doesn’t guarantee the right to paid leave if someone falls ill or has to care for a sick family member.”

Renne pointed out that 41 million people in this country don’t have access to paid sick leave, calling it “a very shameful reality of the American workplace.”

“Passage of this bill is a trend that I hope escalates.”

Local 1994 members and staff joined lobbying efforts of other organizations to promote passage of this legislation.
Cumberland Police Officers Win Contentious Battle to Retain Local 1994; Gain New Three Year Contract

Forty-three police officers in Cumberland City were about to lose their union representation because of the whim of the city’s mayor and council, a majority of whom didn’t like Local 1994’s vigorous representation of the officers. Because of the officers’ strong resolve, and a strategic campaign to fight back, the Officers prevailed as the City agreed to extend their union representation.

In February 2015, Cumberland City sent a letter to the Union’s office advising that it would not recognize Local 1994 as the police officers’ representative after June 30, 2015. The City Administrator and the Chief of Police said in a Times-News article that the Officers’ were free to select any other union to represent them. According to the Chief, Mayor Grim and some members of the City Council were annoyed that officers had endorsed candidates for City Council in the last election and that they had actively campaigned on behalf of the candidates.

Grim claimed that Local 1994 was asking for too much during negotiations, saying in an interview that “they [Local 1994] always want more. We have a bare bones budget but they want to make significant demands.”

Officers countered that claim, noting that they agreed through the union to make changes to their shifts to reduce overtime and save money. They also agreed to defer raises until the City could afford them. Finally, the union agreed to make changes to the officers’ health insurance, which would have created significant savings for the City.

Despite these efforts, the City Administrator characterized the relationship between the City and the Union as “rocky” and would terminate their affiliation effective July 1.

Officers fought back. At a City Council meeting, more than half of the represented police officers, many with their wives and children showed up wearing gold UFCW T-shirts and filled council chambers at City Hall for the City Council meeting. Cpl. Tony Tringler, a Local 1994 steward, presented a petition to the Mayor and City Council with 100 percent of the represented officers’ signatures, urging them to change their minds.

“They [Local 1994] have been there for us when we needed them. Every time we’ve asked them to do something for us they’ve done it. They have our back,” said Tringler in a Times-News interview after the meeting.

The Mayor and City Council remained unmoved.

It wasn’t until after an intense meeting at the eleventh hour with the Chief and the City Administrator, who then requested an emergency executive session that the Mayor and City Council realized the officers were resolute in their desire to remain Local 1994 members.

The City rescinded their February communication to the Union and agreed to work collaboratively with the Union to strengthen their relationship. The City and the Union have agreed to a new three-year collective bargaining agreement effective July 1, 2015 thru June 30, 2018.

Cumberland City Police Reach Tentative Agreement

With the assistance of a Federal Mediator, Cumberland City Police Officers have reached a tentative agreement with their employer after three very long weeks of negotiations.

The Cumberland City Police bargaining team and membership have displayed remarkable solidarity in the face of serious challenges, past and future.

Highlights of the agreement include:

- A three-year agreement with reopeners for economics for year two and three
- A modest cost of living adjustment along with a cash bonus
- Increases in amounts for shift differential, boot allowance, field training officer pay, and court time.
- Established a uniform laundering allowance which provides the officers to have their issued uniforms cleaned at the employers expense
- Established a physical fitness incentive bonus, and;
- Increased opportunities to sell back un-used sick leave.

The Cumberland City Police primary bargaining team members are Tony Tringler, JW Yarnall, Eric Bonner and Jeremy Hedrick. The Cumberland City Police alternate bargaining team members are Josh Keckley, John Kaylor and Barry Fickes.
Secretary-Treasurer’s Report

By Yvette Cuffie, Secretary-Treasurer

In what has become an all too familiar scene, we watched as the city of Baltimore erupted in violent protests in late April after the death of 25-year old Freddie Grey from injuries sustained while in police custody.

Rather than focus on years of oppression that caused the community to erupt in protest, the media relied on stereotypes about the black community. National news outlets ran stories that disparaged the community rather than focusing on the fact that all lives matter.

Not just the health of Baltimore, but also the health of all communities is being affected by tragedies like these. Rather than look at the root cause of this incident, and the dozens of others recorded in similar cities across the country, the protesters in Baltimore were simply labeled “thugs.”

But what is the real problem? One of the root causes is a form of policing call “broken windows.”

Broken windows policing, which gained popularity in the 1990s in New York City, follows the theory that if a window in a building is broken and left unrepaired, all the rest of the windows will soon be broken. That theory was the brainchild of two academics, James Wilson of Harvard and George Kelling of Rutgers who argued that disorder and crime were “inextricably linked” and that fixing the broken windows would fix crime.

When New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani named Bill Bratton police commissioner in 1994, the two men adopted the Broken Windows approach to policing along with the new ideas of “zero tolerance” and “stop-and-frisk.” Soon after, when the crime rate in New York was announced to be down, other cities across the country began to employ those ideas. But, when Wilson and Kelling wrote about broken windows in 1982, they asked the seminal question “How do we ensure, in short, that the police do not become the agents of neighborhood bigotry?” And professed that they could not offer a “wholly satisfactory answer to this important question.”

Under broken windows policies, neighborhoods like West Baltimore disproportionately receive attention from police.

As the great civil rights activist and American sociologist W.E.B. Du Bois said, a system cannot fail those it was never meant to protect.” Under policies like “stop-and-frisk,” and “broken windows” officers were told to arrest people for pretty much everything, from jaywalking and open containers to prostitution and drug crimes. Officers were tasked with arresting people for nuisance and low-level crimes in an effort to “prevent more serious criminal activity.”

In 2004, the National Academy of Sciences reported that “research does not support” broken windows. And that the declining crime rate in areas where that type of policing was employed was more likely attributable to the ebb of the 1980s crack epidemic, population shifts, focus on serious specific problems, and community policing that promoted, according to the academy, “direct involvement of police and citizens.”

There are a lot of other reasons that the violence erupted in Baltimore, but this way of policing can shoulder part of the blame. In Baltimore, and around the country, we need to abandon this flawed theory.

Our police officers are public servants. They got into the profession because of a desire to serve and protect, not to harass a particular set of residents or hurt those in their community. Forcing failed policies on these officers doesn’t allow them to do the job they signed up for. We need to change these policies. We need to allow our police officers to once again be in the community as public servants. We need to rebuild the trust that has been so immeasurably broken. We need to provide our officers, our public servants with the tools and materials necessary to fix real broken windows, not imaginary ones. At the heart of public service is the desire to help, the desire to build up communities, not tear them down. It is time for federal, state and local governments to rethink their policies. It is time to give all people a voice, regardless of their geographical residence, race, gender or ethnicity. All lives matter, not just the privileged few.
Live Well

- Live Well is the Montgomery County Joint Labor Management employee wellness Program.
- Monthly programs & special events
- Free fitness classes like Zumba, Yoga, Boot Camp & more!
- Wellness Webinars and Workshops
- Coming soon...Virgin Pulse!

Visit the Live Well website: www.tinyurl.com/mcgwell
Many Local 1994 members are required to do long stretches of outdoor work and in the summer that can be dangerous. The human body can sometimes have trouble maintaining normal temperatures. If you don’t take steps to protect yourself, you can succumb to heat-related illness with dangerous consequences.

“Every Local 1994 collective bargaining agreement has language to protect members’ safety and health,” said Local 1994 Field Services Coordinator Josh Ardison. “If you feel you are being asked to work unsafely, like in high heat without adequate access to water or breaks, you should call your union representative.”

If you are in a high heat environment, indoors or out, it is important to understand what heat stress is, and how to prevent it.

Factors that increase heat-related illness risks to workers:
- High temperature and humidity
- Direct sun exposure (with no shade)
- Indoor exposure to other sources of radiant heat (ovens, furnaces)
- Limited air movement (no breeze)
- Low fluid consumption
- Physical exertion
- Heavy personal protective clothing and equipment
- Poor physical condition or health problems
- Some medications, for example, different kinds of blood pressure pills or antihistamines
- Pregnancy
- Lack of recent exposure to hot working conditions
- Previous heat-related illness
- Advanced age (65+)

Heat stress is an illness that results from too much heat exposure. This illness may include heat exhaustion, heat cramps, or even heat stroke, which can be fatal.

Symptoms of heat exhaustion include headache, nausea, dizziness, weakness, irritability, thirst, heavy sweating, elevated body temperature, and decreased urine output.

If a worker shows signs of possible heat-related illness you should cool the worker with cold compresses to the head, neck and face or have the worker wash his or her head, face and neck with cold water. Call 911 and stay with the person until help arrives. Encourage the worker to take frequent sips of cool water.

WATER.

REST.

SHADE.