



North Texas Association of Public Employees Steelworkers Local 9479

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Ntape - Steelworkers
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Special Interest Articles:

- Why join a union?
- Pension Problems looming!
- Who is running for City Council, and how does it affect me?
- What has the National Organization done for us lately?
- Already a member, but don't receive any mail from us?

Do you belong to the Steelworkers? You do if your Pay stub says NT Pub E



Privatization

As some of you are aware privatization is again being considered for several city departments. This tired old plan is going to be dusted off and sold to the citizens as a cost saving measure. Been there, done that, watched the pink slips being handed out.

Privatization has been promoted many times as the way to improve efficiency and save money. But as we saw in sanitation, the water department and other areas, it never works like it is suppose to. Can you say pugmill? Convention center?

The city always ends up getting hosed on these deals. Newsflash! The companies who take these contracts are in it for the money. They will do the absolute minimum required to fulfill the contract (or less) and they will only do it as long as it remains profitable.

Many times the bids are 'low balled' so they can secure the contract. On some, they save money on maintenance, on others it is a systematic or rolling service skip. Some vendors will take the contract and bail the instant costs go up and they decide there is not enough money in the contract to make it worth their while. Others leave when the facility they have taken over starts failing due to lack of basic maintenance. This leaves the city scratching, scrambling and spending like crazy to get the personnel and equipment necessary to fulfill these city functions... Or worse, having to go back out and renegotiate the contract with the bidders knowing that we have no equipment or personnel and are now at their mercy. This is about the time that the TRUE costs of privatization become evident.

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Remember UNITED WE NEGOTIATE, DIVIDED WE BEG

Sick Time Changes

Lots of employees want to know is the sick time grab still possible? The answer to that would be a big yes. For reasons unknown, certain parties still persist in flogging this dead horse of an issue. Why you ask. Who can say for sure. Political gain? Personal satisfaction? No way of being sure about the why of the situation. It is certainly not about the money.

Not about the money? Nope. As many of you know the sick time accumulation was put into place to do several things. Chief among them was to save the city money. Encouraging people to not use their sick time saves money in several ways. Reduced overtime for positions which must be covered by law or necessity and reduced pay out of short term disability are just two of the big reasons.

Of course anyone watching the evening news is not going to know that this issue is not about the money. We have all seen *those* reports. Of course the reports that the general public has never seen are the ones that show how much accumulation sick time is forfeited every time someone cashes out their sick time at retirement.

According to Human resources, the amount of time forfeited is more than the amount of the payouts. Amazingly enough they never hear about the amount of money the city saves every year in short term disability payments since very few employees need to use it due to their accumulated sick time.

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Grievance Update - Roy Robinson from the International has been very successful in working grievances for us. He currently has eighteen grievances and three comp cases working. He has already successfully cleared thirteen grievances and had two terminations over turned. Grievance Chair Patricia Newland has taken on her first grievance and won it, as well as successfully negotiated several contested transfer cases.



Dues are less than \$5.00 a week; most of us spend more than that at the candy machine. Why not invest it in our future.



The AFL-CIO has done more good for more people than any group in America in its legislative efforts. It doesn't just try to do something about wages and hours for its own people. No group in the country works harder in the interests of everyone. - President Lyndon Johnson, 1965

Frequently Asked Questions about joining the Steelworkers

Why should I join the Steelworkers? - Many of your fellow employees, tired of having changes made without any consideration of their needs, have joined together so that we can have a voice before city council. No one person can affect the change we need, but many people together can work together to get our concerns noticed, together we have a voice that can be heard, together we can make a change. And as with any endeavor of this nature, the more people that join together, the faster the change can be.

Hey, I joined a union, how do I know if it was the Steelworkers? - Look on your pay stub, if you have a deduction labeled NT Pub E, then you are a member of the North Texas Association of Public Employees - Steel Workers Local 9479. The United Steel Workers of America is one of the largest labor organizations in the United States.

How much does it cost to join the Steelworkers? - It is very inexpensive. The maximum it can be is \$5.00 a week, and depending on income, lots of people contribute less. The dues structure is spelled out in the bylaws here <http://www.cityofdallasemployees.com> look under bylaws

How come the dues are not listed on the enrollment card? - This card was put together and approved by the City Attorney's office. And only the stuff that they approved could be put on it prior to printing. So that was not allowed on the card. You would have liked the dues structure on the card, the City Controllers office wanted the employee number and not the social security number on it, and the Steelworkers would have liked a space for email addresses on them. But we were required to print the card that they approved. We have since been able to use a stamp to slip in the employee number and the email address at the edge of the card, since they do not change the size or overall makeup of the approved card design.

My pay stub says NT Pub E but I never received my membership card, or any mail from the Steelworkers. Why? - For some reason we have a bad or incomplete address for you on your card. Please contact us with the new or correct info. This mailing was sent using a different list.

Well I belong to another association, and I like them, but I want to be in Steelworkers. Can I belong to more than one association? - Sure you can. Lots of the police and fire personnel belong to their main association and also belong to a smaller one too.

But I will get the same benefits as the others whether I am in the Association or not! - True, when the fight against future pay cuts is fought, there will be no distinction between protecting the pay of Steelworker members and the non-members. But think on this, last year we successfully fought a pay cut, but saw our SIP slashed to almost nothing... if we had all been united, could that loss have been avoided? Also when the economy improves and the next cost of living is put into place you will get AN increase. But is it sufficient? Would you get more if all the civilian employees were in the Steelworkers Association? Just think what could be done with a higher membership total. The City would respect you, and your combined voice, just that much more.

Does it really matter if I join? - YES! It is only through a collective voice in the workplace that civilian employees can have a real impact. Non-members are going to be DEPENDING on members to fight against future cuts or for increases. Is that fair? Not really. It's like expecting your co-worker to fill up your gas tank once a month. Skeptical about the benefits of Association membership? Look at all the stuff that the Dallas Police Association has been able to get for it's members. They are a prime example of the benefits of having a large association working towards the long haul on issues that concern them.

Are your retirement benefits really protected? Apparently not

Don't take your retirement benefits for granted.

Most city employees go to work each day assuming that they have a retirement they can bank on. City employees and other Texas public employees are dedicated to serving their communities and we know that an important part of our compensation for our years of public service is a secure pension when we retire. Right?

Not necessarily. In Texas, that's not a promise.

Texas public employees, retirees, and survivors can have their retirement benefits reduced or eliminated at any time by the Texas Legislature or City government. Benefits can be cut even though we contribute part of our wages and in spite of the fact that the Texas Constitution requires retirement systems to place pension assets in a trust for their employees. Pension benefits for City of Dallas employees were reduced during the Great Depression and that was upheld by the courts in the "City of Dallas verses Trammel" case. It has happened in other areas of Texas as recently as 1969, 1992 and 1996. **It can happen in Dallas again.**

Currently there is a bill (Joint House Resolution 54 and Joint Senate Resolution 38) being presented to the Pensions and Investments Committee of the House of Representatives to amend the state constitution to guarantee that once earned, public pension benefits cannot be reduced. The bill is receiving unanimous approval and has been sent to the full house for a vote. A major obstacle at this time appears to be in the Senate State Affairs Committee.

If this bill does not get out of this committee it will not be voted on by your senator. So your

input as well as the input of other employees around the state will be necessary to get this bill out of committee and pass this legislation.

Do not delay in contacting your senator and state representative to seek their support, a vote will be taken prior to June 2, 2003.

In addition, contact the members of the Senate State Affairs Committee, Who are:

- The Honorable Bill Ratliff
- The Honorable Todd Staples
- The Honorable Kenneth Armbrister
- The Honorable Robert Duncan
- The Honorable Rodney Ellis
- The Honorable Troy Fraser
- The Honorable Chris Harris
- The Honorable Frank Madina
- The Honorable Jane Nelson

All of these Senators can be contacted at the following address:

P.O. Box 12068
 Capitol Station
 Austin, Texas 78711

To identify your representative and senator go to the internet and look up the website: www.house.state.tx.us, click on the "members" icon and look on the right side of the webpage. You will find a box to enter your home address, which will allow you to identify your representatives. **Get involved, please write your senator and state representative in Austin seeking their support. Our Steelworker International representatives have working on our behalf to urge the Senate and Congress to pass this bill, you can help by getting involved now!**



The power of a movement lies in the fact that it can indeed change the habits of people. This change is not the result of force but of dedication, of moral persuasion. - Steve Biko (1946-77), South African political leader.



Hear this - Changes made to Civil Services Protections on the federal level in the name of nation security can very easily affect you too.

"In our glorious fight for civil rights, we must guard against being fooled by false slogans, as 'right-to-work.' It provides no 'rights' and no 'works.' Its purpose is to destroy labor unions and the freedom of collective bargaining... We demand this fraud be stopped. -- Martin Luther King Jr.

Dallas City Retired Employees Association Questions the Council Candidates http://www.dcrea.org/responses_to_questions_for_candi.htm



North Texas
Association
of Public
Employees
Steelworkers
Local 9479

Election Results
April 6th 2003

President
Michealle Frey

Vice President
Ervin Horn

Finance Secr.
Frantz Orozco

Recording Secr.
Linda Perez

Greivance
Pat Newland

Treasurer
Johnny Sudbury

Trustees
L.D. Baker
Pat Newland
Judy Williams

Guard
Jim Scantlen
Greg Cook



Privatization continued from page 1

But don't worry. The people that originally pushed the privatization program have already reaped their political hay and moved on to bigger or more profitable things. Which is good because otherwise they would have to explain all the tricky bookkeeping and hidden costs that are now coming to light, or why it is going to take a fortune to get necessary services restored.

The bottom line is that many city services are not an optional thing. We need people purifying water, fixing streets and picking up trash no matter what happens. And unlike private vendors, the city does not have the luxury of walking away from something when it becomes more costly.

One last thing to consider is the multi-functional nature of most departments. Unlike private vendors our departments have numerous duties during emergency situations. One example is the river levee groundkeepers that also have to know what to do to keep the city safe in a flood situation. Try getting your average lawn maintenance company to do that during a high water incident.

City employees need to do a better job of educating the citizens on the many facets and hazards of the jobs we do for them. Of course it would be nice if some of this stuff was taken into consideration once in a while by management and council... but we can work on that now can't we.

The Dallas Central Labor Council is considering endorsing the following candidates for Dallas City Council:

- Place 2 - John Loza
- Place 3 - Ed Oakley
- Place 4 - Maxine Thornton-Reese
- Place 5 - Don Hill (no opponent)
- Place 6 - Steve Salazar
- Place 7 - Leo Chaney
- Place 8 - James Fantroy (no opponent)
- Place 9 - Roxan Staff
- Place 12 - Sandy Greyson
- Place 14 - Veletta Forsythe Lill

The Dallas Central Labor council was one of the movers behind the Living Wage initiative that helped raise the City starting wage to \$10.00 per hour.

Sick continued from page 1

The problem with our sick time rules is a lack of understanding on the part of the citizens and the media of what the program accomplishes and why it was set up. This is exasperated when we have bad labor conditions and the people who have been eligible to retire for several years decide to all go before things get any worse. We lose tons of long term experienced employees and sick time payout amount balloons. Human Resources tells us a similar thing happened in the early 1980's during all the downsizing that took place then.

The next thing you know we have people going around town screaming about people getting sick pay when they aren't sick, which wasn't true and without ever mentioning the money that has been saved over the years or the money saved with forfeited sick time.

Right now, the idea that does not ever seem to die is to 'grandfather' the current sick time accumulation for current employees and to create a second class of employees with less benefits. This is not being considered to accommodate or placate the employees with accumulated sick time. It is being considered because of the almost certain deluge of lawsuits that would follow if they tried to take away the earned accumulated sick time.

So this is good right? We get to keep our time. No, in the long run this bad. The problem is that with the change in SIP (new hires do not get it) and changes being considered like this, we are in very real danger of creating a group of second class employees. This is not fair to them, and it certainly is not without an element of risk to us.

Are you really looking forward to working with a group of 'new hires' that are disgruntled at the inequality between their benefits and ours? And a few years down the line, when you try to explain to your 'new hire' boss why you need six weeks of your accumulated sick leave for a major surgery what kind of reception do you think you will get? Since they have no voice until hired, perhaps we need to stick up for the new hires. we WILL have to work with them.

Appeal to City Council to immediately schedule charter changes to ensure free speech for all Civilian Employees

Or what has the International done for me lately?

Well they have sent us Michael Stanley, Special Assistant to the International President of the United Steelworkers of America, he has been working very hard to interface with us and the council and various other Labor organizations in the area.

He is also working with us to try and get changes to the City Charter made so that civilian employees can have the same free speech rights as the city council and the uniformed employees. We encourage all employees to contact the city council and request that this matter be placed on the next charter ballot. Ask them to do this BEFORE the elections, to insure that we are not penalized at the next one.

The following is a text of his address to the city council on March 5th

On behalf of the North Texas Association of Public Employees- an affiliate of the United Steelworkers of America Local # 9479 (NTAPE-USWA), we are hereby appealing to the Dallas City Council to fully embrace and advocate the appropriate changes to the City Charter which would allow all City / Civilian Employees the right to exercise their first amendment rights of free speech. It must be emphasized that in its present form, the City Charter expressly prohibits equal and fair treatment to all city employees.

The current charter provisions of chapter XVI section 16 pages 66 & 67 outlines certain prohibitions regarding the election of City Council Members. Public endorsement and active support for candidates should apply equally to all city employees who wish to engage in the political process of participatory city government. With every city employee having access to the same free flow of facts, ideas, opinions and beliefs, democracy will surely flourish and enrich our ability to govern without fear of reprisal or intimidation.

By now, each of you should have copies of the relevant charter provisions along with the ballot format of proposition # 11 approved by the voters on August 12, 1989- which amended the charter as follows:

(d) " Notwithstanding any conflict with Subsections (b) and (c) of this section, a sworn employee of the fire department or the police department may engage in political activities to the extent permitted by state law."

Unfortunately, this provision change failed to include all city civilian employees.

Tried and tested citizens have clearly demonstrated their ability to make the best informed decision on any issue, large or small, if they are permitted to live in an environment of unrestricted information by offering the widest range of potential input. To stifle the free dissemination of opinions and information may result in selective secrecy and sometimes-widespread fear.

The ability to fully engage the public during the election process adds richness to our information environment and allows us to make the best informed decisions about city matters of public interest.

The proper venue to make the charter reflect moral clarity rests with the city council officials. Your willingness to act promptly prohibits censorship from being used as a blunt instrument of unwarranted control.

Every city employee gives their individual time and talent each day to insure the overall delivery of quality service to the public is met. This collective loyalty should not be rewarded by the denial of public activity in the city election process.

The City Council can help sustain equality for all city employees by taking the immediate and necessary steps to change the City Charter. This "act of good faith" will make our society stronger while remembering the rights of others.



Will the North Texas Association of Public Employees be endorsing any one for this Election?

No. Due to current City Charter Rules, the **Civilian Employee Associations** are not allowed to give endorsements in any municipal election. These rules also prohibited the City Council and Mayor from giving endorsements. Fortunately for Council, since they make the rules, they can also change them, which they did on March 5th.

Therefore, we will only be providing information about various candidates, including links and endorsements from other organizations and media sources.

Contact information for all the candidates is on the City Secr.'s page. Please decide who you wish to vote for and make arrangements to assist in their election campaign. <http://www.ci.dallas.tx.us/cso/candidates.htm>



Workers Memorial Day

On April 28, the unions of the AFL-CIO observe Workers Memorial Day to remember those who have suffered and died on the job. As we remember workers who have died in workplace catastrophes, suffered diseases due to exposure to toxic substances or been injured because of dangerous conditions, we rededicate ourselves to the fight for safe workplaces. This year the District 12 Memorial will take place in Tyler Texas. Please see the accompanying story on this page.



If you live in the City of Dallas you may want to take advantage of the opportunity to do early voting **April 16th** at City Hall. Voting starts at noon on the Plaza, with fun and free food to follow! Your vote is your Voice!

Smith County Public Employees United Steelworkers of America AFL/CIO,CLC Local 9484

Our fellow union members in Smith County, Tyler, Texas, County Seat, are making great strides forward. They received their Charter from the United Steelworkers late last year and have since been recognized by the County Commissioners and granted dues check-off. The new Local Union Officials have several meetings with the Commissioners Court and both sides have shown a willingness to work together towards solving problems concerning wages, benefits and working conditions.

Also, and very important, the Local Union has been well received within the Community. Much of this can be attributed to two other United Steelworker Local Unions, located in the City of Tyler. The members, of those two Local Unions, have a great history of being active in the Community and also the County.

This report is not to indicate, that there are not problems, which will have to be addressed, but to let you know we have another group of Public Employees who are also working to improve their members quality of life. Be reminded we also have Local Municipal Unions established in Corpus and Laredo and organizing campaigns are proceeding in other areas, including our own Dallas County. The bigger our numbers become, the closer we come to being an influence in Austin and acquiring the laws we need to protect our FUTURES.

Contributors - Many thanks to the contributors of articles for this first issue.

Mike Stanley, Jerry Storm, Michealle Frey, Johnny Sudbury, Kathy James, Frantz Orozco and Linda Perez.

If you would like to contribute an article for the next one, please email Newsletter@cityofdallasemployees.com

Membership Meetings take place on the Second Tuesday of each month at 6:00 p.m. at 500 South Ervay Suite 112A. Please join us there

Former City Employee in Council Race

Greg Holliday has contacted us with information about his election bid for Dallas City Council Place 10.

While NTAPE doesn't offer political endorsements at this time, Mr. Holliday has shared information with us as to why he thinks he would be the best choice to represent District 10 and City employees. As a Dallas Police officer for 31 years, he knows what we all go through. Mr. Holliday is confident he can look out for the best interests of the City of Dallas, District 10 residents, and the City employees, police, fire and civilian.

Mr. Holliday's campaign, like many of the others is looking for volunteers to work phone banks on April 16,17 and May 2nd, as well working the polling areas on May 3rd. You can reach him at 927-783-4473 if you would like to help. For other candidate contact numbers see the Dallas City Secretary's web.

District 12 Workers Memorial Day Observance Saturday April 26th

Local 746L is hosting this years Workers Memorial Day Observance in Tyler Texas. All Dallas Ntape - Steelworkers Association members are welcome to attend with their families.

The event starts at 10:00 a.m. with a reading of the names of the workers who have been killed or disabled while on the job this year. Then there will be remarks from Congressman Max A. Sandlin and from several officers from the international office of the USWA.

The focus will then switch from remembrance of the losses we have suffered to a celebration of the progress we have made in worker safety.

At approximately noon there will be a complementary traditional Texas Bar-B-Q lunch along with children's activities such as a Bounce pit and Clown.

We are proud to have contributed funds to this event and encourage all members to attend. Please feel free to call the office for more information. The event will take place at Steelworkers Local 746L, 13624 State Hwy 31, W. Tyler, Texas 75709 Phone 903-595-3469