



Representing Wayne State Faculty and Academic Staff

NEWSBRIEFS

Telephone: 313.577.1750 ~ Fax: 313.577.8150
office@aaupaft.org ~ www.aaupaft.org

February 2011

A New President, A Continuing Crisis

Charles Parrish, *AAUP-AFT President*

The appointment of Allan Gilmour as the President of Wayne State University for a three-year term will give us a chance for a period of stability that is much needed in our battered institution. President Gilmour has made a good beginning. Since coming to the position last August, he has been a steady and even-handed leader.

He did not come to the job with an intimate knowledge of how universities work (or don't), but so far he has been a fast learner. He needs to be and we need him to be. Fortunately, he has a Provost, Ron Brown, who can provide road maps through the more arcane thickets and who understands the dialect of the more exotic natives.

A Hard Road

We are in a period of crisis that has gone on for some years and there is no end in sight. In the difficult time ahead I think we need to emphasize the same attitude expressed in Chrysler's now famous Super Bowl ad: that we are a gritty institution made in Detroit and committed to excellence.

I am less sure that Eminem would be our best spokesperson. If he had enrolled at Wayne State as a young man, when he was still known as Marshall Bruce Mathers III, I don't think he would have helped our retention problem much. But I liked the attitude he portrayed in the advertisement, with its

commitment to the Motor City. It is one that we would do well to share.

The economic crisis that we face, however, will demand more than mere attitude adjustment. With an estimated \$1.8 billion state budget deficit to address, further cuts to our state appropriation are threatened, well beyond the reductions we have already absorbed over the last decade.

Equal Sacrifice?

Our new Governor has reassured us that the principle of equal and shared sacrifice will guide the necessary retrenchment, but I can't help but think such high-sounding phrases often prepare the ground for sacrifice that is neither equal nor shared.

Governor Snyder's demagogic attack on public employees provides little comfort on this score. We are, he claims with little attention to reality, grossly overpaid compared to the general population.

As this newsletter reported last November ("The Myth of the Overpaid Public Employee," available on our web site), such claims willfully ignore the fact that an unusually large number of public employees-- teachers, nurses, social workers and engineers among them-- are far more likely than the general public to work in jobs that require advanced de-

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Now It's Your Turn

Dan Golodner, *Coordinator*
Political Action Committee

One always wonders what politicians are up to in Lansing. Are they looking out for the best interest of the voters of Michigan? Of their constituents?

Unfortunately, it looks like some want to make unwarranted cuts to public employee pay, attack unions, and strip away the health and safety laws that protect workers' rights. The proposed bills that threaten our livelihoods and weaken collective bargaining are catalogued on pages 3-4. The issue of state support for WSU is also a pressing issue.

As part of our effort to lobby these measures, our Political Action Committee is asking YOU to take a stand. We are asking you, our members, to write a personal letter to your state legislator.

Twenty letters from constituents can influence a legislator's thinking on pending legislation. However, a typical state legislator usually receives only five or so personal emails or letters about a specific issue. We need to raise that number as a first step in educating our legislators on issues of importance to Wayne State University students and employees, as well as to Michigan residents.

A personal letter is effective, even a short one, and writing such a letter takes less time and effort than you might think. If you don't know the name of your legislator you can either follow this link, <http://action.aft.org/o/368/getLocal.jsp>, contact the union office (577-1750), or call me at 577-8988 for assistance.

Here are a few suggestions:

- Be personal in your letter, but also show respect and use the legislator's full name. I don't like being called "occupant," and neither do legislators.
- Get to the point. Don't be long-winded or wordy-- three paragraphs are plenty. In your introductory paragraph let them know what you are writing about.
- Be specific in your request. If possible try to give the number or description of the bill.
- In the second paragraph state why you are

opposed or in favor of the bill. Try to be reasonable, factual, and friendly. Give practical and logical reasons for your position.

- Don't threaten! Don't say that you will never vote for him/her in the next election. Be nice-- remember, we are all professionals!
- Finally, time your letters to arrive at mid-week, rather than on Monday, when deliveries are heaviest, or on Friday, when the weekend rush begins.

Whether it is a personal letter or phone call, the goal is to be polite and straight to the point so that staffers can put your message on top of the pile. Your voice does make a difference, and our union needs to be as loud as possible to protect Wayne State University, our union, and our families.

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grees. Studies that control for education and experience show that full-time state and local government employees in Michigan make 5-7% less in total compensation than their *equivalent* counterparts in the private sector. (See, for example, "Study Contradicts Snyder's Report on Public Workers' Pay," *Detroit Free Press*, 2/4/11.)

A nerd should be able to read these studies and come to a supportable conclusion rather than play to the Tea Party galleries. In this context, there is little prospect of raising revenue from a sales tax on services or a modest increase in the income tax on wealthy families. We can only be thankful, I suppose, that Governor Snyder has not threatened to call out the National Guard to suppress public employee unions, as the right-wing governor of Wisconsin did earlier this month.

The Bottom Line

No matter how the battle over public-employee pay is resolved, at the end of the day we are facing a state budget that imposes a cut of 15% on the appropriation for higher education. The only silver lining is that our appropriation has been cut so much in the past that it now represents a far smaller proportion of our General Fund. The new cuts will therefore reduce our university budget by "only" 6% or so.

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Lansing Legislative Lookout

This is only a partial listing of the many proposed statutes that impact our livelihoods, our rights, and our working conditions. State support for Wayne State in particular and higher education in general is another important issue we need to raise with our legislators. For details on particular legislative proposals go to <http://www.legislature.mi.gov>. [“SB” and “HB” refer to bills before Senate and House; “SJR” and “HJR” refer to joint resolutions.]

<u>Bill</u>	<u>Description</u>
SJR B	Public Employee Wages: Would permit the abrogation of contracts by unilaterally reducing base pay for all public employees by 5% for three years beginning January 1, 2012. This would apply to higher education as well as all other branches of state and local government. Introduced last year and again in the current session by Senator John Pappageorge (R-Troy). <i>This is a meat-ax approach that scapegoats public employees already paid less than their private-sector counterparts.</i>
SB 14	Occupational Safety: Would repeal Michigan’s Occupational Safety and Health Act. Introduced this January by Senator Mark Jansen (R-Gaines Township) and currently before the Senate Appropriations Committee. <i>Promotes a so-called “better business climate” by putting workers at risk.</i>
SB 20	Ergonomics Rule: Would prohibit promulgation of workplace ergonomics rules that address repetitive strain and other stress injuries related to work design. Introduced this January by Senator Rick Jones (R-Grand Ledge) and currently before the Senate Appropriations Committee. <i>Promotes a so-called “better business climate” by putting workers at risk.</i>
HJR D	Tuition Rates: Would put before voters an amendment to the state constitution limiting tuition increases for in-state students at public universities to no more than the increase in the consumer price index. Introduced in January by Representative Al Pscholka (R-Stevensville) and currently before the House Education Committee. <i>Further defunds higher education, already imperiled by cuts in state support, and preempts discretion over proper balance between tuition restraint and core expenditures.</i>
HB 4019	Charter School Cap: Would eliminate the cap on the number of public school academies authorized by state public universities, currently set at 150, and eliminate restriction on placing such academies only in school districts with low graduation rates. Introduced in January by Representative Tom McMillin (R-Rochester Hills) and currently before the House Education Committee. <i>This bill accelerates the shift towards a two-tier school system and promotes charter schools even in districts with higher graduation rates.</i>
HB 4050	Health Insurance: Would prohibit mandate to obtain individual healthcare insurance coverage. Introduced in January by Representative Tom McMillin (R-Rochester Hills) and currently before the House Health Policy Committee. <i>Nullifies federal healthcare reform with no positive alternative.</i>

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(A stab at gallows humor ...)

A state cut of 15% will mean a reduction of about \$32 million. It is estimated that the University's obligations (utility increases, salary commitments, etc.) will increase by \$10-\$12 million next year. We therefore face, at a minimum, the need to make up about \$43 million in next year's budget just to stand pat. But it's hard to get anywhere standing pat.

Where will the money come from to meet next year's budget? We have a little under \$20 million in the Rainy Day Fund. The latter has not been used at any point in our ongoing financial crises. We need to remember that this is one-time money, so it needs to be used sparingly. But constantly growing it and not spending some of it does not make much sense.

The current budget estimates that we will get a little under \$300 million from tuition this year. A 10% increase in tuition would bring us about \$30 million in new tuition income. How much the Board of Governors will be willing to increase tuition is unclear. Its members always vote for an increase in tuition with great reluctance.

In this situation there are likely to be further budget cuts. We are going to be told that we need to tighten our belts. We need to ensure that any cuts are made with care and caution and with appropriate consultation with the union and with our institutions of academic governance, primarily the Academic Senate. When a belt is tightened, it needs to be around our waist, not our neck.

Lansing Lookout *(continued from page 3)*

Bill
HB 4052

Description

Union Activities: Would prohibit use of taxpayer-funded equipment, facilities or services, including e-mail, for union or political activities. Introduced in January by Representative Al Pscholka (R-Stevensville) and currently before the House Oversight, Ethics, and Reform Committee. *Virtually impossible to police and therefore subject to arbitrary enforcement that nullifies free speech. Would the transmission of this union newsletter be illegal since it is sent on university email, while distribution of Chamber of Commerce literature is not?*

HB 4054

Right to Work: Would permit establishment by local governments and school boards of local "Right to Work" zones where mandatory collection of union dues would be prohibited. Introduced in January by Representative Marty Knollenberg (R-Troy) and currently before the House Commerce Committee. *Nullifies majority rule after union wins representation election by permitting individual freeloaders to benefit from collective bargaining without paying their share of the cost of representation.*

Wayne State University Chapter, AAUP-AFT Local 6075

5057 Woodward Avenue, Suite 3301, Detroit, MI 48202-4050

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Visit our website at www.aaupaft.org for an electronic copy of this newsletter.



LOCAL 6075

UPCOMING EVENTS



PACTivist Meeting

Tuesday, March 8, 2011

11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Reuther Library, 2nd Floor Conference Room

Please join us for paczki's and a light lunch to discuss the Union's plan to address the budget cuts and attacks on public employees.



General Membership Meeting

Wednesday, April 6, 2011

12:00 p.m. to 1:30 p.m.

Student Center, Hilberry B (2nd Floor)

This meeting is open to all AAUP-AFT Union members. Officer nominations will be on the agenda for this meeting. Guest speaker - Julie Matuzak, Political Coordinator, AFT Michigan



Mark Your Calendars For

LOBBY DAY

Tuesday, May 17, 2011

Please plan on joining us on our trip to Lansing to lobby legislators to support **HIGHER EDUCATION, WSU, and PUBLIC EMPLOYEES.**

More information to follow as it becomes available.

For additional information, or if you have any questions, please call the Union Office at 313.577.1750, or e-mail at office@aaupaft.org