President’s Message

The Struggle Continues

Dear Members,

This is a difficult time for labor. Vested interests are attacking our health and pension benefits under the guise of solving a fiscal crisis that itself is the product of their own reckless financial mismanagement. We are at loggerheads with City Hall to get our members a decent wage agreement without yielding to the Mayor’s demands for givebacks. Despite these distractions, our Union’s focus and strategy of improving member representation has not been overshadowed. The present administration under my leadership is constantly in search of ways to advance and provide better service to you. This is our day-to-day goal: how to improve the quality of our representation.

I have made a pledge to restructure our union to become more member-oriented and more active. I pledged to work constantly to unify our union. I pledged to make the Local administration a responsible fiduciary of your dues and to maintain our integrity. The most logical choice and option for Local 375 at this juncture is to be inclusive, transparent, open, democratic, united, pro-active, and fiscally responsible. We knew that it will take time, from planning to implementation, to see full progress.

The end result will be seen in the areas of saving member jobs, grievance victories, holding productive labor-management meetings, organizing rallies, press conferences, demonstrations, and conducting effective lobbying. The undisputed fact is that our Local has already achieved wonderful and remarkable results in protecting members’ jobs and providing better and improved services. We are on target to continue in this regard even as we fight devastating budget cuts not only on behalf of Local 375 members, but on behalf of all DC 37 represented workers.

Another hallmark of this administration is the increased level of communication with members. We have a more attractive, accessible website where we daily post information including my daily schedule, information about civil service issues, our union’s budget, member benefit information, and links to DC 37 and AFSCME. We report on our actions and fightback plans on the site and via email, and are working on giving you the ability to comment online. We have set up a Facebook page and want you to join. Our goal is to keep you informed and involved in the Union’s decision-making processes.

A new policy is already in place whereby chapter members will be informed, in the form of meeting reports, about labor-management meetings that may take place in their chapters. After every Labor Management meeting, members will receive report covering all aspects of the meeting. I encourage all Chapter presidents to collect members’ issues and concerns and send an agenda to the Local so that we can assist in setting up meetings with management.

I have taken a position that we should send no more than two delegates to solidarity conferences, subject to final approval by the Local’s delegates. This practice will save tens of thousands of dollars of our dues money and at the same time ensure our participation in important labor gatherings. I have mandated that Local 375 participants attending conferences on the members’ behalf must provide written reports at delegates meetings. The evidence is overwhelming that organizational restructuring and adherence to fiscally responsible policies are resulting in better representation of members.

We have been without a contract since March 3 of 2010. In a recent lively and very interesting meeting of District (continued on page Two)
President’s message, continued…

Council 37 Presidents, we voted to initiate contract negotiations with the City of New York. In a healthy, democratic, and constructive atmosphere, the pros and cons of starting negotiations were discussed. I was among those voting to start negotiations now for a wage increase.

DC 37 will be the first municipal union to move forward. We believe the time is right to begin talking about: a) the City has a surplus of more than $3.2 Billion annually, b) the Mayor’s Administration has failed to collect the proper amount of taxes from corporations and companies such as owners of cell phone towers and billboards. In a healthy, democratic, and constructive atmosphere, the pros and cons of starting negotiations were discussed. I was among those voting to start negotiations now for a wage increase.

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The need to advertise our cause to the public is growing. We all know the media has shut our voice. We may be able to break through, but we don’t know when. Cohen’s boycott of work will bring in hundreds of millions of dollars. The City Hall is a Union town. The DC 37 will be the first municipality in New York to overturn the anti-worker policy known as contract givebacks. In Connecticut, public workers voted down a contract. In Chicago, a few of our chapter elections have now been successfully completed.

In rallies throughout the month of June, the fightback continues.

From the Secretary

This has been a particularly interesting time to take on the duties of the Local 375 Secretary. In addition to receiving and replying to correspondence to the Local; and reviewing and compiling multiple requests each week for donations from entities both inside and outside of the union; I also have the responsibility of certifying our Chapter election results. Where our chapter elections have gone smoothly this has involved making sure that chapter election committees have received the proper election materials, that DC37 membership lists are available, and that election challenges are properly recorded and presented to the appropriate bodies for review. All but a few of our chapter elections have now been successfully completed.

However, as we welcome new and old chapter officers and delegates, it is also time to focus on a new round of training for our chapter delegates. Our delegates represent the backbone of this organization. There are many day to day issues that can be handled by the Local’s elected Officers, Chairs and staff, but for Local 375 to be fully engaged and actualizing its real potential – the power of 7000 organized and knowledgeable engineers, architects, scientists and project managers - our delegates must, themselves, be organized, knowledgeable, and in constant communication with our membership at large. This training is already being developed, but in order for it to be lasting and meaningful we must also formally announce and establish the presence of our elected delegates on the shop floor of every agency. Our Local 375 delegates are the daily representation of the union on the shop floor, and such they must be respected by management as such representatives.

As the Local 375 Grievance Coordinator, I have had the privilege of working with an excellent grievance staff. Karl Toth, as always, has provided consistent and incredibly knowledgeable representation at DIF, as well as several other Chapters. His experience and knowledge of the Contract has also been a tremendous asset in helping us to train two new grievance reps.

Both Elena Mora and Eduard Rosario have proved to not only be wonderfully competent and exceptional in their taking initiative, but they are terrific to work with and are an excellent team. Under their direction, they have represented ten chapters.

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Under my coordination, we have had some 23 Grievance Rep meetings where we have not only provided training to our new representatives, but also discussed specific disciplinary and grievance issues. My door has always remained open to the inevitable questions from our reps and it will remain open as we work to transition to the new grievance coordination under Brother Uma Kutwal.

— Jon Forster
Secretary
From your Pension Chair

Although Mayor Mike Bloomberg continues to hammer away at our pensions, I can assure everyone that DC37 is committed to doing everything in its power to keep our pensions safe. Mayor Bloomberg is trying to scapegoat public employees by deliberately misrepresenting the causes of what he calls the ‘pension crisis’. The actual cause of the present under-funding of pensions is due to the stock market. This past decade was one of the worst for investments in recent economic history.

However, there are many indications that economic growth will increase, and that, with normal investment returns, our pension funds will become stronger.

I am still actively trying to get pension reform bills introduced before the State Senate and Assembly. As always, I am available to speak at meetings and for individual consultation. Please feel free to call me with any pension questions or concerns. I can reached at the Union at 212-815-1375 or at 917-207-6862.

Mike Myers

Local 375 Financial Secretary

The Local 375 Financial Secretary is the officer elected for a three year term by its members. The Financial Secretary oversees policy concerning the flow of financial resources in and out of the Local. The Financial Secretary oversees the collection and appropriation of member’s dues.

The financial secretary implements policy with the cooperation of the Executive Committee. This year the financial secretary has been working with DC 37 with the reconciliation of appropriate dues adjustments from the Transit Authority, Health and Hospital Corporation, as well as members with special circumstances. Updated reports are prepared and matched with membership changes when there are transfers within Local 375, new employees and retirements.

An additional responsibility of the financial secretary is to be a member of the committee overseeing the Professional Employees Legal Services.