

Council 13 38th Annual Convention

Hershey Lodge & Convention Center
April 23-25, 2010

Dear AFSCME Brothers & Sisters:

Sister Kathy Dorman and I, Sister Jan Bottorf, were Delegates from AFSCME Local 2360 at the 38th Annual Council 13 Convention which took place at the Hershey Lodge & Convention Center April 23-25, 2010. Kathy and I were very grateful to be able to attend as Delegates, and we both felt that the Convention was extremely educational, as well as enjoyable!

Todd Singer, President of Council 13, provided the opening remarks and showed a very moving video which highlighted AFSCME's success in the PA Supreme Court ruling that "Payless Paydays" are unconstitutional. Timely payment of wages is required by Federal law, and Pennsylvania will now be required to comply. Therefore, in the event of another budget impasse, state workers will no longer be forced to go without a paycheck for any amount of time. This was a monumental victory for AFSCME, and was highlighted throughout the Convention.

Rep. Kevin Murphy (D-113), our State Representative representing State workers, provided a welcome address and spoke on the importance of supporting the candidates who support AFSCME. During the last budget impasse, Rep. Murphy himself opted to not take a paycheck until the budget was passed. He spoke on the difficult economy and the need to increase revenue. Cutting services is simply not an option, as more and more people need the services that AFSCME workers provide. We also must remember that we are paid by taxes. Therefore, it will be necessary to raise some taxes, and we must support the people who are making the difficult decisions to do so. Rep. Murphy indicated that there is currently an attack on unions throughout the United States. He said that this is our "Call to Duty," and that we must have faith in our Brothers, Sisters, and leadership, and stand behind them. He also noted that all other options are being considered including the important issue of closing the "Delaware Loophole." Currently, 76% of Pennsylvania's corporations have a satellite office in Delaware, and therefore fall through a loophole in which they are not required to pay taxes to Pennsylvania! Closing this loophole will significantly help Pennsylvania's economy.

Phyllis Wingate, the current Secretary of Council 13, announced her retirement at the Convention. She was presented with a plaque, thanking her for 32 years of dedicated service. She gave a very sincere exit speech, and will obviously be very missed by her colleagues at Council 13.

The Constitution Committee reported that there were no proposed amendments to the Council 13 Constitution.

Lee Saunders, Executive Assistant to the President of AFSCME, announced his intent to run for International Secretary-Treasurer of AFSCME. Mr. Saunders has been involved with AFSCME since 1978. He noted that the Health Care Reform was a major victory, because health care is a right. Mr. Saunders made it clear that there are a lot of lies and inaccuracies circulating about the Health Care Reform—he noted that we did not get everything we wanted on the issue, but that we did get a solid foundation on which we can build. Mr. Saunders spoke passionately about not letting our elected officials forget their promises. He emphasized the importance of supporting the PAL program, holding politicians accountable, and activating and educating current members. AFSCME had the most growth in the AFL-CIO last year—we grew by 24,000 members! He also noted that 56% of our membership is currently female.

Seventeen Resolutions were proposed at the Convention. All were passed without question. Notable were:

- **Resolution #1: Support Revenue Enhancements in Pennsylvania** – AFSCME Council 13 and its affiliated locals support the revenue enhancements in this year's proposed state budget including taxing cigars and smokeless tobacco, taxing Marcellus Shale extraction, putting an end to bonuses for businesses for paying their taxes on time, closing any sales tax loopholes, and closing the Delaware loophole.
- **Resolution #9: Observe Workers Memorial Day – April 28th** – On April 28, the unions of the AFL-CIO will observe Workers Memorial Day to remember those who have suffered and died on the job and to renew the fight for safe workplaces.
- **Resolution #13: Lee Saunders for International Secretary-Treasurer** – AFSCME Council 13 officially feels that Brother Saunders is the best suited candidate to serve as our International Secretary-Treasurer.
- **Resolution #16: 1st Year's Dues to AFSCME Retiree Chapter** – AFSCME Council 13 encourages its Locals to pay the first year's dues for their retiring members in the Retired Public Employees of Pennsylvania (RPEP).

Council 13 Executive Director, David Fillman, spoke about how this has been a year of hardship and growth, and of battle and victory. A recurring theme throughout the Convention was "It's about Main Street, NOT Wall Street!" Mr. Fillman pointed to the CLEAR Coalition website at <http://www.clearforpa.org> for information on how it is the legal and moral duty of Pennsylvania government, state and local, to efficiently deliver essential, quality services to Pennsylvanians. He reinforced the idea that, where any cuts may be necessary, they need to "Chop from the Top." Mr. Fillman indicated that the new Accelerated Grievance Program is now available to SSHE workers. He talked about the importance of trainings, how much better the Local websites are now due to the availability of the LaborWeb website tool, and noted that the name of the Council 13 newspaper, *Public Employee Press*, is being changed to the *Council 13 Connection*. I was very honored when Mr. Fillman recognized and thanked me for providing the suggestion for the new name! Finally, Mr. Fillman pointed to the recent mining tragedies as an example of the importance of unions. To all non-unionized workers who complain about the benefits we reap as union employees, Mr. Fillman says "Don't envy our benefits, demand them!"

Nominations were held for Council 13 Officers and Trustees. The entire slate of nominees ran unopposed, and therefore elections were not necessary. David Fillman remains our Executive Director, Todd Singer remains Council 13 President, Jane Beverage replaces the retiring Secretary Phyllis Wingate, and Alan Redding remains Treasurer. One of the four Trustees is Local 2360's own Cheryl Reynolds! The other three Trustees are Linda Cleveland, Henry Hurt, and Tina Lynch. All officers and trustees were sworn into office by the outgoing Secretary Phyllis Wingate.

Hilda Solis, the 25th United States Secretary of Labor, spoke to the Convention and made it very clear that President Obama "gets it." She stressed that President Obama very strongly supports collective bargaining rights, and is serious about focusing on job creation. Solis was personally appointed by President Obama because he knows that she is a voice for working people and isn't afraid to speak up. Ms. Solis' involvement in AFSCME dates back to 1992. She passed a message along from President Obama that he is very thankful for AFSCME's support on the Health Care Reform issue. She also wants us to know that we have fighters in D.C., and that we should keep the energy level up, as we are indeed starting to pull out of the unemployment slump. Ms. Solis was leaving directly from the Council 13 Convention and going to the memorial service for the 29 West Virginia miners who were recently lost due to unsafe mine conditions. She emphasized that it was important to her to be there for those miners' families.

Gerald McEntee, International President of AFSCME, gave the Keynote Address of the Convention. Mr. McEntee noted that PA is his home state, and that Council 13 is his home Council. He congratulated Council 13 for being the best, most powerful Council in the U.S. He noted that we have suffered since Governor Rendell has been in office—there have been layoffs, cutbacks, and salary decreases, but we are going to get it all back! He said it is workers like AFSCME employees who will pull us out of this recession. We will hold employers accountable, push for occupational safety for all public employees, and we can do this by contacting our Representatives. Mr. McEntee stressed that union workers have a new enemy called the “Teaparty” folks who are spreading lies about the Health Care Reform. He noted that 20% of these people make over \$100k per year and are white upper middle class. AFSCME supports the Health Care Reform, and we should not believe the lies that the Teapartiers are perpetrating. Mr. McEntee also noted that AFSCME gained 40,000 new members last year with 5,700 of those members within Council 13. We must continue to attract and retain the next generation of AFSCME members. He encouraged young members to become involved in the Next Wave program, whose purpose is to recruit, engage and educate younger members to step up and carry on the legacy that AFSCME leaders before us have built.

On behalf of the Credentials Committee, Sharon Sober (who is also the Director of our District Council 86) gave the report on registrations from the Convention. In attendance were 8 District Councils, 1 Retiree chapter, 236 Locals, and 472 Delegates who represented 53,533 votes.

Several awards were given on the final morning of the Convention, including a communications award given to a Local who is heavily using their website to communicate with their members. They were honored for “going green” by no longer mailing out paper meeting notices to members—their meetings will now only be announced on their Local’s website, with the exception of meetings where elections will take place. I feel that our Local is moving in this direction, and we can now have confidence that this move is embraced by Council 13.

On a fun note, the Convention had a “Survivor” theme with banana trees and simulated tiki torches! There was a Delegate Reception Friday evening with a DJ and dancing. At Saturday evening’s banquet there was a live band, and also entertainment provided by Dan Dunn’s PaintJam. Mr. Dunn speed paints large paintings while “jamming” to a song or two, and typically the painting is done upside down, leaving the audience in suspense until the end of the song when he flips the painting around and the subject takes its awesome shape! I highly recommend looking Dan Dunn up on YouTube, you won’t be sorry! He did three paintings for us, with the final one being a portrait of David Fillman! It was very cool!

I want to stress again how thankful Sister Dorman and I are to have the opportunity to attend the 38th Annual Council 13 Convention. We would both strongly encourage all Local 2360 members to take advantage of these opportunities whenever possible. Attending a Convention of this sort is extremely beneficial for boosting morale and AFSCME pride! Attendees get to see first hand how important it is to become as involved as possible to support the union who supports their workers so passionately. It was also a wonderful opportunity to meet and become familiar with AFSCME leadership, and make new friends in fellow AFSCME workers from across Pennsylvania.

In Solidarity,

Sister Jan Bottorf
Local 2360 Treasurer