



AFSCME Local 5 – AFL-CIO

PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

WHEN IT COMES TO HONORING CONTRACTS, IT DEPENDS ON THE COLOR OF YOUR COLLAR

LANSING, MICHIGAN, MAY 5, 2009—Scott Dianda, President of the Michigan State Employees Association, warns that the Governor’s budget-cutting Executive Order once again targets state employees who have, over the years, sacrificed so much.

“State employees returned more than \$600 million to the state over the last six years through various forms of concessions,” Dianda said.

He says that in spite of these reductions in wages and benefits, and a reduction in force of nearly 10,000 workers, state workers have struggled to maintain services to a population that has grown by 1.5 million over this same period.

“Michigan citizens require increased services as a result of economic hardships,” Dianda emphasized. “Hard-working state employees do not deserve the insult of a proposed cancellation of their contractual rights by their elected representatives.”

Dianda pointed out that collective bargaining is one of the core principles of American Labor-Management Law.

“To permit such a violation of the collective bargaining agreement, flies in the face of the concept of collective bargaining and flouts the law and rules which establish the bargaining system,” Dianda said.

“Our contract was negotiated in good faith,” he continued. “Citizens were told that outrageous bonuses had to be paid to AIG employees recently because of ‘contractual obligations.’ How about honoring ‘contractual obligations’ for state workers?”

“I guess it depends on the color of your collar.”

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add 1—Michigan State Employees Association contract

Dianda says that the collective bargaining agreement may only be altered by agreement of the parties and ratification by employees within the bargaining unit.

“This is the procedure followed by employers in the private sector as well as the public sector,” he said.

Dianda observed that the layoffs, temporary layoffs and furlough days could have been avoided and the state could have saved millions of dollars if they had done just a few basic things.

“State departments are extremely wasteful,” Dianda said. “The state needs to freeze all hiring, review all hiring and cut the high-paying, top-heavy middle management out of their departments.”

“We have repeatedly made recommendations to the state, but do they listen and take action?” he asked. “No—it’s just business as usual. And when they get into trouble, state employees are a convenient target.”

Dianda pointed out that the much-publicized 10 percent pay cut for legislators won’t take effect until 2011. Many legislators will not be affected because they must leave office in two years under term limits.

“Only after legislators take immediate pay cuts themselves should there be any proposals about pay cuts for the rank-and-file,” Dianda said.

Dianda stressed that the taxpayers in Michigan deserve better.

“Aren’t people suffering enough? There won’t be anyone left to provide much-needed services to the citizens of our state.”

The Michigan State Employees Association (MSEA) was founded in 1950 and has over 5,000 members, representing primarily state, but also county and university employees. MSEA is affiliated with the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), Local 5 of the AFL-CIO.