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**SECURITY AT STATE CAPITOL IN JEOPARDY  
CAPITOL SECURITY FORCE TO BE CHOPPED**

**AUGUST 31, 2009, LANSING, MICHIGAN**—The 11-member Capitol Security Force whose mission it is to protect school children, the general public, state employees and state buildings, legislators and the historic state capitol building have received their 30-day layoff notices, effective October 1.

“I understand that Michigan has seen better budget days, but this is outrageous,” said Scott Dianda, President of the Michigan State Employees Association (MSEA) which represents the Capitol Security Force.

Statistics document that over 250,000 people visit the Capitol per year. In addition, there are 125,000 guided tours per year which consist mainly of school children. There were also over 400 rallies held on the Capitol grounds in 2008, many of which drew thousands of people (the area around the Capitol building has a capacity of 10,000 people).

According to Stephen Thomas, an MSEA Spokesperson who is a member of the Capitol Security Force, cost-cutting measures in the past have had safety consequences.

“When the midnight shift was eliminated in 2000 and the Capitol was left unprotected, there was a break-in with maintenance staff assaulted. In the 1970s, two legislative aides were attacked just outside the Capitol building.”

Thomas says that significant threats to state government have escalated since 9/11 and are on the rise.

“The recent Town Hall meetings are an indication of how people are reacting to tough times. The Treasury Department and individual legislators are usually threat targets, but we are also charged with protecting state employees and state buildings. State government is always a target—not only by international terrorists, but by domestic terrorists as well.”

Thomas noted the 1995 bombing in downtown Oklahoma City which killed 168 people and injured more than 680.<sup>[2][3]</sup> The blast destroyed or damaged 324 buildings within a 16-block radius,<sup>[4]</sup> destroyed or burned 86 cars, and shattered glass in 258 nearby buildings.<sup>[5]</sup> The bomb was estimated to have caused at least \$652 million worth of damage.<sup>[6]</sup>

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*add 1—security of state capitol in jeopardy*

“There is no plan to replace the Capitol Security Force,” said Dianda, “and they’re the ones who have specialized training in threat assessment and response which is different than troopers assigned to road duty for example.

“The Capitol Security Force can respond to a situation in a matter of a minute or less, but it most likely would take outside law enforcement 10 minutes or so to respond. Not a good scenario if it’s a crisis.”

Dianda says that an incident in July 2009 illustrates his point.

“Apparently, a man was watching pornography on a computer at the Michigan Historical Center. It was discovered that he was an unregistered sex offender and he was arrested wandering around in front of the Capitol building.”

Dianda observed that the majority of state capitols have a security force.

“Security police for government facilities is actually a very old idea, dating back at least to the guards posted at Solomon's temple,” said Dianda.

“Providing security to the government and its citizens is a matter of safety and common sense,” he continued. “We certainly don’t need the daily proceedings of state government disrupted. “