



"The News"

Volume 8, Issue 7

June 2008



The Fierce Urgency of Now...A Message from your President

As usual I hope this letter finds everyone in good health and enjoying the spring.

Our new look.....

Thanks to everyone who took a moment to compliment us on the newsletter last month. We have been working to perfect both the newsletter and the website. Hopefully, you have been watching the newsletter constantly evolve and you approve. Pretty soon you will see a new look for the website. Let us know what you think about the contents, it is our sincere desire to make it enjoyable with informative articles and the pictures.

Please contact Heather Kirk to submit your article. Please have the articles ready in the form that you would like to see it appear. You can also email it to us, if possible, all of the above would be greatly appreciated.

Election Results...

At last month's union meeting we held an election to fill a vacancy created when one of the three Election Committee members retired.

The nominees were Donna Stinson and Anthony "Tony" Fuqua. 154 votes were cast. The winner was Tony Fuqua. It was a close vote, 83 to 72.

I would like to thank both Donna and Tony for deciding to participate in the election and deciding to become a part of the solution and not sit on the sidelines and watch the problems.

Tony brings experience to the team, he left the election committee to run for a shop stewards position, which he held until the last election. Welcome back Tony. The Election Committee consists of Tony Fuqua, Travita Haley, and Linda Lattimore.

Issue of Southeast Division.... closing comes to a final close.....

At last months union meeting the issue of Southeast closing was put to rest, hopefully, once and for all. The issue swirling around the closing was not just the members of the garage, but it was also the decision of Local 689 Officers and Executive Board that lead to the retired position of the Executive Board/Shop Stewards

position at Southeast Garage.

The bases for the decision was two issues. One- the division closed without a planned decision for a new garage. That would have made the decision very easy, we could have followed the same history of Bladensburg with the closing of Trinidad, Eastern and Brookland garages. But unlike that situation, members of Southeast were dispersed through out the system.

Two-Our bylaws does not give bus operators a floating shop steward like the rail. Their Executive Board/Shop Stewards are elected by garage and not by total geographic area. (i.e. 3 stewards for Rail Operations and 1 e-board member and the same for Stations Managers.-see bylaws)

After consulting with the International, it was the opinion of the Executive Officers and Board that there wasn't a logical reason to substantiate keeping the steward if the location closed and he was not representing a particular group of members as he was elected to do. A system pick took place and the members of Southeast along with every other garage moved throughout the entire bus system in seniority order.

Now I have explained that the decision was difficult for the e-board because we became a very tight group. Brother Farmer was an active member of the board and an effective shop steward. I am very proud of who he was becoming. But as hard hearted as it sounds, decisions in the local union should not or can not be about friendship. You elect the board to do the right thing in spite of friendship.

Through the years I have watched members end their friendship because their grievances were recommended to be dropped by the board or because the steward made a human mistake. Friendships are not easy to maintain in this business.

Several letters were written to the International and a petition was generated by the members and those actions led to a division of the house vote of the membership and the membership upheld the decision of the Executive Board.

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The possibility of the closing of Royal Street Division and Arlington is moving to another location, how we handle this issue is important. We need to have language in our Bylaws to address the closing of locations, we have language governing the retirement of an officer or shop steward, we should have language governing that also. If anyone needs further explanation or clarification, please don't hesitate to contact me at the union hall.

Contract Proposal Meeting....

Usually I don't put certain information in the newsletter because its posted on website and outsiders utilize that information tool. Not all of them are interested in using it in a positive way. But this needs to be said and discussed.

For the first time in the 30 years since I've been a member of Local 689, we did a very positive thing. On May 8th and 10th, as promised, we held meetings to inform the membership of the contract proposals that were submitted by the members of Local 689 but also the proposals submitted by the Authority. We believe that you have the right to know what is being proposed in contract negotiations. Approximately 300 members attended. The Latino Caucus and the Women's Caucus gave of their time and sold hot dogs for your convenience. The Election Committee volunteered at the sign in table. Every member, except one, left knowing that we are in a dog fight just to maintain what we have now.

Tell me why that one person went out into the membership and purposely spread rumors, instead of facts, purposely switched information contained in the union proposals with the Authority. Please stop allowing people to divide us up into small pieces so the Authority can pick us off one at a time.

Every department is subjected to subcontracting. Every department is subjected to the desire to have changes in our health care and our pension. All of us are affected by the high gas prices at the pump. We are one of the few people in the community who can not catch public transportation to work. We have to get there so we can take everybody else to work.

The issues in this contract are not new, but they are mean spirited and unrealistic. I believe that because they brought it to us. Our chance of prevailing will depend on how we, as a group, deal with the pressure to accept their offer or fight to the death, so to speak. And it is the death because it will be the death of life as we know it, if we give up and don't put up a fight.

Now the window for divulging specifically what was being proposed is over. We have been in contract negotiations since April 4th. We finally received the Authority's economic proposals on May 2, 2008 and I brought the entire package to you and we have furthered the negotiations. We have signed ground rules that govern what we do from here on.

What we have informed you of is not the final product, if we reach an agreement it will be given to you for your consideration. You will have the decision of agreeing to what was negotiated on your behalf before anything is finalized.

There is no way that we can even begin to think about accepting some of the insulting proposed contract changes. Get ready to take a stand, not lay down and roll over.

Challenges and Appeals....

Let me begin by begging your pardon with this next piece of information. We have made every attempt to allow this topic, and others, to play themselves out. We have allowed your decision and the decision of the ATU International to speak for itself. But this group won't let it die.

These issues keep us from fulfilling our greatness as a large, powerfully strong, financially solvent union. It's time to move beyond this and deal with the big issues like keeping our health care down, getting a decent wage increase or keeping our retirement benefits so that we can live beyond retirement.

Last month, four of Local 689 Executive Officers attended the General Executive Board meeting of the International, held in New Orleans, to answer the appeal submitted by Brother Bernard Womack. He, along with those who support his accusations, appealed the decision of International President's denial of his appeal contesting several issues he raised concerning the election.

We answered questions and supplied evidence to support the union's reason for dropping the challenges at the January 2, 2007 meeting.

Our local has over 10,000 members so there is bound to be instances when things happen. A machine breaks down, a members name may not appear on the rolls and they will have to cast a challenge ballot, names may be left off but if all of those things are attended to immediately and they are rectified, you could not ask for any more of an effort from the Election Committee. That doesn't mean that a person is cheated out of the election.

In a letter that I'm sure wasn't circulated in the same fashion as "Womack Speaks", the General Executive Board upheld the decision of Local 689 and the International President. That letter was sent to Mr. Womack and a copy was cc'd to this office on May 09, 2008. Once again they denied the empty accusations.

We need to move on and work together to make this local better and not worse.



Jackie L. Jeter



CELL PHONES (DON'T TALK YOURSELF OUT OF A JOB)

By Gerry Garnett

Each month the union processes cell phone violations. Each month union members ask their Union Reps to help them avoid the suspension. Each month many of these members serve five, sometimes ten day suspensions. As a union, a cell phone violation is one of the hardest violations that we can win. The reason is simple; either a member was on the phone or he/she wasn't. If that member was on the phone, Metro considers them guilty and will suspend them.

There are several reasons for the stiffness of the penalties. First of all there is a safety matter. When an operator talks on the cell phone, there is a divided attention. As a professional operator, your attention should be totally on the safe operation of your bus. Next, in the District of Columbia, where most of Metrobuses operate, it is against the law to use a mobile phone without a hands-free device. It is also a Metro rule anywhere in our operating area. Finally, with all the negativity surrounding Metrobus, and with the media watching every move we make, Metro has strong concerns about its public image.

There is another very important reason. As a union negotiating a contract, we are faced with Metro using everything they can to cut or avoid paying for much needed and deserved benefits that we are asking for. They throw these safety violations into the union's face, and then ask for stronger discipline. They say that with our performance on safety matters, we are being paid more than we deserve. When the union looks at these violations that they so conveniently bring to the table, it puts us in a defensive position. That is not the position any union wants to be in.

As an operator who is suspended, you can lose over one thousand dollars with a five day suspension. For most members, this can have a devastating affect on their family's finances. When you are charged twice with this violation, this doubles the penalty.

If you must talk on the phone, secure your bus, step off of it, handle your business, and if there is a true emergency, take the proper steps that will solve the situation. There is no acceptable reason to talk on the phone while operating the bus.

WANTED LABOR UNION ACTIVIST FOR LOCAL 689.....

All dues paying members can apply for the 10,103 positions...

Qualifications

Must attend membership meetings the first Tuesday at 8:00 pm and Wednesday at 10:00 am each month.

Must be registered to vote and vote in all elections.

Must participate in discussions to bring about positive change. **Can Not** put the union down but lend solutions to problems to lift us up.

Must disseminate truthful information to fellow members after returning to job site.

Must be unselfish with your time to assure that the entire membership is cared for and not just yourself.

Must file grievances, protect your Collective Bargaining Agreement, even against another member.

Must talk to shop steward regularly.

Must volunteer

If you fit that description.... your union needs your help.

Apply Within.....Next meeting June 3rd and 4thPlease get involved.....
your livelihood depends on it!



Making Metrobus Safer for Drivers

Washington Post, Close to Home, Sunday, May 4, 2008; B08

Congress recently received legislation approved by the [D.C. Council](#) to toughen penalties for assaults on Metrobus operators and rail managers. [Capitol Hill](#) should swiftly approve the legislation.

Assaults on Metrobus operators have more than doubled over the past five years, from 36 in 2002 to 84 in 2007. That's Metro's count, but the union representing operators disputes those numbers as being too low. With the safety of the riding public in their hands, Metrobus operators have been spat on, punched, slapped and attacked with bricks, sticks and other blunt objects. Drivers also have been sexually assaulted.

I operated a Metrobus for more than 20 years. I know firsthand what it's like to have your life threatened by a passenger wielding a gun or knife:

"Mother [expletive], if you hit the brakes one more [expletive] time, I'll pop a cap in you."

So warned an assailant aiming a gun at me at point-blank range, irate about the jerky characteristics of the bus I was driving. I was approaching a red light; terrible timing. Should I stop and risk the lives of everyone on the bus if this man standing over me squeezes the trigger, or keep going and risk an accident with other injuries? I opted to run the light, putting on the brakes only when I got to the passenger's stop several blocks away.

In another incident, a passenger commandeered the bus I was operating after ambushing me with a blow to the back of my head. I'm a big guy who played semipro football after college. If I've been a target of attacks, what about female operators, particularly those who drive on night shifts? Nearly 45 percent of Metro's new bus operators are women. Until they gain seniority, they typically work at night, when most attacks occur.

Metrobus operators are mothers, fathers, grandparents and members of the communities we serve. Riders befriend us, share their joys and woes, and rely on us to drive them to their destinations safely. Last year alone, we drove 131.5 million riders around the District, suburban Maryland and Northern Virginia. We connect communities.

Operating a mass-transit vehicle requires focused attention on the road, passengers and pedestrians. At best, attacks on Metrobus operators can lead to traffic accidents and injuries. At worst, the lives of bus operators and the public are in jeopardy.

The Transit Operator Protection and Enhanced Penalty Amendment Act of 2008 would stiffen fines and prison sentences for assaults against bus operators. We especially support the bill's requirement to post notices about the tougher penalties on Metrobuses and throughout the system. Such postings would signal to passengers that their safety matters and would warn would-be attackers to think twice.

While there is no silver bullet to end all attacks, the legislation before Congress moves the issue of safety in the right direction. Last month, Local 689 of the Amalgamated Transit Union collaborated with Metro in rolling out a pilot program to test driver protective shields on a few Metrobuses. The transparent acrylic panels are an investment in safety.

Over the years, Local 689 has proposed additional safety measures to Metro, including asking it to repair broken surveillance cameras on buses and increase the presence of Metro police officers. In principle, Metro agrees with our safety recommendations, but it seems stymied by inadequate funding for the necessary upgrades. Local 689 pledges to help clear the bumps in the road and drive home the point that a safe Metro benefits us all.

Anthony Garland

Recording Secretary



Universal Health Care bill HR 676 Update: What is HR 676?

HR 676 would institute a single payer health care system in the U.S. by expanding a greatly improved Medicare system to every resident. It would cover every person in the U.S. for all necessary medical care including prescription, hospital, surgical, outpatient services, primary and preventive care, emergency services, dental, mental health, home health, physical therapy, rehabilitation (including substance abuse), vision care, chiropractic and long term care. The bill would also end deductibles and co-payments. HR 676 would save billions annually by eliminating the high overhead and profits of the private health insurance industry and HMO's.

As of May 18th, three (3) more Central Labor Councils have endorsed HR 676, which brings the total to one hundred and seven (107) Central Labor Councils that have endorsed the bill. HR 676 has been endorsed by four hundred and seventeen (417) union organizations in forty eight (48) states.

"Don't Buy Smithfield" Campaign!

Smithfield Foods is the largest pork producer and processor in the world, the fourth largest turkey processor and fifth largest beef processor in the U.S.

Poverty wages, brutal conditions, crippling injuries--5,500 workers in Tar Heel, North Carolina face this every day at the world's largest hog processing plant. Cited by Human Rights Watch for violating international human rights standards, Smithfield Packing has created an environment of intimidation, racial tension, and sometimes violence for workers who want a voice on the job.

Please visit www.smithfieldjustice.com for more information.



Below are the Representatives running for Democratic and Republican primary in Washington, DC on September 2008.

Kwame Brown at large

Carol Swartz at large

Jack Evans district 2

Muriel Bowser district 4

Yvette Alexander district 7

Marion Barry district 8

Keeping a Long-Term Focus Can Help Returns

When people make investment changes based on the daily performance of the stock market, they tend to make poor decisions – selling when a stock is down and buying when it's doing well. That is exactly opposite from the way to make money in investments, which is to buy low and sell high.

It's time in the market, rather timing the market that has paid off for most investors over the past 80 years. Missing just a few of the stock market's best days can have a dramatic impact on your portfolio. But it's impossible to predict when those days will come. Instead, it's best to invest in such a way that you don't have to worry about the day-to-day returns. That means diversifying your portfolio – spreading your money among funds that invest in large, medium and small companies and that use different investment strategies, with some funds searching for fast-growing companies while others look for undervalued stock that seem ready to rebound. Then, make changes based on your investing time frame and risk tolerance, not on which stocks did well yesterday.

Pick funds based on long-term performance – especially over the past three to five years. And compare them with other funds in the same investment category. One sector may be having a tough year but could be the next big performer. History shows that diversifying your investments will reduce your portfolio's volatility while improving the probability of meeting your long-term goals.

For information on the 457 Retirement Plan, please contact your Retirement Plans Specialists, Al Slocum at 1-866-620-6069 or Ronald Samson at 1-888-803-2729.





The 1978 Strike

By Michael Golash

This July we celebrate the 30th Anniversary of the 1978 Wildcat Strike. The strike had its origins in the 1974 contract dispute. Those contract negotiations were the first between Local 689 and WMATA. Metro demanded the union negotiate over the full escalator clause in the contract which provided cost of living raises every three months based on increases in the Consumer Price Index. The union said no and walked out. Metro then got the Federal Courts to order the union back to work. The union complied. When negotiations were completed, the COLA clause in the contract remained untouched.

This set the stage for the 1976 contract struggle. Again management demanded a reduction in the COLA escalator clause. The union said no. This time instead of striking on May 1, the union turned to an arbitrator to resolve the issue. As July 1 neared, Metro announced that they were not going to pay the COLA increase due on that date. The rank and file were angry, but the union said that we should let the arbitrator decide the issue. The membership went along with this decision.

The union leadership of course pushed the line that with the resignation of Nixon as President, the end of the Vietnam War and the upcoming elections, the political climate was improving and we could expect a better contract. Carter was elected President while the arbitration hearings were in progress. When the arbitration award was issued in December, it continued the COLA for another two years, but the increase due July 1, 1976 was eliminated.

In the spring of 1978, tensions were mounting as the contract expiration date drew near. A wildcat strike started at Southeastern Division following the sexual assault on a women driver. All the drivers in the system joined in. At Northern, a mass meeting was held with the Reverend Jerry Moore, a member of the Metro Board. He saw the rage of the drivers and he promised amnesty for the strikers and improved security for the drivers. That night the drivers met at RFK Parking Lot. A safety committee was elected to follow up on the issues of the wildcat. A vote was taken and the drivers decided to return to work the next day. The one day strike gave the workers the confidence that they could shut the system down when needed to accomplish their goals.

The stage was now set for July 1978. Preparations had been made for sharpening the struggle in a mass way. A newsletter was being circulated to hundreds of workers explaining why the fight to protect the COLA was important and the racist nature of the attack on us. Again as in 1976, contract negotiations dragged past the deadline. Metro announced in June that they were not going to pay the COLA on July 1. Strike talk permeated the divisions and work locations. We advocated a walk-out on July 19 if the COLA was not on our checks that day. The Davis-Richmond leadership did nothing to prepare the workers for a strike.

On July 18, the regular union meeting drew over 500 workers. George Davis, the union president, told us to wait for an arbitrator to decide the issue. The workers were in no mood to wait. Davis walked out of the meeting. Gary Young, a track worker, took the podium and called for a motion to strike. The motion was made. Another member outlined the reasons that we had to strike and called for a vote. Hundreds of workers shouted yea. There were no nays. The strike was set for 10:00 a.m. the next morning. A Washington Post reporter was called and he reported the vote on the front page of the Metro section the next day.

The following morning when workers got their checks, and the COLA was not on them, the strike began. Brentwood Yard and Bladensburg Shop, the two largest maintenance facilities for rail and bus, walked out at 10:00 a.m. The drivers hesitated because they did not want to get the riding public angry by leaving them at work. Management's response was to fire every worker at Bladensburg Shop (hundreds of people). A meeting was called for the RFK Parking Lot that night to plan for the next day. A thousand workers showed. Plans were made to picket every bus and rail facility in the system. By Thursday morning the system was entirely shut down. For four days the strike kept the system completely shut down. The few drivers, who attempted to take buses out, were persuaded not to.

The Washington Post called the strikers saboteurs (today it would have been terrorists). The union leadership blamed the strike on communists who had come to Metro for the sole purpose of shutting down the system. The courts threatened fines and jail terms for the strikers if they did not go back to work.

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The first break in the strikers' ranks occurred when Bill Scoggins, a driver from Arlington Division who had been elected leader of the strike steering committee, announced he was resigning and encouraging his drivers at Arlington to return to work. At a mass meeting of the strikers on Sunday evening, Scoggins was shouted down and the strikers voted to continue for one more day. On Monday, the courts ordered Metro to hold an expedited arbitration hearing on the COLA payment for July and to quickly process the grievance of anyone disciplined as a result of the strike. At this point the sentiment of the workers was that we had accomplished all that we could hope for. At garage meetings on Tuesday morning, the workers voted to end the strike.

The arbitration hearing on the COLA was held the next week and the arbitrator ordered Metro to pay the July 1 COLA. After the strike, management fired all of the wildcat strike leaders except for Bill Scoggins. Scoggins was spared because he had led the back to work movement. An arbitrator eventually gave the fired workers their jobs back. Bill Scoggins died shortly after the strike ended. Metro also brought contempt of court charges against Mike Golash, George Goodwin, Eugene Ray and Gary Young. They were all fined by the courts as a result of the contempt charges.

June 2008

Local 689's Calendar of Events!

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2	3 Union Meeting 8:00 p.m.	4 Union Meeting 10:00 a.m.	5	6 Pension Mtg. 9 a.m.	7
8	9 Arbitration Ryan Baker	10 Arbitration Steven Schneider	11 Contract Meeting 9-5	12	13 Contract Meeting 9-5	14
15 Father's Day!	16 Arbitration Renne Body	17	18	19	20 Summer Begins!	21
22	23	24 Contract Meeting 9-5	25 Contract Meeting 9-5	26 Metro Board Meeting	27 Executive Board Meeting	28
29	30 Contract Meeting 9-5					

Congratulations to Metro Retirees!

March 2008

Elwood P. Gaines
Christopher T. Lizzi

April 2008

Chetister W. Anderson
Amos B. Black
Barbara N. Brooks
William F. Brooks Jr.
Raymond F. Cook Jr.
Derrick M. Fennell
Thomas E. Frazier
Donald E. Hammett
Jacquelyn D. Hoadley
Carolyn Jackson
Curtis Jordan
Randall C. Knight
March T. Krantz
William G. Lewis
John T. Mckay

Lewis L. Moore
Eric A. Morman
Nong C. Nguyen
Gilma M. Nurquez
Ordred D. Pender
Ronald C. Perry
Clarence K. Reid
Ricardo F. Roach
Michael D. Robertson
Jacquelyn Robinson
James E. Shorts
Craig L. Smith
Marsha L. Smith
Karl N. Spencer
Peter J. Stanskas
Caroyln A. Stieff
Clarence W. Thompson
Lawrence Washington
Leroy A. White
Herman I. Williams

OBITUARIES

WITH SADNESS WE ANNOUNCE THE PASSING OF OUR FELLOW LOCAL 689 MEMBERS

March 2008

Golie Dunn
Louise C. Walters
Ulyssess L. Wilson

April 2008

Aaron R. Lockhart
Calvin L. Smith
Lester J. Picard
John W. Bryd
Bennie T. Dixon
Harry C. Hills
Kermit T. Woodridge

• **Attend Your Union Meetings!**

- 1st Tuesday Evening of Each Month @ 8:00 p.m.
- The Following Wednesday Morning of Each Month @ 10:00 a.m.

The meetings are held at your Union Hall:

2701 Whitney Place
Forestville, MD 20747

Phone: 301-568-6899
Fax: 301-568-0692
Health and Welfare: 301-568-2294
E-mail: unionhall@atulocal689.org
Newsletter E-mail:
newsletter@atulocal689.org



LOCAL 689 ANNOUNCEMENTS



Look inside to read about:

- ◇ See the article that Anthony Garland wrote for the Washington Post on Bus Safety.
- ◇ Important news and information on the 457 Retirement Plan
- ◇ The June calendar of events
- ◇ Cell phones on the job
- ◇ Metro's Wildcat Strike!

"Grievance Updates"

Settled Grievances for April: 16
Settled Grievances for May: 62

Dropped Grievances for April: 19
Dropped Grievances for May: 23

Arbitrated Grievances for April: 10
Arbitrated Grievances for May: 10

3rd Annual Motorcycle Meet and Greet
For all Metro employees, bikers and friends!



A benefit for the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation!

Sunday, June 1, 2008
10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Lamont's Entertainment Complex
4400 Livingston Road
Pomonkey, MD 20640

Music by DJ AL-V

Donation of \$5.00 and kids under 12 are free

Contact for Registration for Car & Bike Show:

Lamont: 301-283-0225

Janice 'Leggs' Leggett: 301-442-7392

Ron Holston: 240-441-0886

Lewis 'Dawk' Dawkins: 202-329-6779

DJ AL-V: 240-508-4616

Reese: 301-512-1888

S. Commodore: 240-882-5915

President:

Jackie L. Jeter

First Vice President:

Roland Jeter

Second Vice President:

Larry Lockley Jr.

Financial Secretary-Treasurer

Esker Bilger

Recording Secretary

Anthony Garland

Executive Board Members:

James Alford

Shelia Quarles-Alston

Anthony Barnes

Earl Beatty

Herman Brown

Matthew Bryan

Walter Butler

Timothy Busby

Wilbert Cunningham

Joseph Farmer Jr.

Nathan Hall

Gerry Garnett

Judy Holton

Cathleen Jackson

Raymond Jackson

James Madaras

Michael Myrick

John Nixon

David Robinson

Gerard Webb

Shop Stewards

Beverly Cooper

Jacob Ayers

Warren Chapman

Brenda Quarles-Cummings

William Dudley

Barbara Middleton

Derrick Gray

Calvin Barnes

Byron Barnes

Eddie Broidy

Donald Parish

William Cuff

Diane Boyd

Tracy Stokes