



"The News"

Volume 8, Issue 5

January 2008



Message from the President:

Happy New Year! It's hard to believe it's been a year since "The Team" began serving as your executive officers and like you; we all have dealt with a great deal of circumstances, situations, and issues. By November all of us felt like we'd gone 15 rounds in the ring with a heavy weight. But it wasn't all bad stuff but like the saying goes, what doesn't kill you, will make you stronger. And I can tell you, 2008 has started off with a bang. So are you ready for this great year? Let's go.....

Contract Negotiations

Our desire for early negotiations has been set back by WMATA. Although the contract only requires negotiations to begin 90 days before the expirations of the Agreement, we had hoped to start early so that there wouldn't be the extensive delays that have occurred in the past.

Unfortunately, WMATA has notified me that they will not be prepared to exchange proposals until the end of February-at the earliest. I am meeting with General Manager, John Catoo, to discuss negotiations and hope to have a meeting to finalize ground rules with the Authority sometime late January or early February.

Are Ground Rules a Big Deal?

Ground rules are more important than they sound. Ground rules adopted in the 2004 negotiations affected our ability to change the outcome of negotiations in arbitration. In those negotiations, the union and management agreed to reveal to an arbitrator the 'last best offer; of both parties. Since, those 'last best offers' were a tentative agreement-the arbitrator simply made that agreement his ruling. I will not agree to the same ground rules in this set of negotiations.

On our end the contract proposal committee, made up of rank and file members, has met and made their recommendations to be considered by the Executive Board. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the following Local 689 members who composed the Contract Committee: Darrell Allison, Melissa Bagster-Collins, Stephen Barrett, Renee Brady, Maurice Burch, Gilbert Burgess, Manulanche Carter, Galen Clemons, Lawrence Cole, James Jackson, Derek Jones, Rayford Jones, Richard Lloyd, Jerry McCalop, Michael Morsell, Jesse Powell, Robert Roman, Christopher Stallings, Melvin Streeter, Brenda Thomas, James Thompson, Tracy Tymas,

Toney Wayde. Thanks so much to all of you for participating in the contract committee! Next step is for the Executive Board to meet and finalize the Local 689 proposals. Once the proposals have been exchanged with the Authority, I will call a meeting so that everyone will know what we are proposing.

Operators Assault Bill 17-233Vote

The bill in the District to increase penalties for assaulting transit workers is likely to come up for a committee vote at the end of January or beginning of February. Look out for a call to action when this happens. We have created an online video lobbying in favor of this bill, which details the history of transit workers assaults in the Metro area.

You can view the video at the Local 689 website, www.atulocal689.org, or on the newly created YouTube website along with other informative videos, at www.youtube.com/profile?user=atulocal689, or simply just go to www.youtube.com and search ATU 689. New videos are being posted regularly.

State of the Union

The union had a successful year in 2007, beating back attempts in Congress to limit our collective bargaining rights and gaining new friends through our political work in the VA elections. We began a long term battle to increase penalties for assaults on transit workers and have hired a public relations firm to shore up our support in the metro area after a series of news stories attacking us. I have initiated a program to insure that shop stewards receive training in all aspects of their jobs. We have more to do, but we have gotten off to a good start.

Caremark Prescription Cards

Members who have Carefirst BlueCross Blueshield have a new prescription plan, called Caremark. One of the problems we have encountered after the switchover is members calling who have not received their new Caremark prescription cards, this can be solved by calling Caremark directly to request another card be mailed to you, odds are they had a wrong address and that is why your card was not received. Their number is 1-888-892-7271.

Let's make 2008 our best year yet!

Safety Recommendations from the AFL-CIO

After years of hard fighting, the union movement has achieved certain basic legal and contractual health and safety rights for workers. You should note that, even though you have these legal rights, they are not easy to enforce. Your employer may respond harshly if you exercise them. Even though the law is on your side, it could take years for government officials and the courts to undo an employer's illegal punishment of a worker who exercises a safety and health right. If you plan to exercise a safety and health right in a hostile employment environment, it is a good idea to be prepared for a harsh response and a long wait to obtain justice.

- Under the federal Occupational Safety and Health Act, you have a legal right to a workplace free of recognized health and safety hazards.
- Under regulations of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), you have a legal right to any information that your employer has about any exposure you may have had to hazards such as toxic chemicals or noise. You also have a right to any medical records your employer has concerning you.
- Under Occupational Safety and Health Administration regulations, you have a legal right to complain to your employer about dangerous conditions.
- Under the Occupational Safety and Health Act, you have a legal right to file complaints with the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and request OSHA inspections. This right also applies to safety complaints to other government agencies, such as a fire department.
- Under Occupational Safety and Health Administration regulations, you have the legal right to respond to questions from an OSHA inspector and point out hazards to the inspector, including telling the inspector about past accidents or illnesses and informing the inspector if your employer has temporarily eliminated hazards during the inspection.
- Under the Occupational Safety and Health Act, you have a legal right not to be discriminated against for exercising your health and safety rights.
- "Discrimination" includes any adverse action by an employer--anything from being harassed to being fired.
- Under the National Labor Relations Act, you have a legal right to refuse to work or to walk off the job because of workplace hazards. This right only applies to "concerted activities," which are actions by two or more workers or by one worker whose action is endorsed by other workers. Such a refusal to work because of workplace hazards must be based on a good-faith belief that the condition is hazardous. Even if you are wrong about the danger (say, if you refuse to work because you smell what you believe is a toxic vapor, but it turns out to be a nontoxic vapor), your actions are protected.
- Under Occupational Safety and Health Administration regulations, you have a legal right to refuse work that places you in imminent danger of death or serious physical harm and there is not time to contact OSHA. Before you refuse unsafe work, you should request that your employer eliminate the hazard and you should make it clear that you will accept an alternate assignment. Unlike the National Labor Relations Act, the OSHA rule protects actions by a single worker as well as "concerted activities." The OSHA regulation only protects you if the danger can be proven to exist; if you refuse to work because you believe a condition is hazardous, but are proved wrong, OSHA does not protect you.
- Under regulations of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, you have a legal right to information and training about hazardous materials you work with, including Material Safety Data Sheets.
- Under regulations of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, you have a legal right to information about injuries and illnesses experienced by you and your co-workers.

For more information on Safety and Health in the Workplace for the AFL-CIO please visit, <http://www.aflcio.com/issues/safety/tools/>



Safety news from other ATU's...

York, Ontario Canada Transit Drivers say Safety is at Risk

YorkRegion.com, York, ON -12/20/2007, DEC 20, 2007 10:23 AM, By: Sean Pearce

An increasing number of York Region Transit bus drivers are alleging their contractor, Tokmakjian Inc., is taking cost-cutting detours when it comes to public safety.

The York Region Transit System has already received one charge from the MTO on Commercial Vehicle Operator's Registration record. Among them is preventative maintenance and vehicle damage. "Emphasis is being placed on Tokmakjian's overall bus maintenance practices, because they consistently fell below standard in the key area of vehicle maintenance, although some improvement was made ...," the Oct. 18, 2007 report reads. "Tokmakjian has taken steps to ensure improvement with their preventative maintenance program."

Tokmakjian employee and Amalgamated Transit Union representative Trevor Bucknor states, "It's been like this since I've been here," he said. "It's gotten to the point where we can't keep silent anymore." And by talking about it, Mr. Bucknor said he might be spelling the end of his job. A Dec. 6 letter from Company manager Ajay Mehra, said, "If you contact York Region Transit directly or indirectly by suggesting someone else contact them to raise these alleged concerns, this will be considered an act of insubordination and we will have no alternative, but to issue disciplinary measures."

Mr. Bucknor and Mr. Kordas said that such a statement is indicative of the larger safety issue as many of the drivers, especially part-timers, don't receive proper training.

Local 689's Calendar of Events!



February 2008

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1	2
3	4	5 UNION MEETING @ 8 p.m.	6 UNION MEETING @ 10 a.m.	7	8	9
10	11 Arbitration: Larry Towns	12	13 Arbitration: John Slade	14 Arbitration: Harvey Pitts	15	16 Local 689's Sweethearts Ball
17	18 <i>President's Day</i> Union Closed	19	20	21	22 Executive Board Meeting 9 a.m.	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	

March 2008

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1
2	3 Arbitration: Tony Roseboro-El	4 UNION MEETING @ 8 p.m.	5 UNION MEETING @ 10 a.m.	6 Arbitration: Dana Hallmon	7	8
9 Daylight Savings Begins!	10 Arbitration: Maurice Waller	11 Arbitration: Group Grievance	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21 Executive Board Meeting 9 a.m.	22
23 <i>Easter</i>	24 Union Hall Closed	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

Congratulations to All Metro Retirees!

October 2007

Jorge D. Acevedo	Robert McClure	Roger L. Hooker	Paul H. London
Dennis Ballard	Mildred McCoy	Edward C. Kline	Evelyn R. McAdoo
William L. Baugham Jr.	Floyd Mitchell	Reginald W. McDavid	Derrick A. McPhatter
Danny T. Bell	Johnnnny L. Penn	Oscar B. Mceachern	Marshall P. Moore
Richard J. Bell	Willie Roberts	Earl L. Meadows	Glenard R. Shepherd
Arnold Buckland	Floyd L. Seymore	Donald L. Mizell	William B. Walker
She-ling Chen	James Stieff III	Paul M. Nadler	Marboo R. Whisnant
Walter E. Coulston III	Gregory A. Thompson	David G. Patrick	Billy A. Wilkins
Duane D. Easterling	Jonathan Watkins	James A. Peebles	Martina L. Brooks
Leon S. Hankins	Alfred B. Weaver Sr.	Howard L. Smith Sr.	Adrienne C. Cowart
Alfred K. Hobbs	Gene Wicker	Vincent R. Truslow	Derek M. Jones Jr.

November 2007

Roland R. Howard	John J. Dempsey	Ronald L. Williams	Ronnie Exum
Charles Jackson Sr.	Norris J. Fisher	Woodrow Yarbrough	John E. Anderson
Roy Jenkins Sr.	Charles W. Gardner	<u>December 2007</u>	Clifton F. Linkins
Donald M. Johnson	Richard H. Garlic	Everette O. Anthony	Robert M. Mills
Milton Jones III	Stephen R. Gibson	David E. Bishop	Robert D. Torrance
Thomas R. Jones Sr.	Jesse V. Hall	Willis M. Boone	
		William Cole	

• **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 2074

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:

- Safety recommendations and concerns from the AFL-CIO
- Calendar of Events for February and March 2008
- Updates on Operator Assault Bill



Grievance Updates

The following grievances were voted to arbitrate at the December 2007 Executive Board meeting:

- Timothy Grant-Bus Operator. He signed up for DOT physical and was told by management to wait. He was then suspended for his DOT card being expired
- Ricardo Hill-Bus Operator. He was taken off the tripper board for being late. His late charge was before the end of the year prior.
- Renee Body-Falsification of workman's compensation claim

Local 689 is having it's
Second Annual Educational Seminar!

When: March 29th, 2008 at 9:30 a.m.

Where: Union Hall
2701 Whitney Place
Forestville, MD 20747

The seminar will cover the following:

- Health and Welfare
- Local 689 Pension Plan
- CareTeam Connect
 - IMCA 457 Plan
- Workman's Compensation
 - And much more!

A BBQ lunch will be served as well!

Please call the union hall with any questions you have about the seminar at 301.568.6899!

Keep an eye out for Local 689 new and easy to navigate website that should be up and running in the next month!

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

October 2007

Keith Dodson
Ronald A. Hammond
James A. Jeter
Edward Latney

November 2007

Leon Myers
John R. Self
Warren Wingfield

December 2007

Robert D. Torrance

<u>President:</u>	Shelia Quarles-Alston	Cathleen Jackson	Diane Boyd
Jackie L. Jeter	Anthony Barnes	Raymond Jackson	Warren Chapman
<u>First Vice President:</u>	Earl Beatty	James Madaras	Beverly Cooper
Roland Jeter	Herman Brown	Michael Myrick	William Cuff
<u>Second Vice President:</u>	Matthew Bryan	John Nixon	William Dudley
Larry Lockley Jr.	Walter Butler	David Robinson	Derrick Gray
<u>Financial Secretary-Treasurer</u>	Timothy Busby	Gerard Webb	Barbara Middleton
Esker Bilger	Wilbert Cunningham	<u>Shop Stewards</u>	Donald Parish
<u>Recording Secretary</u>	Joseph Farmer Jr.	Jacob Ayers	Brenda Quarles-Cummings
Anthony Garland	Gerry Garnett	Byron Barnes	Tracey Stokes
<u>Executive Board Members:</u>	Nathan Hall	Calvin Barnes	
James Alford	Judy Holton	Eddie Broidy	