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Wednesday, March 25, 2009

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## AME Happenings

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### County Admits It Has No Authority to Layoff Without Legislative Approval

3/25/2009 - Cheryl A. Felice, President

March 25, 2009

Union presence gets County to admit- "It has no authority to Layoff without Legislative Approval"

On Tuesday, March 24, 2009, approximately 1,000 AME members and supporters rallied at the Suffolk County Legislature for a "Union Strong, Levy Wrong" rally, protesting County Executive Steve Levy's proposed layoffs in IR#1205-2009 and his illegal act in sending out layoff notices prior to receiving legislative approval to do so.

"Over 5,000 letters were sent to hard-working County employees, and AME spent the weekend consoling our members who thought they lost their jobs"- President Felice told the Legislature. Member after member spoke to the legislators sharing their stories of despair after they received their Levy letter. Members working as few as five (5) years and some as long as thirty-nine (39) years all were subject to Levy's inhumane threats.

Nevertheless, Deputy County Executive Ben Zwirn admitted, "the County cannot layoff without the Legislature's approval," which Cheryl Felice stressed, that the County Executive did not have when he unilaterally issued thousands of layoff letters.

Members from the County print shop, who were on the layoff list as well, were actually given overtime to process the mass mailing at the taxpayer's expense. "I cannot possibly fathom the extent to which this man, who professes to be a competent fiscal manager, will go. The waste of all that paper, envelopes, ink, postage, and overtime costs, are exorbitant! He knew what he did was wrong, yet he did it anyway. This was just business as usual for Levy. Who is watching him to ensure he won't waste again? I think he should be forced to pay the taxpayers back from his own pocket", Felice added.

Felice pointed out that Levy's original proposal to the legislature calling for layoffs or concessions was tabled in the Budget & Finance Committee, thereby prohibiting Levy from acting. As such, AME will pursue filing an improper labor practice against Mr. Levy by the week's end.

The Legislature's Office of Budget Review provided a power point display of Suffolk's projected shortfall, which is estimated at \$100 million.

Legislator Ed Romaine (R) chastised Levy for "pouring acid" on a wound, when Levy acted alone to cause undo stress and heartache to the County workforce and their families.

Presiding Officer William Lindsay praised the workers for their display of union solidarity. Mr. Lindsay is the former Business Manager for IBEW Local 25 Brotherhood of Electrical Workers,

and asked that the Unions sit with the County Executive to address the ways the two sides could come together at the negotiations table.

"We remain available to discuss options to avoid layoffs, but we will not negotiate out of fear and certainly will not talk with a gun held to our heads," Felice said. "Further, I will say "NO!" to any accommodations without guarantees! While the county sits on a windfall of \$130 million dollars, amassed by not filling positions that were earmarked in the budget specifically for that purpose, my members were forced to do more with less. Levy, by not filling those positions, shifted the money into his "slush fund", called turn-over savings. Now, Levy wants the union to give more – without showing us any coherent plan. The union would like to know if the county has applied for all monies it may be entitled to from the Federal and State governments prior to demanding concessions from us. Levy hasn't said what concessions management will be accepting. Will Levy excise the many highly paid deputies and other non-union employees who were brought in during his tenure, or has he asked management, including himself, to return the raises they were recently given? Where is his leadership and vision?" Felice concluded.

The resolution remained tabled and was not discharged from committee while Levy filed, at the end of the day, a new resolution where he begins to address his overall recovery plan. Both resolutions will be on the Budget & Finance Committee agenda on April 21, 2009, as talks with the County continue. Watch the AME website @ [www.scame.org](http://www.scame.org) for continuous updates on our progress.

Cheryl A. Felice, President, on behalf of AME, is grateful to each and every member who gave up their time to stand arm-in-arm with their union brothers and sisters. Together we can do what we cannot do alone; that is the true sprit of unionism!