

## You asked, Your AME Delegates Delivered!

11/10/2009 - Cheryl A. Felice President

On 11/10/09, the second day of the Suffolk County Association of Municipal Employees Annual three-day Convention, AME delegates stood in Union solidarity as they unanimously adopted a constitutional amendment which succeeds in providing our AME membership with the ability to vote on contractual changes that occur between Negotiations. The members asked – and your AME delegates delivered!

As our independent Union held its 25th consecutive constitutional Convention, a strong feeling of accomplishment, pride, and solidarity permeated the room when 112 delegates unanimously adopted Proposal #16 providing the members with their right to vote on contractual changes, such as lag payroll, that may occur between formal negotiations. There were four (4) proposals from concerned AME members (13, 14, 15, and 16) which, in turn, were presented by the Constitution and Bylaws Committee, all of which dealt with the same issue. The fervently passionate debate on the four proposed amendments ensued for nearly three hours.

The AME Executive Board, together with every Unit President and/or Delegate, were all acutely aware of the membership's desire to achieve the right to vote on contractual matters, such as lag payroll, if and when they are proposed. However, the AME Constitution and Bylaws language inherited by this Executive Board and in its current form, prohibited a general membership vote in April 2009. The decision to accept a lag payroll and avoid lay-offs was left solely up to the Board of Directors when the issue surfaced during Suffolk's budget crisis earlier this year as sales tax revenues plunged over 10 percent.

As the debate neared conclusion, President Felice acknowledged thoroughly the merits of each proposal. In a process available to AME only as an independent Union, the delegates came together to amend and adopt a strengthened version of Proposal #16, which incorporated the strongest elements of all four proposals. All sides collaborated on the important venture, which gave way to the unanimous adoption. The thundering round of applause which followed culminated a fulfilled sense of achievement!

The new constitutional amendment reads as follows:

Constitution- Article XII- Contract Ratification-  
Section 3. Supplementary Agreements

"The Collective Bargaining Agreement is unique and shall be ratified following the requirements of Section 1 of this article. Agreements that change the Collective Bargaining Agreement that affect the membership at large shall be approved by the Board of Directors. The proposed agreements shall be presented to the Board of Directors using the exact wording to be incorporated. The Board of Directors shall send the proposed agreements to the membership for a ratification vote, before being executed by the President of the Association. Agreements that affect a single or a few members such as grievance settlements and upgrade approvals shall be approved by the Executive Board before being executed by the President of the Association."

AME Suspends Dues During Lag Payroll:

In another unanimously-adopted action, the delegates voted to suspend the collection of the bi-weekly dues for the remaining lag payroll on December 31, 2009.

The year 2009 was a fiscally challenging year for AME members, but in the end we proved our motto to be true: "The power and strength of our Union is in our membership and no one else. Become part of the solution!" And in the end, we did just that – together.

Congratulations to each and every delegate for the work that was completed on behalf of all of our AME members, our brothers and sisters in labor!

A full report on the entire Convention is being prepared and will be distributed shortly. A review of the Convention will be held at the General Membership Meeting on December 1, 2009 at 6:00 p.m. at AME. Please attend to be an active part of your Union!

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