Survey Shows Money Matters to Members

Near unanimous support in Unit 1 for fully paid health insurance

More than 550 Staff Guild members recently responded to a comprehensive union bargaining survey. The 37 questions cover a broad range of workplace issues, from contract demands to career development.

"Money is the top issue," said AFT Local 1521A President Velma J. Butler, "but members showed interest in a lot of workplace issues."

Members welcomed a chance to let AFT Local 1521A leaders know their priorities at the bargaining table, as well as how they feel about working for the LACCD.

Survey-takers ranked the contract issues on a scale from 1-10. Based on 549 responses, wages and pensions came in first and second, followed by holidays and vacations. Attendance incentives rounded out the Top Five. See the chart above.

Job child-care (60.7%), or that 87% of respondents believe the District can improve workplace safety. See charts on page 3.

Other workplace issues included: Outsourcing: Nearly 60% saw student workers and unclassified employees as a threat to their jobs – more than instructional special assignments (ISAs), contractors and volunteers combined. About 37% saw no threat at work.

Workload: About 57% of respondents said they face a stressful or heavy workload, with the rest rating it balanced or sustainable. When asked how often their workflow is interrupted, about 83% said Always, Often or Sometimes. About 17% said Rarely or Never.

Health and Safety: Fewer than 37% of respondents say their worksite takes steps to prevent injuries or assaults, and only 39% were offered

Our Union Affiliates Are Losing Their Compasses

By President Velma J. Butler

For 15 years, AFT Local 1521A members were directly represented on the L.A. County Federation of Labor’s Committee on Political Education (COPE).

The College Staff Guild and other smaller locals had a place at the table alongside the largest unions. Together, we built the County Fed’s COPE into one of the country’s most effective and progressive political operations.

That’s labor solidarity!

Miguel Contreras and his successor, Maria Elena Durazo, shared that vision. The Fed always charged us a per-capita fee based on our 1,400 members to sit on the COPE Board.

Not anymore. The current leadership wants us to pay as if we had 2,500 members. We refused.

The Staff Guild is not pulling out of politics. It has never been more important for unions to mobilize our friends and families to support public education and other vital issues. But we will work through our own Local

Audit Rates LACCD’s H.R. Division ‘Impaired’ — Page 2
LACCD’s H.R. Division Rated “Impaired”

After studying the Human Resources Division (HRD) for 18 months, an official LACCD audit has found dozens of violations of federal and state laws, policies and procedures, and labor contracts.

The director of the LACCD internal audit division, Arnold Blanshard, said the HRD’s “overall risk program is not acceptable” and gave the division an “Impaired” rating. The District, not surprisingly, didn’t circulate the unfavorable audit for five months.

Blanshard warned that the division’s “deficiencies place the District at an imminent risk of material financial loss, significant regulatory criticism, fines, sanctions or significant reputation damage.”

HRD describes its goal as striving “to create, support and maintain a positive and nurturing work environment.”

The audit, however, found 20 failures it ranked as “high,” eight that are “considerable,” and 10 “moderate” issues.

Some of the most serious lapses affect security, from failing to adequately protect employees’ personnel files from hackers and former employees, to documenting the fingerprinting and FBI screening process for new-hires in sensitive jobs.

Other shortcomings take a toll on employees’ wallets, such as mishandling applications for tuition reimbursement.

Auditors also found:

VanGinkle Promotes to SEIU 721

Mary VanGinkle remembers the moment when she realized that labor unions give employees a fighting chance on the job. VanGinkle began at LACCD as a student worker in 1993. She was on probation as a permanent employee – and serving as Staff Guild secretary – when she was terminated in 2000.

The union won back VanGinkle’s job, but the full impact of the victory didn’t set in until she attended her first board meeting after returning to work.

“No one was sitting in the secretary’s seat,” she said. “The Board was waiting for me to come back. That’s when I knew they were for real. They made me whole.”

After decades of union picket lines, contract negotiations and political activism, VanGinkle made her mark at AFT Local 1521A.

Now, however, something almost unthinkable has happened:

In March, VanGinkle began serving as a Senior Personnel Technician for the District Office’s Human Resources Department. That position is represented by SEIU, not the Staff Guild.

Congratulations on the new job, Mary! Keep up the fight!

Staff Guild Members Elect New Officers

The ballots were counted and results announced May 23.

Bargaining Survey…

Continued from page 1

health and safety training during the previous two years. About 57% said they have safe and ergonomically correct equipment at work. Survey-takers were also eligible for a prize drawing featuring a Fitbit, a $100 gift card and a $50 grocery card.

“We had a great response from members, which will help the union negotiate the best possible contract,” Butler said.

LACCD’s H.R. Division Rated “Impaired”

• More than 80% of performance evaluations aren’t completed on time.
• A 100% error rate for improperly documented probationary evaluations and missing documents in personnel files.
• Up to two-thirds of the files are missing results of tuberculosis exams.
• The division doesn’t have an orientation program for new-hires, or document that employees complete the required exit process as they leave.

Staff Guild members have the right under Article 18 of the contract to review their records for accuracy. Contact the District Human Resources office to make an appointment to review your files.

“Buy Out” Attracts Hundreds of Retirees

Hundreds of LACCD staff, managers and faculty have accepted a District offer to “sweeten” their compensation package if they retire this year.

About one-fifth of 1,639 eligible employees – including 138 classified staff – accepted the Supplemental Retirement Plan, and will receive a monthly bonus over five, nine or 15 years totaling 75% of their final base pay.

According to LACCD data, 75% of the average classified salary ($62,888 per year) translates to monthly payments of $781 for five years, $450 for nine years, or $287 for 15 years.

“The numbers added up for me,” said Staff Guild Grievance Secretary Fern Reisner, who will resign from Mission College at the end of December.

The District estimates it will leave up to 15% of the retirees’ positions unfilled, saving about $9 million in 2018.

Congratulations to all our retirees. Contact Barbara Harmon to join our Retiree Chapter at the AFT office at (323) 851-1521.


“Shoes That Fit”

When family budgets are squeezed, children often feel the pinch from hand-me-down shoes that are too small, too large, or too worn. The Staff Guild works with Shoes That Fit (STF) so all kids can attend school in comfort and with dignity, better prepared to learn and play.

AFT Local 1521A has adopted 12 L.A. Unified schools near the nine LACCD campuses, the District headquarters and the Staff Guild office. Representatives at each worksite collect funds and coordinate with their school to buy the right sized shoes for the neediest students.

Gratts Elementary School, for example, serves the neighborhoods just west of Downtown. The school’s outreach coordinator, Guadalupe Aguila, said most of her parents are blue-collar workers.

“This is a very deserving community. Our families are very hard-working, but it’s hard to make ends meet,” Aguila said.

After Staff Guild members at the District Office contacted the school, Aguila asked Gratts teachers to pick the neediest of the nearly 600 students in grades 2 through 6.

At the District office, Staff Guild activist Victor Hugo Ortiz sent an email asking 100 union members – as well as supervisors and other employees – to contribute. Ortiz also praised Smart & Final markets and Payless Shoes for their support.

“There were no small donations. Every one of them counted,” he said.

Aguila told the students who were selected a little white lie, that they had won a raffle for the shoes. “These kids and their families shouldn’t be burdened by the stigma of being ‘low income.’”

Ortiz and District Office activists met their goal of raising enough money to buy 100 pairs of shoes.

STF Committee Chair Mercedes Gaitan said the union has set a target of delivering 400 pairs of shoes in June.

Affiliates…

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1521A COPE. Thanks to your support, we have now set aside nearly $100,000 for political action.

The Staff Guild and members of other classified AFT locals are also being short-changed by our state affiliate, the California Federation of Teachers.

We know the AFT is a teachers’ union. It says so right in the name. But when we affiliated, CFT leaders told LACCD staff they would stand with us like brothers and sisters. That isn’t what happened during our most recent state officers election.

A new voting system gives an unfair edge to slates over individual candidates. As a result, only insiders chosen by incumbent leaders will have a seat at the top levels of our state organization. That is not democracy!

The Staff Guild has always stood up to management. Why must classified employees also stand up to our union leadership?