

# AFSCME U of M Strike Info FAQ

## September 2007

### **Insurance issues:**

#### **Will I lose my health insurance if I go on strike?**

Your health coverage will continue as long as you work one day in a pay period. This has been taken into account in developing the strike plan. Monday, September 3<sup>rd</sup> is the first day of the pay period. You would be covered for that pay period, and you would need to work one day in the next pay period in order to have the entire month covered. We are suggesting that this could be the last day, Friday, September 28<sup>th</sup>. It is highly unlikely that the strike would last that long.

#### **How are Retirement/FICA contributions affected during a strike?**

The strike will count as non-work time. No taxes will be paid, nor earnings reported, on time spent out on strike.

#### **I have a surgery scheduled. What if we're on strike?**

The Employer cannot rescind your rights under the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA). The Employer may require medical certification, in keeping with the FMLA.

### **Strike/Picket issues:**

#### **Can I be fired for striking?**

Legal strikes are protected by the Minnesota Public Employee Labor Relations Act (MPELRA). Your right to strike is guaranteed by law. If your supervisor threatens you in any way, contact the union office and we will take action.

#### **Can I be permanently replaced?**

No. Unlike the private sector, striking public employees cannot be permanently replaced. Under Minnesota Statute 179A (PELRA,) an employer cannot "grant the status of permanent replacement employee to a person for performing bargaining unit work for the employer...during a strike authorized by an employee organization that is an exclusive representative."

#### **What should I do if my supervisor threatens me about striking?**

It is illegal for your supervisor to threaten you about striking or to suggest that you will lose your job by striking. If they do so, please contact the union office so we can take action against them.

#### **If I am on probation should I strike? Will I get fired if I do?**

Probationary employees have the right to strike. It is unlawful for the Employer to terminate any employee for exercising their legal right to strike. If you would like to discuss your situation, call the union office.

#### **What is the Mutual Support Committee?**

U of M AFSCME has set up a support fund. Donations have been and will be taken from unions, from the larger community and from on-campus supporters. The Mutual Support Committee is responsible for administering the hardship fund and for mobilizing the additional resources of the Union and the community to meet the health and welfare needs of strikers and their families.

#### **I have vacation coming up, what happens to my vacation if I strike?**

The employer will not grant vacation pay while a strike is ongoing.

## **Strike/Picket issues: (cont'd)**

### **Can I work for another employer during the strike?**

Yes. Many employees will seek temporary and/or part-time positions. Retail enterprises will have begun holiday hiring and will likely be a good source of temporary work. Keep in mind that evening and weekend work will allow you to do picket duty and actively engage in other strike activities.

### **Where do I show up on the first day of the strike?**

We will attempt to call everyone to let you know what building you are to go to on that first day. There will be main gathering areas. If you do not get a call from someone at Strike Headquarters, please check for your picket location on your Local's web site: AFSCME 3937: [www.afscme3937.org](http://www.afscme3937.org). AFSCME 3800 [www.afscme3800.org](http://www.afscme3800.org)

### **Will I be picketing in front of my building?**

The first day calls for people to picket in front of your own buildings, but if you have reasons you would like to picket somewhere else let us or a picket captain know. We may move people around to meet the needs of the situation in order to have the most effective strike possible.

### **What happens if I don't strike? Do I have to strike?**

Once a decision is regarding the employer's final offer has been made (the reject or accept vote), and if the vote is to reject and strike, all employees are expected to honor the majority decision. Failure to do so will mean you are consciously harming the efforts of your co-workers. Once a decision is made to strike, every worker bears personal responsibility for the strength of the strike action. Every worker also needs to care about the needs of every other worker and help to make sure those needs get met during the strike. This is done by raising hardship funds from supporters, participating in the work of the mutual support committee and making needs known to union leaders.

## **Personal/Financial issues:**

### **What happens if I can't make my mortgage payment?**

We suggest you immediately notify whatever organization holds your mortgage (your bank, building & loan, credit union, etc.) to inform them that you may possibly be going on strike. Many companies have policies or procedures that may make a postponement or reduction of payments during the strike without adversely affecting your credit. Once you find out what the policies are please let us know. There may be other employees who can use this information for themselves.

### **What if I rent an apartment?**

You should get in touch with your landlord and inform them of the possibility of a strike. Once the strike starts, if you are not able to pay the rent, ask for a postponement until the successful conclusion of the strike.

### **How can I pay my utility bills?**

Notify all utilities (telephone, gas, electric, water, cable, etc.) of the possibility of a strike.

### **I have credit card debt. Will they let me skip payments?**

Notify any companies to whom you are making any payments for cars, furniture, department stores, credits cards, loan companies, etc. and inform them of the possibility of a strike. Find out what their policies are. Once the strike starts, if you are unable to make payments, you should give notification that you are on strike and request a moratorium on your accounts until the strike is settled.

## **Personal/Financial issues: (cont'd)**

### **Is there any help from the Union while I'm on strike?**

We have formed a U of M AFSCME Mutual Support Committee which is responsible for mobilizing the resources of the Union, the International, and the community to meet the health and welfare needs of strikers and their families. There is a committee of our members who will be establishing guidelines for distribution of funds in emergency situations, and they will be responsible for reviewing any applications. In addition, there are governmental and voluntary agencies in the community that can provide assistance. The Mutual Support Committee will identify these agencies, determine eligibility requirements, and develop a referral process for our members.

## **University-related issues:**

### **Could the University lock us out?**

The University cannot lock us out as long as we are engaged in a legal strike. We will be engaged in a legal strike. Any communications implying otherwise are simply attempts to intimidate.

### **If I had scheduled vacation during the time we are on strike, will I be paid for it?**

The University has said that vacation will be cancelled not only for striking workers, but other employees as well. This is at supervisor discretion and each individual supervisor has a choice about whether to do this or not.

### **Can I tell my supervisor that I am going to strike?**

Your supervisor cannot require you to tell him/her whether or not you are going to strike. To even ask you if you are going on strike is considered an unfair labor practice. It is up to you whether or not you want to give them that information.

### **Will I have to turn in my keys and secure cards and tell my passwords to my department?**

Your supervisor cannot ask you whether or not you are going on strike. They can ask all clerical workers in your department to turn in all keys and secure cards that are Department property. University policy on passwords to all systems is clear. It says, "Passwords must be managed solely by the authorized owner of the User ID. Passwords must remain confidential. Never share passwords with your supervisor or technical support staff." This is a direct quote from the following web site

[http://www.fss.umn.edu/sec\\_jde\\_passreminder.htm](http://www.fss.umn.edu/sec_jde_passreminder.htm).

### **Will I have to turn in my U Card?**

Your U card is personal property. You cannot be asked to turn it in to the department. For many people it is also an ATM card. If it is used for security access and your supervisor wishes you not to have access in the event of a strike, he/she will have to cancel that access through their normal channels but cannot do so by seizing your U Card.

### **What about my Regents Scholarship?**

As long as you work a certain number of days in the semester, your Regents Scholarship benefit is covered. If you are taking a class, ask the professor or instructor if s/he will move the class off-campus. If they won't, you can ask how to participate without crossing the picket line.

### **Will my Metropass be cancelled? How about my Parking Contract?**

Neither your Metropass nor parking contract will be cancelled. The University will bill you for any payments that were missed because you did not have a paycheck.

## Contact information:

### AFSCME Local 3260:

President:

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### AFSMCE Local 3800:

President:

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### AFSCME Local 3937:

President:

Barbara Bezat

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### Strike Headquarters:

University Baptist Church

1219 University Avenue SE

Minneapolis, MN 55414

Strike hotline:

**612-234-8772**

