



# A Real Voice for Quality Public Services

March 2010

## 1,000 MEMBERS AND GROWING



Our 1,000th member of FCGEU joined on February 22nd from the Neighborhood and Community Services Board. We've come a long way since the first member card was signed on November 16, 2005, by President Karen Conchar. FCGEU continues to be the fastest growing union in Virginia and is now the second largest union in Fairfax County.

Board of Supervisors Chairman Sharon Bullova congratulated FCGEU members on their accomplishment. "I have appreciated the opportunity to work with representatives of FCGEU, especially during the past two years," said Bullova. "They have provided a helpful forum for discussing employee issues. Congratulations on reaching 1,000 members."

### 2012 Budget Proposal Shows No Raise: Unless You're a Contractor

Despite a projected \$50 million shortfall in the budget, no raises for county employees for a third straight year and increasing health care costs for county employees, there is apparently still plenty of money in the budget to allow for \$3.2 million for raises for contractors.

In addition \$3.4 million was found for the new FOCUS software system.

Ask your co-workers to become members of FCGEU and make our voice louder as we work to improve this budget for general county employees.



President Karen Conchar had this to say on this achievement:

"I would like to thank each and every member for joining in our quest for a real voice for Fairfax County employees, from the first 87 members that started to the last 1,000 who joined.

We have made some great strides, returning the market rate adjustments to our salaries, representation on our retirement board and a voice on the benefits council that determines how your benefits are administrated. Only through your willingness to stand together to be heard were we able to accomplish this work. Our continued growth will assure even more rewards, so please urge your co-workers to join.

Again, thank you for your support."

### FCGEU CALENDAR

March 9: Noon - 1 p.m. Membership Meeting, South County

March 11-12th: Action Summit, Fairfax  
For more information on the Action Summit, call 571-432-0209.



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## THANK YOU, JOHN BAILS!

John Bails, an original FCGEU board member has decided to retire from his position due to the press of other commitments.

John has been a huge part of building this union from the earliest days to our recent milestone of 1000 members.



As a union leader in FMD, John worked to make FMD the first county agency with a majority of union employees.

John will be missed at FCGEU board meetings but we look forward to still seeing him often at the monthly membership meetings. Thanks again, for all you did to build this union, John.

## JOINING TOGETHER TO PROTECT OUR RETIREMENT

FCGEU had joined together with the teachers, firefighters and sheriffs unions to form a new coalition of unions. This new coalition is called SAFE, Standing Altogether for Fairfax Employees. Our first goal is to protect our defined contribution retirement benefits. The Fairfax County Board of Supervisors has commissioned a study of our retirement benefits to determine if we should continue to receive a defined benefit program or move to a defined contribution program, similar to a 401K plan.

The SAFE coalition has voted to advocate maintaining our current plans. To this end, we have or will be visiting each Board of Supervisors Member to provide information on our retirement plans and why they are so important to maintain.

The consultant tasked with this study will be reporting their findings sometime in the late spring or early summer. More information will be provided on the study as it becomes available.

## YOUR DUES ARE TAX DEDUCTIBLE

It's tax time! And, if you're itemizing when you file, remember that union dues are tax deductible.

Publication 17 from the IRS, under item 28 details the information you'll need in order to take advantage of this deduction.

## MEMBERS HELP WOUNDED VETERANS

The FCGEU/SEIU Executive Board recently voted to help sponsor the First Annual "Victory for Veterans" motorcycle ride that will be held on Saturday, August 6, 2011. The proceeds from this motorcycle ride will provide therapeutic horseback riding to veterans who



are undergoing rehabilitation at Walter Reed Army Medical Center. The 65 mile ride will begin at Groves Winchester Harley-Davidson and will end at Secret Passage Therapeutic Riding Center in Fort Valley, Virginia (they are a 501(c)(3) charitable organization). Registration for the event includes a barbecue at the end of the ride, or you can register just for the barbecue (without doing the ride). Any members interested in participating in this ride, volunteering to help with the barbecue and/or parking, or who wish to donate to the Secret Passage Therapeutic Riding program can obtain more information at [www.victoryforveterans.com](http://www.victoryforveterans.com).



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## The Union at Work

### YOU AND YOUR COMPUTER: KNOW THE RULES

It has become a more frequent occurrence for members to call us to ask about discipline or questions involving the use of their county computer and e mail accounts. In some cases, serious discipline has been proposed, including termination of employment.

County workers need to be aware that they don't have any inherent right to use county computers for personal use. The County has issued numerous directives and policies in recent years that make this clear. Yet, for whatever reasons, there continues to be a problem in the misuse of county computers, especially when it comes to the Internet.

The County's policy allows for "incidental usage" but this term has not been expressly defined. While it has been, in some instances, roughly correlated to break times, this is not a precise or accepted rule. Some usage may be excessive or inappropriate due to content, time of day, or any number of reasons.

In some cases, it has become a standard action for workers being investigated for other kinds of alleged violations to have their computer "dumped" with an eye towards scrutinizing inappropriate usage, resulting in additional workplace charges.

Some of the misunderstanding appears to stem from the idea that the employer is mainly concerned with inappropriate content, such as accessing illicit sites. But the real concern lies in the employee doing non work related items while on the clock. Simply put, when you're at work, you're supposed to be working, not doing on line shopping or playing games.

The Courts do not offer any relief on this. As numerous decisions have made clear, and county policy specifically states, the employee has no expectation of privacy in their use of workplace computers. Technically, misuse of a workplace computer can constitute fraud. If an employee put in for two hours of overtime, and was found to be on the Internet or personal e mail accounts doing personal business, they can be accused of defrauding the employer who is paying wages

for that time period.

One way trouble happens is the worker who accesses the internet briefly, but then fails to shut it down when done. As those of us who have worked these cases know, it appears that reams of data and time are generated when in fact the usage is minimal.

The best course for county workers is to make sure their computer use is work related. If you need to download something outside the normal scope of your duties, ask your supervisor or IT Administrator. If you have a funny joke you can't resist sending, do it from your personal computer to workers' non-county e mails. "Everybody does it" may be an unfortunate fact, but it won't serve as much of a defense. For more information, <http://www.privacyrights.org/fs/fs7-work.htm>

### GOT YOUR MEMBERSHIP PACKET?

New FCGEU members get a member packet welcoming them to the union and giving them information on what's available to them as a union member.

Whether you're a new member or joined years ago, we want to make sure you've gotten your member packet. So if you haven't seen one, please call Julie at the union office at 571-432-0209 and ask for one.

#### FCGEU Executive Board

**Karen Conchar,**  
President (DPWES)

**Joe Wilhelm,**  
Vice President (FMD)

**Paula Woodrum**  
Secretary (Fire & Rescue)

**Travis Mahrer,**  
Director (Police)

**Yvonne Dabney,**  
Director (Fire & Rescue)

**Jon Miskell,**  
Director (Housing)