

President's Message

Two Years In The Woodshed (a jay morgan reality show)

My main source for news is the website "daily KOS" found at <http://www.dailykos.com> . It is run by Markos Moulitsas Zuniga, a 33-year-old military veteran who had grown up in El Salvador and earned a law degree from Boston University after serving our country. The column below is reprinted with his permission.

Once upon a time, it was easy for the American Right to smear its opponents on the left -- they could simply equate them with the nation's communist enemies. It didn't matter that the American "left" (Democrats) had more in common with the Right than international communism, the smear was useful.

Now, however, our international enemy -- Islamic radicalism -- is actually the *polar opposite* of what liberals stand for -- their actions on women rights are deplorable, they insist on theocracy, they loooove torture and the death penalty, they demand to control the culture (TV, movies, music), they rail against rampant sexuality, they seek to spread their ideology via force, and they have a well-defined black-and-white sense of truth.

Does this remind you of a certain American political party?

That's why hysterical assertions by the wingers that liberals hate America and want the terrorists to win are so absurd. As absurd as it would've been to claim that Reagan wanted the Communists to win the Cold War. The Taliban/Al Qaida/Hezbollah/Jihadists of the world are the exact embodiment of evil in the liberal mind. They are everything we are against, and against everything we are for.

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The General Membership meetings are held on the 3rd Tuesday of every month.

Next General Membership Meeting:

Tuesday, April 19, 2005 - 5:30 P.M.

Administration Building – Training Resource Center

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AFSCME
in the public service

President's Message (can't)

In fact, they are exactly what we see in the Republican Party as the GOP continues to consolidate power -- creeping theocracy, moralizing, us versus them, embrace of torture, the need to constantly declare jihad on someone, hysterics over football-game nipples, control over "decency" on the airwaves, lyrics censorship, hostility to women's freedoms, curtailing of civil liberties, and so on.

So it's pretty obvious -- we don't love terrorists. We don't want them to win. For them to win would be to realize our greatest fears. The Muslim terrorist is truly the anti-liberal. Like matter and anti-matter.

Republicans, on the other hand, hate the terrorists because they're Muslim. But aside from that, they've got far more in common than they'll ever admit to themselves.

And it's high time we started to make that connection more forcefully.

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Did you know?

During the 2002 payroll year, thirty-three (33) Local 2019 and twenty-four (24) Local 444 members forfeited their One Day Special Birthday Float, saving EBMUD approximately \$18K; twenty-two (22) Local 444 members forfeited their Malcolm X Floater, which saved the District approximately \$7K.

During the 2003 payroll year, nineteen (19) Local 2019 and thirteen (13) Local 444 members forfeited their One Day Special Birthday Float; District savings: approximately \$10K. Fifteen (15) Local 444 members forfeited their Malcolm X Floater, saving Mother MUD approximately \$5K.

During the 2004 payroll year, twenty-one (21) Local 2019 and six (6) Local 444 members forfeited their One Day Special Birthday Float; District savings: approximately \$9K. Eleven (11) Local 444 members forfeited their Malcolm X Floater, saving Mother MUD approximately \$4K.

That's \$53K we've given back to the District in two years! By 2007, we'll have funded a shiny, new FTE (unfilled, of course). Please use your floating holiday(s) as soon as possible each payroll year! Don't give away a benefit we have fought to bring to our Locals.

By the way, do you know how many Local 2019 members have forfeited their fixed, Columbus Day Holiday over the last two years...approximately ZERO!

Have you ever been denied the use of your floating holiday? Were you forced to forfeit it? Let us know ASAP...ammunition for 2007!

Mark Foley

1st Vice President

AFSCME Local 2019

The Courage to say “NO”

When Angela Jackson became uncomfortable with her company’s business practices, she did exactly what she should have done. She went straight to her boss at US Seminar Corp. to express her reservations about the company’s refund and collection practices.

Later, after learning the federal government was investigating the company, she refused to follow the orders of owner Jeffrey Ribera to shred certain documents. Quietly, she was fired in November 2001 when she returned to work from her honeymoon.

Jackson has been vindicated in court over her firing, but her experience demonstrates a character trait that every worker should possess.

“It takes an act of courage for people to stand up like this,” notes Marc Lampe, a business ethics professor at the University of San Diego. “The reality is that this is a very difficult thing for most of us to do.”

Speaking up when you witness wrongdoing is a vital issue in today’s corporate world. From Enron to Peregrine Systems, the trail of accounting frauds seems endless.

In each of these scandals, some employees knew the actions of their companies were misguided, but said nothing. In Enron’s case, by the time the scandal became public, thousands of employees, shareholders, and customers had become victims.

Pinpointing the time to protest a company’s business practices is not easily defined. Each case is different. But Lampe says each of us has a responsibility to watch over the companies we work for.

“I think we all want to be loyal to our bosses and act in the best interests of the company,” he said. “But we also need to be aware of what we are being asked to do. When the orders we are given bump against our personal ethics, we have to weigh those things before acting.”

Most companies don’t intentionally do wrong. Sometimes they are myopic in their rush to succeed and sometimes they just make mistakes. But when those missteps are identified by an employee, sometimes the worker is viewed as an enemy of the company.

“I really think that when this happens, we have to recognize it as an early warning sign,” said Lampe. “Through the years we have used the term ‘whistleblower’ pejoratively, but whistleblowers have a very important function. They are the ones who speak up when they see wrongs. These people are often heroes.”

In Jackson’s case, San Diego Superior Court Judge Frederic Link said it was clear that Ribera had asked employees of US Seminar to break the law. He attempted to have them destroy documents that might be needed by federal authorities investigating whether the company deceived the public by claiming its Medicare reform classes were government mandated.

Link deemed it was evident that Ribera was trying to undermine the investigation, and Jackson was the one employee to protest to Ribera, which led to her firing. She was awarded \$489,000 in damages for lost wages and emotional pain and suffering.

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The Courage to say “NO” (con't)

Just two months before, federal authorities had sought a \$1,000,000 fine against US Seminar Corp. for alleged deceptive business practices.

Jackson's attorney, Josh Gruenberg, reports seeing more evidence these days of workers willing to come forward when they have been asked by their employers to do things that seem wrong. "This is very hard for employees," Gruenberg concedes. "The vast majority of workers want to get along with their co-workers and their employers. They want to be proud of who they work for and they very closely identify with their jobs."

When workers feel uneasy or uncomfortable with directions from their supervisor, they should speak directly to the supervisor. This isn't easy. It takes an individual with backbone, even if the protest is done for the good of the company. Sometimes, the news is received well. Other times, people wind up getting fired like Jackson.

But Gruenberg urges workers to point out wrongdoing when they see it, whether it is a safety hazard, unfair business practices or improper behavior in the workplace.

"There is a risk to everyone who speaks out," he cautions. "But most companies welcome this kind of feedback. But there will be cases where the employee is penalized. This is one of those cases that shows they have rights and that they are not necessarily between a rock and a hard place when they do the right thing."

Written by Michael Kinsman, columnist for the San Diego Union-Tribune

AFSCME Political Rebate—Another View

Here is a rebuttal to an article by Kevin Hangman that appeared in the February 2005 issue of On Tap.

I have to admire Brother Hangman's tenacity. He encourages members to ask for very small refunds on their dues each year based on the premise that the Union spends money on political causes that you might not agree with. He does this as a matter of principle, admitting that "maybe I am just stubborn." I would have to agree. I believe that he is being stubborn to the point of being willing to "cut off his nose to spite his face."

The factor that Kevin fails to grasp is that there is strength in numbers. In a democratically run organization like a labor union, the majority will determine how its funds are used. At times, money will be spent in ways that Kevin, you or I might not agree with completely.

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Rebate, (con't)

But I believe using that as a justification for demanding a few dollars of dues back each year is dead wrong. Kevin points out that he follows politics in the state and he probably votes regularly. He might even write letters to his representatives. All those acts have practically no value compared to the joint, cooperative action of our Union. When thousands speak together, legislators listen. When one person writes a letter, it is answered with a form letter from a college intern, never having passed over the legislator's desk.

The impact we have working together, even in times when we don't completely agree with each other, far outweighs anything individuals can do alone. Martin Luther King Jr. had some words of wisdom on this subject--words that changed an entire nation. He said that, "We may have come over on different ships but we are ALL in the same boat now." Kevin, and others who hurt the Union's efforts to act on behalf of the best interests of all of us, are ignoring this advice. I believe that he needs to look more closely at what "boat" he is in and act accordingly.

Think about this: When you invest part of your paycheck in a 401(k) or 457 account, do all the companies in that portfolio treat their workers well? Are they all exemplary environmental citizens? Do they have fair hiring and promotional practices? I ask these questions to point out that we all compromise our values at times in the course of life. But just try asking for a refund on a percentage of your retirement accounts based on the fact that they invest in companies that have policies that you don't agree with. It's simply not done. You have to live with some investments with which you simply don't agree politically or socially. It should be the same with the Union.

The challenge is to learn to appreciate what you ARE getting in life, not what you AREN'T. I'm not suggesting that you cast your principles aside, but that you realize that an organization of any kind isn't able to meet the exact individual needs of each of its members. With such a huge diversity of political points of view in America, organizations have to make informed decisions that benefit the majority while doing the least harm to the minority. This is reality. We need to learn to accept this and appreciate it. The minority in our Union still has the right to attend meetings, express their point of view, and try to influence others. If Kevin does this, it's possible that some day the Union might even support his causes and not mine. The I'll write his letters and he can write this one back to me.

By Bob Flasher

A member who is always willing to give others a piece of his mind. Fortunately, he only has a few pieces left.

P.O. Box 71288
Oakland CA 94612-7388

E-mail:



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WWW.AFSCME2019.ORG

To promote the welfare of the membership and to provide a voice in the determination of the terms and conditions of employment. We are committed to the process of collective bargaining as the most desirable, democratic, and effective method to achieve this. Both as union members and as citizens, we shall employ available legislative and political action.

To unite the Clerical, Technical, Service and Inspection, and Professional employees of EBMUD into a single cohesive labor union.

DISCLAIMER: Any opinion expressed by a contributor about a controversial subject is to be considered his/her own personal opinion, not the opinion of Local 2019 as a whole and should not be considered as an endorsement.

Upcoming Events

AFSCME People Conference, May 1-3, 2005 in Sacramento.

The Executive Board meetings are normally held on the 1st Thursday of every month.

Next Executive Board Meeting:

Thursday, May 5, 2005 - 5:30 P.M.

Administration Building - 7th Floor Conference Room