

## **Is a Strike Possible? How Will I Be Affected?**

It appears that Lane County is trying to force a strike. It's something we really don't want to see happen. A lot of people depend on the services we provide. We're going to do everything we can to avoid a strike, but we're also going to insist on a fair contract.

### **The Process**

Members voted by secret ballot to authorize the strike. A strike vote provides your negotiating committee with a stronger mandate at the bargaining table by sending the employer a very clear message that you support the negotiating committee and that you are serious about the demands they have made. The stronger the strike vote, the louder the message that is sent to Lane County management.

### **What to Do Now**

Planning well in advance of a strike will allow you to reduce any negative effects a strike can have on you and your family. You should:

- Plan a budget, stick to it, and start saving.
- If you work overtime, bank your overtime pay in a separate "strike" account. Plan to have at least enough saved to cover mortgage payments or rent and living expenses.
- AFSCME does not administer a strike fund (If we did, our dues would be much higher.) We do have a hardship fund to help those who are unable to pay bills because of loss of pay during a strike. Your local has approved \$20,000 to help those in need which will be available immediately after the strike starts. Council 75, our statewide organization, has also pledged up to \$100,000 to defray strike expenses and to meet hardships if the strike goes longer than seven days.
- Pay off or pay down your credit card debt and other bills. Creditors are more likely to work with you when you are on strike if you have paid your bills on time in the past.
- Schedule any necessary medical appointments. You may also want to talk with your doctor about lengthening your next prescription so you don't have to purchase drugs while on strike.
- Complete any important maintenance or repairs on your vehicles or home.
- Do not make any major purchases until the threat of a strike has passed.

### **What to Do If We Get Closer to a Strike: Personal Finances**

- Sell your TM and either pre-pay bills or increase your savings to use during the strike.
- Increase your W4 exemptions so you pay less in taxes and have more take home pay. Again, save this money for use during the strike.
- If we get close to a strike, it is a good idea to contact your creditors and advise them that you may be going on strike and you want to make arrangements now to reduce your payments should a strike occur. Most businesses would not have given you credit in the first place if they were not convinced that you would meet your obligations. They know that you will not be on strike forever and that you will pay your debt when you are back at work.
- Arrangements for loan payments vary by financial institution. Credit unions are often the most flexible. If you have been doing business with the same financial institution for a number of years and you have a good credit rating with them, they may agree to make 'interest only' payment arrangements.
- Talk with your financial institution well in advance of a strike. The key to dealing with financial institutions is to give them as much lead time as possible to make alternative arrangements.

### **What to Do If We Get Closer to a Strike: Health Insurance**

- If you are in a paid status on the first day of the month, you are covered for the rest of the month.

### **What to Do If We Get Closer to a Strike: Family**

- Make arrangements with friends or relatives to provide for child care while you are on picket duty. Or get together with your co-workers and develop a system whereby child care responsibilities are shared among yourselves. Make sure picket schedules are arranged in such a manner that when one group is picketing the other is available to take care of the children of those on the picket lines.
- Children, even young children, are very aware about what is going on around them. Therefore it is important that your children understand to the degree their age permits, what a strike is all about. Be sure to explain that it is a temporary situation that will not last a long time, remembering of course that a few days may seem like a very long time to a young child.

- Make sure you explain to your children that there will be enough money for food and that they will have a place to live, but that there will not be enough money to do things they may want to do, or buy all of the things they may want. This will ease the pressure on you to provide things you cannot afford during a strike.
- It is very important to include your spouse/partner in discussions about the strike. Keep them informed about what is going on. Let them know how you are feeling and what you are experiencing so they can be supportive of your actions and take some of the pressure off you.

### **What to Do If We Get Closer to a Strike: Stocking Up**

- Some people have found it advantageous to stock upon non-perishable food items and staples in anticipation of a strike. They keep an eye on advertising flyers, etc. looking for good buys and where they can purchase goods in large quantities at reduced prices.
- In some cases, co-workers will get together and purchase large quantities and divide the goods and the cost. People with home freezers will do the same with food that can be frozen.
- If you decide to stock up, purchase only those items that you will use whether or not there is a strike. Remember: not every strike vote leads to a strike!