



# The Public Employee

American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, Local 1624  
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April 2005

## Your Personnel Policies Negotiations Continue

### “Just Cause” Protections

AFSCME representatives have been meeting with City Administration for over a year to work towards agreement on proposed personnel policies amendments.

AFSCME ensured that all rights, protections and benefits would remain in Policy and that any future amendments had to have City Council approval.

AFSCME intends to include “Just Cause” protections in the Personnel Policies. Simply put, the language would state “no employee will be disciplined or terminated without a **“just cause”**”.

This language will eliminate the “At Will” employment status of City employees. “At Will” employment allows for an employee to be fired for “good cause”, “bad cause”, or “no cause”. “Just cause” ensures that COA employees are provided “due process”.

It is time for this 19th century employment doctrine to go the way of child labor, indentured servitude, and debtors prison. It is incomprehensible and embarrassing that the City would cling to such an antiquated idea that, quite frankly, is an insult to City employees. We deserve better and AFSCME will lead this charge.

AFSCME is also reviewing any and all procedures mentioned in Personnel Policy. We have learned the hard way that the procedures can make or break the intent of a policy.

## Creating Equality Closing the Gap Among COA Employees

Over the past several years City Management has bestowed very generous salaries, benefits and retirement packages for Police and Fire Department Civil Service employees. During this same period, regular COA employees received no pay raises, higher healthcare premiums, a freeze on reclassifications, and layoffs. AFSCME is pressing for substantial pay increases to close this gap.

| <b>Benefit Comparison: Police vs. Non-Civil Employees</b> |                                  |                               |
|---|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <i>Benefit</i>  | <i>Police</i>                    | <i>Non-Civil Service</i>      |
| <u>Pay Increase</u>                                       | 3.5%                             | 3.5% (for meets expectations) |
| <u>Public Safety Premium</u>                              | 2%                               | none                          |
| <u>Retirement Contribution</u>                            | Employees: 9%<br>COA: 18%        | Employees: 8%<br>COA: 8%      |
| <u>Bilingual Stipend</u>                                  | \$175/Month                      | none                          |
| <u>Longevity Pay</u>                                      | up to \$2500<br>(effective 2007) | up to \$1500                  |
| <u>Certification Pay</u>                                  | \$50-\$150/month                 | none                          |
| <u>Emergency Leave</u>                                    | up to 40 hrs of paid leave       | up to 24 hours of paid leave  |
| <u>Sick Leave Payout</u>                                  | up to 1020 hours                 | none (if hired after 1987)    |

One of the best methods to achieve equality is to level the playing field among COA employees. Collective Bargaining, Meet and Confer rights, or Consultation and Recognition are all effective methods to insure that COA employees’ unions have a seat at the table to negotiate for wages and benefits for the employees they represent. For our purposes, we will refer to this process as **Recognition and Consultation.**

(Continued on page 2)

(continued from page 1)

Recognition of the fact that COA employees have legitimate interests and issues which demand attention.

Also, recognition of AFSCME as the representative organization authorized to address these interest and issues. Consultation means not only discussing issues, but also achieving consensus and effecting an agreement that our City Council can approve and give appropriate direction on how to carry out the agreement.

AFSCME is securing City Council support for an ordinance that will recognize AFSCME as the union representing City of Austin non-civil service employees (after 36 years of doing this job, we have **earned** that recognition).

The ordinance will provide a means for AFSCME to negotiate agreements affecting wages, hours and working conditions.

These agreements can then be drafted in a Memorandum of Understanding for City Council approval.

Then, and only then, can COA employees rest assured that their interests will be represented each and every budget year to ensure that we do not continue to fall behind.

This is how equality is achieved.

Having a representative with a seat at the table **is** the difference between the haves and have-nots at the City. Police and Fire have seats at the table; the rest of us do not. That explains the difference in our pay and benefits.

**AFSCME Scholarship Program**

AFSCME's 2005 scholarship applications are now available online. Three \$1000 scholarships will be awarded to graduating high school seniors. The deadline to turn in all applications is May 13th. AFSCME's Scholarship Committee will review all of the applications and will conduct interviews of all eligible applicants on May 24th. Winners will be announced on May 27th.

Please check the website for more info.

**AFSCME's 2006 Budget Proposals**

**Looking For Your Feedback**

Through these past few years City employees (except Police and Fire) bit the bullet as we worked through a budget crisis. Inflation and the market have marched on, putting us further behind. It is time to catch up.

AFSCME proposes an **across-the-board market-based salary adjustment of 5%**, which is equivalent to the inflation rate. This adjustment would bring salaries closer to the market and would move pay scales forward accordingly.

In addition, we are advocating for a 3% Pay for Performance increase, effective October 2005, with an additional 1% lump sum for those "exceeding expectations" on their SSPR.

We are also developing a Bilingual stipend for those employees who are required to speak an additional language in the course of their jobs.

We are further requesting an additional 2% City contribution to employees' retirement accounts. This contribution is necessary to keep the fund solvent over the next several years. It will also help us achieve some parity with Police and Fire employees' retirement contributions.

We will be meeting with City Council members to secure support for our budget proposals.

If you have other ideas, please contact us on our website at [www.afscme1624.org](http://www.afscme1624.org).

**Did you know?**

The City Manager quietly put through a market increase for each of her executives in the average amount of **\$9400** annually. She did this while arguing how costly it was to allow every full time City employee to make no less than \$10.00 per hour.

Get organized so we can get your market salary increase in October. Sign up a co-worker. This is about **parity!**

Please check the website for more info.

# City Council Candidate Endorsements

AFSCME and the Central Labor Council have endorsed the following candidates for Austin City Council:

## Place 1 Lee Leffingwell

Lee has been active in Austin politics for many years.



Lee is a strong supporter of “**Just Cause**” protections for City employees, which will **eliminate** the “At Will” employment status of City workers. Lee is committed to helping City employees **catch up on the pay raises** that were eliminated during the City’s budget crunch. Additionally, Lee has pledged his support to help **AFSCME gain full recognition** as the City employees’ Union.

Lee will be a strong supporter of City employees and AFSCME.

## Place 3 Gregg Knaupe

Gregg received our endorsement based on his firm grasp of the issues affecting City of Austin employees.



Gregg will support an increase of the City’s contribution to **employees’ retirement funds**. A minimum increase of 1% by the City is needed to keep the Retirement Fund solvent.

Gregg is also a strong supporter of employee rights, including “**Just Cause**” protections, **collective bargaining** for public employees, and strong **AFSCME representation** rights.

## Place 4 Betty Dunkerley



Betty has a solid track record supporting City employees.

Most notably, Betty championed the AFSCME initiative to have all Community Care employees remain as City employees rather than having them transferred to the newly-created Hospital District, thus **protecting their retirement benefits**. Betty also voted to establish the **\$10.00 minimum living wage** for City employees.

Betty has committed to strengthening the **City Retirement Fund** and working towards a substantial pay raise for City workers.

We urge our members and their friends and families to support these candidates.

Remember, we are in the unique position where we can elect our “bosses”.

Contact the AFSCME office if you want to get involved in any of these campaigns.

**City Council Elections will be held on May 7th, 2005.**

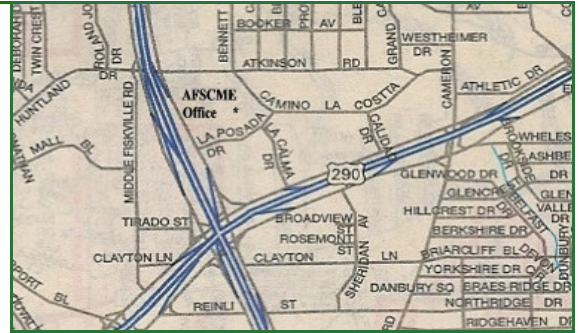
**Early Voting begins on April 20th, ending on May 3rd, 2005.**

**MAKE  
A HEALTHY  
CHOICE:  
VOTE** 

**AFSCME LOCAL 1624**  
**P.O. BOX 11671**  
**AUSTIN, TX 78711**

**Monthly Membership Meeting held at our Local 1624 office on the fourth Thursday of each month at 6:00 PM. 1016 La Posada Ste 285 Between Papadeaux & the Doubletree Hotel**

Our membership meetings are your opportunity for input into the decisions and to participate in your Union's activities.



Become an AFSCME Cyber Activist! Sign up for the Action Alert List and receive legislative alerts via e-mail. Visit the Legislative Action Center on our web site—[www.afscme.org](http://www.afscme.org)—to see current issue alerts and sample letters, and for the latest news and information about what's happening in Congress and how it affects you.

## Public Safety Revisited

Police, Fire and EMS employees receive a 2% Public Safety Pay Premium (\$1,000/year average). The rationale for this Premium Pay is that these employees' jobs are crucial to the Public Safety of our community, or perhaps because these jobs are inherently dangerous. In either event AFSCME would not argue against this premise.

We would argue, however, that there are many City of Austin employees whose jobs meet the same criteria:

Most obviously, **Airport and Parks Police Officers** (they do **not** receive Safety Premium Pay)

**Austin Energy** (try hanging from a high voltage line in the middle of a thunderstorm)

**Austin Water** (after all, you can't put out a fire without water)

**Solid Waste Services** (picture your trash left standing for a month)

**Public Works** (you can't get far on dirt and tar)

**Community Care** (does bubonic plague ring a bell?)

Our point here is public safety depends on all public services. Let's be fair, or to use another term, let's achieve PARITY !