

## Sunshine Report

November 2005 to April 2006

Submitted by Ellie O'Neil



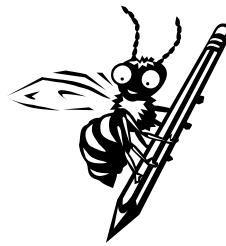
The membership's condolences go out to Jim Dorian on the loss of his mother and also to Mark Lawrence on the passing of his mother.

We send our strongest wishes for good health to Dolores Passarelli.

And hearty congratulations to Chaan Keut-Ya and family on their new arrival.

## The Buzz has landed!

About a month ago the entire membership received an email about the launch of a new feature in our newsletter. A column devoted to tips and suggestions we might want to share with each other. These tips could range from the name of a new restaurant you tried the other night that you feel deserves some attention to helpful suggestions for Spring cleaning/organizing that you feel the membership could benefit from. We're starting small this month but hope that as word about "The Buzz" spreads you will flood the newsletter editor's mail box (mgorman@ric.edu) with your up to the minute suggestions. Without further ado, here are a few tips we did receive to get the buzz going...



- From Jimena Resto: "I have a weight loss tip that I recently learned about that may be of interest: 'Hot water with a squeeze of lemon before breakfast gets the metabolism going for the day and is excellent for the skin.'"
- From Mike Gorman: "I cannot recommend enough the water workout programs run up at the Rec Center. The variety of water aerobics programs offered are awesome and you may find your class is being taught by a fellow PSA member. Hi Janice!"
- From Andrea Wiggins: "If you are looking for a fun, interactive dinner be sure to check out Fire & Ice in the Providence Place Mall. You get to mix & match your ingredients so no two meals are ever the same. Also, on Tuesdays and Wednesdays they offer a great meal deal that includes a movie ticket for the cinema upstairs."
- From Dominik Licygiewicz: "Being new to the area I enjoy making new finds. The revamped Lincoln Mall plaza area is a hidden jewel. With the brand new cinema, enormous Target, and variety of eateries, this plaza is a great place to spend a Saturday afternoon away from the chaos of the larger venues like Providence Place and Emerald Square."
- From Mike Gorman: "If you are a Disney lover like myself and you are thinking of planning a Fall trip be aware that Disney has just released a new discount for Fall getaways that will give you their new Meal Plan free for the duration of your trip. It is a limited time offer but a great way to explore some of the exotic dining locations they offer in the parks and at the resorts that you may have otherwise missed. Details at <http://www.wdwinfo.com>"

### PSA@RIC News

The Professional Staff Association  
at Rhode Island College  
AFT Local 3302  
600 Mt. Pleasant Ave.  
Providence, RI 02908

# PSA@RIC News

Professional Staff Association @ Rhode Island College

Equal Partners in Education

April 2006 Edition

Please make all submissions for June 2006 Edition to mgorman@ric.edu by May 26th.

## From the President...

I went down to the State House on Tuesday, March 21, to hear the Governor's staff defend the Governor's "personnel reform" legislation. The reaction of the House Finance Committee was cool to say the least. So it will be surprising if our Representatives allow the ill advised proposals to make it into law. But the alternatives to alleviate the looming budget gap include layoffs and will no doubt mean revisiting many of these "personnel reforms" at the bargaining table next year.

As you no doubt have heard, the proposals include eliminating statutory status (a guarantee against being laid off after 20 years of state service); freezing longevity at current levels so that it would no longer be granted to employees reaching their employment milestones (for us 10 and 20 years); forcing us to take two unpaid holidays; eliminating bumping during workforce reductions; and "Pay for Performance" bonuses of up to 3 percent annually.

I was struck by the ineptness of the Governor's team, led by Department of Administration Director Beverly Najarian. The bill was poorly written (Section 1 listed items that were not dealt with later in the Article) and poorly defended. When asked why the issues weren't raised in any of the bargaining sessions concluded last year, Najarian said they were unaware of the seriousness of the budget shortfall. The Finance Committee members chastised her for not foreseeing the problem (her highly paid staff and

consultants didn't have a clue) and for allowing her Directors to overspend their budgets.

The line up of union leaders arguing against the proposals was impressive. Council 94 President J. Michael Downey said that the Administration is trying to undo what they just agreed to last year in negotiations. Downey said he always honors a contract once it's signed and he expects the Governor to do the same. Others pointed out that passing the legislation would no doubt open up the floodgates of litigation because of the strong Constitutional (both U.S. and State of RI) language supporting contracts. Our own Jim Parisi of the Rhode Island Federation of Teachers and Health Professionals made the point that state employees had already paid their dues with health insurance co-pays and \$50 million in pension reform last year. And Bob Walsh of NEARI showed that the proposals would hurt Rhode Island businesses by eliminating \$42.4 million from the state economy.

The lack of vigor in defending the proposals lends credence to the theory that this is all a smoke screen to scare people into early retirement. But even if that's the case, the fact remains that there are serious budget problems that will be painful however they are dealt with. We in the PSA@RIC (and RICSA before us) have always approached these difficult issues with a sense of professionalism. We have not objected, indeed we

have been cooperative, when there have been honest attempts to sit down and deal with the problems openly and fairly.

And this is the clear difference between this Governor and previous administrations. During the difficult fiscal times in 1992, Governor Sundlun reached out to the labor unions and worked out a Salary Deferral Plan which allowed state workers to share the temporary pain but paid them back eventually. (Some of us still have the SDP time on the books.) Today, there are no signs that Governor Carcieri is willing to reach out to labor. He seems to have trouble enough communicating with agencies that would be affected by his proposals. When asked, his team admitted they had not communicated with the Office of Higher Education on any of these personnel reform proposals.

So where does all this leave us? For the short term, I will be surprised if any of these ill advised proposals get implemented. For the longer term, if solutions to the budget deficit are not forthcoming, we will again be faced with a tough road in negotiations to keep the benefits we have and obtain the pay raises we deserve. I ask your patience and your support during the difficult months ahead.

Rob Bower  
President

### In this Issue...

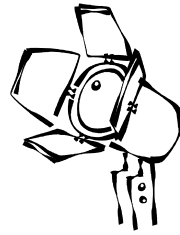
- **Highlighting the changes to the Appeals Process for upgrades**
- **The Plusses of being an AFT member**
- **The debut edition of "The Buzz!"**



A Union of Professionals

American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO

## Spotlight on The Updated “Position Upgrade Appeals Process”



What follows are the sections of our new agreement that focus specifically on the process a PSA member will now follow when making an appeal in regards to the upgrade of their position. The Executive Board encourages all members to closely review this process as the new updates present a clearer timeline for the process which should help clear up any confusion around the timing of each stage of the process.

### 23.1 Purpose

The purpose of this appeal process is to remedy inequities in the placement of positions in pay grades of members of the bargaining unit.

### 23.2 Right to Appeal

During the term of this agreement any employee who claims that his/her job description or job duties have been changed, or that he/she has undertaken additional job responsibilities, or that his/her job situation is unique so as to constitute an inequity with respect to the member's present grade shall have the right to appeal for a grade change as follows:

### 23.3 Internal Review

- The employee shall request a review by the President or his/her designee who will meet with the individual and the Association within fifteen (15) working days following the request.
- The President or his/her designee will conduct the appropriate research, and within fifteen (15) working days of the meeting with the member, will respond in writing to the employee and the Association stating his/her recommendation for approval or disapproval and the reasons for his/her actions.
- If agreement is reached with the employee and the Association, the recommendation will go directly to the Personnel Review Committee (PRC) for a hearing in accordance with the provisions of paragraph 23.5
- If an agreement cannot be reached with the employee, the appeal will be directed to the committee specified in paragraph 23.4.

### 23.4 Personnel Appeals Committee

- The employee shall request a review by the College Personnel Appeals Committee (PAC), a three (3) member committee comprised of one (1) member appointed by the College President and (1) member appointed by the President of the Association.
- The third member will be appointed by the President of the College with the approval of the

- Association.
- The committee will meet with the employee within ten (10) working days following receipt of the request.
- The staff member shall have the right to present evidence in support of his/her claim.
- The majority decision of the committee shall be set forth in writing, with reasons, within 10 working days following the last meeting with the member unless more time is needed to gather additional information.

### 23.5 Personnel Review Committee

- Written decisions of the above-mentioned committee will be forwarded to the Board of Governors Personnel Review Committee (PRC), the employee, and the Association within five (5) working days of the issuing of a decision.
- The Personnel Review Committee shall consider the appeal at the next scheduled meeting, but no later than six (6) months after submission.
- Decisions by the committee shall be reviewed by the Personnel Review Committee in an impartial and judicious manner.
- The Personnel Review Committee shall render its final decision within fifteen (15) working days of the hearing. This decision shall be in writing.
- If the appeal is denied, specific reasons based upon the evidence presented shall be set forth. Denials shall not be based upon financial constraints. A simple majority vote is required for a decision.

### 23.6 Employee Rights

The employee and/or the Association shall have the right to present evidence and testimony in support of his/her appeal before the PRC. The employee and the Association shall be notified one (1) week prior to each appeal hearing.

## Quick Note About Job Descriptions

From time to time, members have asked about how they might check on the accuracy of their job descriptions. The annual evaluation affords an opportunity to cover this with your supervisor. Our Human Resources department is presently readying this year's evaluation forms, which will soon go to all evaluators. Since job performance is directly related to the job description, take some time during your evaluation to discuss the present description with your supervisor/supervisee. In some instances, the wording of a job description may need to be tweaked to more properly reflect the current reality. If you do not have access to a current copy of your job description and feel that you need one, contact Janine Tegu in the Human Resources department. Janine should be able to either send hard copy or e-mail the description to you.

If you have questions arising from this process, feel free to contact Kathy Sasso at extension 8022.



# Make the Most of the Plus!

Did you know that there are a variety of benefits you receive for being a member of PSA through the AFT Plus program? Here is a summary of a few that you might find useful or might add some fun to your Spring & Summer plans. To get more details or see the entire listing of available benefits go to <http://www.aft.org/aftplus/index.htm>

### Financial Services:

#### **AFT Credit Card**

The AFT PLUS MasterCard is a union-endorsed card that can save you money and carries special union-member-only features you can't get elsewhere. Call 800/522-4000 for more info.

#### **Mortgage & Real Estate Program**

The AFT PLUS mortgage and real estate program is one of the most popular programs. This program makes buying or selling a home or condo or refinancing your present home easier and more affordable than ever. Call 800/981-3798 for more info.

#### **Education Finance Solutions**

The AFT PLUS Education Loan Marketplace™ is a one-stop array of resources to help AFT members and their families navigate financial aid options, locate scholarships and find the best college loan alternatives, including loans for parents helping children with their education. To access services, call 866/353-3184.

#### **Online Tax Preparation Service**

With the Union Plus online tax preparation service, AFT members and their families can use an online tax tool to prepare and file their taxes. This service is available for about half the cost of similar services from H&R Block and Quicken. Go to <http://www.unionplus.org/taxes/> to access this service.

### Travel Services:

#### **Car Rental Discounts**

Discount car rental programs with Alamo, Budget and National help AFT members stretch their travel budget. Available discounts include:

- Alamo Car Rental, 800/354-2322, Discount Code #93643
- Budget Car Rental, 800/455-2848, Discount Code #T544500
- National Car Rental, 800/227-7368, Discount Code #5130283

#### **Theme Park Discounts Tickets**

AFT members can purchase discounted admission tickets online for the Anheuser-Busch family of adventure theme parks, including SeaWorld and Busch Gardens (several locations), Water Country USA, Sesame Place and more. This feature saves time waiting in line at the park. Visit this site, <http://www.aft.org/aftplus/travel/themeparks.htm>, for more details.

#### **Hotel Discounts**

Save 10 percent off the "Best Available Rate" at thousands of participating Cendant locations throughout the world. These include Days Inn, Howard Johnson, Travelodge and more. To make reservations by phone, call 877/670-7088 or use the toll-free number for the hotel chains listed at <http://www.aft.org/aftplus/travel/hotel.htm>. Identify yourself as an AFT member and mention your AFT PLUS ID# to the operator: 20952.

### General Discounts & Services:

#### **Flowers**

With the Union Member flower service, you receive a 15 percent discount on every order. Selection includes floral arrangements, roses, plants, orchids, gift baskets and more. Call 888/667-7779 or order online <http://www.unionpriv.flowerclub.com/>

#### **Health Club Discounts**

Save at a variety of health clubs in our area. Program features include:

- Pre-negotiated 20 to 60 percent discounts on monthly fees at more than 1,500 health clubs nationwide
- Month-to-month membership—your membership may be cancelled at any time
- Ability to freeze membership and activate it at a later date
- Ability to transfer membership between participating health clubs for a \$10 transfer fee.

Call 888/294-1500 or visit [www.unionplus.org/healthclubs](http://www.unionplus.org/healthclubs).

#### **Magazine Discounts**

Save up to 50 percent on your favorite magazines and on gift subscriptions. Call 800/877-7238 to order, check a rate or obtain a current list. Or, you can visit [www.buymags.com/aft](http://www.buymags.com/aft).