

**SPECIAL
POINTS OF
INTEREST:**

- 2008 Victories
- Fed Stimulus
- EFCA
- Millage Vote
- College Separation
- Shared Governance

**INSIDE THIS
ISSUE:**

Fed Stimulus	2
EFCA	3
Millage/ Separation	5
Lobby/Poll Work	5
Governance	6

ANNUAL REPORT ON STATE OF UNION

The Federation’s constitution calls for an annual report on the state of the Union, affording the membership an opportunity to assess the achievements of the year concluding and challenges of that upcoming. In virtually every such report I have delivered since becoming Local President, I have emphasized how decisions in the legislative arena determine the fate of our College and our careers. On each occasion, I have struggled with how best to drive that message home, the message that legislative decisions – and legislative indecision – profoundly impact HFCC faculty, and that it is folly to forfeit the opportunity to influence the policy makers who influence our lives.

“...it is folly to forfeit the opportunity to influence the policy makers who influence our lives.”

If nothing else, the economic disaster which the nation now confronts should drive that message home. The failure of federal policy makers to establish adequate regulatory measures, and the failure of bureaucrats to enforce those in place, have produced a national economic crisis that is driving unprecedented numbers of students and displaced workers to our College and, at the same time, diminishing the revenues necessary to serve these students.

2008 Victories/2009 Realities

Last year, Local 1650 spent a great deal of effort supporting candidates for State office who faced recall and opposition because they sought to address the State’s budget crisis with a combination of budget cuts and revenue increases – and not with budget cuts alone. In 2008, the Federation pointed out yet again that calls for budget cuts alone are in fact calls to cut HFCC revenues. Because of an ideology obsessed with cutting taxes, embraced by some legislators and feared by others, HFCC’s State aid currently stands in actual dollars at 1999 levels.

“...calls for budget cuts alone are in fact calls to cut HFCC revenues.”

Twenty years ago, State support for HFCC amounted to approximately 50% of College revenues and tuition 30%. Those numbers are now reversed. This fact drives the Local's efforts to elect State officials who will work to reverse this trend. In 2008, seven of the eight State legislative candidates actively supported by Local 1650 won election. In addition, the Local supported Diane Hathaway in her victory over Michigan Supreme Court Justice Clifford Taylor, whose decisions had undermined teacher collective bargaining rights, retiree health care coverage, and political action payroll deduction. In 2008, candidates for federal office endorsed by the national AFT and AFT-Michigan were overwhelmingly successful as well.

“Twenty years ago, State support for HFCC amounted to approximately 50% of College revenues and tuition 30%. Those numbers are now reversed.

This fact drives the Local's efforts to elect State officials who will work to reverse this trend.”

However, before these newly elected officials could take office, corporate greed, regulatory myopia, and the Bush Administration's inept response to the resulting banking crisis combined to drive the U.S. economy off a cliff. Nevertheless, in the entire U.S. Congress, not one Republican Representative and only three Republican Senators could be found to support an economic stimulus package addressing the severe recession inherited by the Obama Administration.

Fed Stimulus Package and HFCC

The \$787 billion American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), which emerged from the House-Senate Conference Committee, heavily influenced by the three Republican Senators whose votes were necessary for passage, provides less funding than either the House or Senate version and cuts nearly \$50 billion from State stabilization school construction funding.

What lies before us now is (1) the hope that this package, far less than a broad spectrum of economists believes necessary, will prove sufficient to the task and (2) the hard work of lobbying the Michigan Legislature for the ARRA funds the College needs to serve the large influx of students and workers seeking a better future at HFCC.

The College has already submitted several infrastructure projects for consideration under the ARRA, focusing on the SME Building, a parking structure, and adaptation of a facility adjacent to M-TEC for the Nursing Program.

If the College is successful in securing ARRA funds for these projects, amounting to \$20.5 million, it will take a great deal of pressure off the College's operating budget. With that pressure diminished, greater funds will be available for the expansion of course offerings and

programs to address the College's soaring enrollment; the needs of displaced workers; the hiring of additional, much needed full-time faculty; and equity for the College's underpaid adjunct faculty.

The ARRA is intended to generate employment growth near-term with "shovel-ready" projects and long-term by educating and training students for high skill jobs. What is not mentioned in the current debate and bill is that a major jobs program is needed for those who will educate and train these students.

A "mind ready" jobs program is needed to employ full-time faculty, whose numbers have plummeted across the nation over the last 25 years. Today, over one-half of the instruction at most of the nation's colleges and universities is performed by contingent faculty, most of these being underpaid adjunct faculty. At many institutions, this percentage approaches 70%. Over a period of 25 years, college faculty have become largely a profession of "displaced workers."

"A 'mind ready' jobs program is needed to employ full-time faculty...."

When HFCC enrollment was last over 17,000 students, as it is now, full-time HFCC faculty numbered 225. The Federation seeks to return to that number. Our booming enrollment, Dr. Mee's initiatives for the College, and the responsibilities of shared governance require such.

The ARRA provides a very "high stakes" opportunity to relieve the College's severe local and State revenue shortfall, but only if Local 1650 members engage in the legislative arena, where the fate of these "high stakes" and HFCC's future will be determined. Shortly, the Local's Legislative/Political Action Committee will call upon each Local 1650 member to call, e-mail or write and visit their State legislators. Our decisions to do so – or not to do so – will profoundly impact our College, our students, our professional lives, and our livelihoods.

"The ARRA provides a very 'high stakes' opportunity to relieve the College's severe local and State revenue shortfall...."

Employee Free Choice Act

Some time in 2009, another piece of federal legislation will be introduced, also vital to the economic well being of the middle class and HFCC faculty. Since the 1970's, the percentage and number of unionized workers in the U.S. has plummeted and, with that, the standing of the middle class. This has happened

despite the fact that repeated surveys indicate a majority of U.S. workers would prefer to work in a union environment – as a means of advancing their economic interests, job security, and dignity in the workplace.

“The viability of the union movement in this country is important to the nation because it generates and advances the middle class and, in turn, the economic health and social stability of the country.”

The Employee Free Choice Act (EFCA) is designed to level the playing field in union-management relations – a playing field now heavily favoring management. EFCA will permit employees to form unions upon achieving a majority of signed authorization cards, rather than through an election process.

Too often employers stall the election process – which they characterize as a vital feature of democracy – and use the time to intimidate employees and fire those perceived as union supporters. Since employers often drag out the negotiation of a first contract for years in hope of destroying a new union, EFCA also requires binding arbitration to resolve impasse in the negotiation of a Union’s first contract.

The viability of the union movement in this country is important to the nation because it generates and advances the middle class and, in turn, the economic health and social stability of the country. The overall strength of the union movement is important to HFCC faculty because its achievement of middle class incomes, comprehensive health benefits, and sound pensions in the private sector made such possible to achieve in the public sector. As these union achievements in wages, benefits, and pensions disappear in the private sector – and they are rapidly doing so – it will be impossible to maintain them in the public sector. No elected official will support these things for federal, State, county, municipal, or HFCC employees if their private sector constituents do not have them.

“Do not believe for an instant that HFCC faculty are immune from the ‘race to the bottom’ already well underway in the private sector.”

Do not believe for an instant that HFCC faculty are immune from the “race to the bottom” already well underway in the private sector. There will be no island of economic security in higher education or at HFCC absent a vibrant middle class in the private sector. The decline of the middle class – the nation’s true economic engine – parallels the decline of private sector unions. Support of EFCA will be an important part of Local 1650's legislative agenda in 2009 because it is vital to preserving the nation’s middle class and, in turn, the economic standing of HFCC faculty.

HFCC Millage Renewal/College Separation

On the local level, 2009 will bring either a ballot proposal to renew one-half mill for the College's operating budget or a ballot proposal to separate the College from the Dearborn Public School District. If separation is on the ballot, so too will be a charter millage for the College and an entire Board of Trustees.

"2009 will bring either a ballot proposal to renew one-half mill for the College's operating budget or a ballot proposal to separate the College from the Dearborn Public School District."

The Federation must be prepared to support the College's interests in a millage renewal or separation question – with funding and volunteer effort. Local 1650 members have strongly supported the Local's political efforts in the past with the contribution of funds. There is virtually no other union in the country where 90% of its members contribute \$100 annually for political action. However, a Michigan Supreme Court decision ruled illegal the payroll deduction of political action funds. This took effect at HFCC last November, with the result being that from November 2008 through May 2009 payroll deductions were not and will not be collected from the 30% of Local 1650 members who elected to contribute via payroll deduction rather than check. This has diminished the Local's current political capacity and will do so next fall as well. Area Representatives are contacting members who have pledged through payroll deduction in the past, asking them to fulfill that commitment by check. It is critical that these members do so.

Lobbying and Poll Work

The Local has been less successful, though, in generating volunteers to write and visit their legislators on issues important to the College and to work the phones and polls in support of candidates who support education. This was not always the case. However, even with the Local 1650 Legislative/Political Action Committee developing sample letters or providing electronic links to contact legislators, few members utilize these relatively painless measures to educate elected officials about the College and its needs.

"The Local has been less successful, though, in generating volunteers to write and visit their legislators on issues important to the College and to work the phones and polls in support of candidates who support education."

In the recent HFCC Trustee election, the two successful candidates had volunteers at virtually every polling place distributing literature from 7 a.m. - 8 p.m. This was particularly effective given the large number of voters turning out for the Presidential race but unaware of the Trustee race.

Shared Governance at HFCC — the History

“The Constitution for the College Organization, the controlling document of shared governance at HFCC, was the product of Local 1650’s first contract.”

Lastly, in keeping with the theme of this report, permit me to turn to politics internal to the College. Yes, you will be shocked to learn that politics operate within HFCC’s hallowed halls.

Last month, at the request of Local 1650 members, the Federation devoted much of its General Membership Meeting to a discussion of the current state of shared governance at the College. Many of those concerns are summarized in the February 1650 Report and have been reviewed earlier today. An article in the February 1650 Report also cites the history of Local 1650 in negotiating and preserving shared governance at the College. That history bears repeating.

The Constitution for the College Organization, the controlling document of shared governance at HFCC, was the product of Local 1650’s first contract. In September 1966, Local 1650 was the first faculty collective bargaining union in the country to go on strike. That strike was largely undertaken to overcome the Administration’s refusal to codify the principles of shared governance in a constitution and its refusal to sanction what was then called the Faculty Senate.

“The two week strike produced the Local’s first contract and the Constitution delineating shared governance...”

The two week strike produced the Local’s first contract and the Constitution delineating shared governance and a Senate distinct from Local 1650 and separate from the Local’s operating structure, all of which is protected by Article IV.C. and the grievance procedure of the contract.

For at least two decades following the establishment of the Constitution, the College Administration repeatedly attempted to negotiate it and the Senate out of existence. The Administration felt that Union should take over the college governance structure, but the Union refused. The Federation believed then and believes now that the College is best served with two institutions representing its faculty: the Union on matters of wages, hours, and conditions of employment – and the Senate on matters of educational and institutional policy.

Ultimately, both the Local 1650 contract and the Constitution for the College Organization are documents which empower faculty. Both documents define the rights of faculty, one in matters of employment and the other in matters of professional standing. In doing so, both limit the power of management.

Both documents provide the opportunity for broad and substantive engagement by faculty in decision making at the College. Checks on managerial power and the engagement of many minds in decision making produce labor, educational, and institutional policies that are far sounder and more broadly embraced than would be policies deriving from a few administrators in a rigid, hierarchical system.

“Ultimately, both the Local 1650 contract and the Constitution or the College Organization are documents which empower faculty.”

HFCC’s full-time faculty have come to the College and spent their careers here, in part, because of the wages and benefits of the Local 1650 contract. Equally important, though, has been the professional standing and professional fulfillment conferred to faculty by HFCC’s shared governance tradition and its controlling document.

A final observation regarding what shared governance is and what it is not. Shared governance entails far more than a participatory management style. The opportunity for faculty to provide input is only one part of shared governance. Under the Constitution, the faculty and administration share responsibility for matters of educational policy, meaning that all educational policies, following opportunities for faculty input, are subject to debate and a vote of approval or dissent by the College Organization or Senate. Educational policies then proceed to the Trustees for action, carrying with them such approval or dissent. In this year as in the past, College faculty must protect and exercise their political role within the College, if the College is to have sound policy and faculty are to maintain their professional standing.

“The opportunity for faculty to provide input is only one part of shared governance.”

2009 will be a difficult and demanding year. The effects of the federal stimulus package are not likely to manifest themselves in the economy before 2010. Nevertheless, HFCC faculty must, as always, support legislators who invest in the nation’s future. Very soon we must, as well, do the political “heavy lifting” necessary to assure that HFCC receives its share of federal funds – if we are to provide the students and displaced workers who come to us with the skills critical to secure careers and the education vital to a discerning and engaged citizenry.

“...we must, as well, do the political “heavy lifting” necessary to assure that HFCC receives its share of federal funds....”

John McDonald
February 16, 2009