

# The Union Bug

Published for the members of the United Staff Union

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## WEAC/UniServ Associate Staff Bargain Update

The Associate Staff have reached a tentative agreement with management for a 2004-2008 contract. Details have been distributed electronically and a ratification vote is scheduled for Saturday, December 11. A summary of the tentative agreements appears below.

The bargaining team is made up of **Bonnie Breivogel, Cindy Jensen, Shorty Ott, Neva Paque, Kathy Spannauer, Louise Uphoff, and Fred Andrist**. After two preliminary weekend bargaining sessions, negotiations took place in July and August. Each session took place over a three to four day period.

1. Point of Service Plan with no deductible for Level 1 usage with a 0/5/20 drug card
2. Increase of Union days from 100 to 134 days per contract length
3. New hires participate in orientation
4. One sick day may be used to attend a funeral of a person not in the immediate family
5. The provisions of the Family Medical Leave Act apply to all employees
6. Once vacation time is granted, if canceled by the Employer, then the Employer shall pay any costs actually incurred
7. If an office is officially closed due to an emergency or inclement weather, employees will not be required to report to work and will not suffer any loss of compensation or leave
8. Regarding the 25% retirement contribution by the Employer, new employees will be vested after 2 years rather than 5 years

9. A revised post-retirement benefit. Instead of 1% of salary and \$100 per year of service after 19 years; a dollar amount that applies to everyone which increases during the term of the contract from \$600 to \$1,000 per year of service. As with the 1% of salary in the previous contract this money would be used for insurance costs after retirement. The new language includes survivor benefits and pro rata benefits for people with 10 years or more of experience who meet the rule of 75.

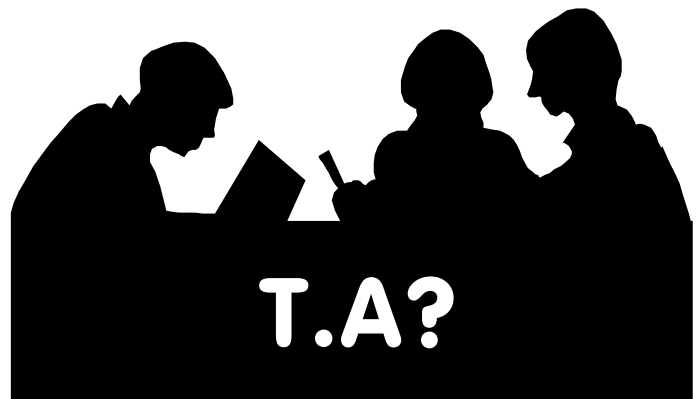
10. True severance language, \$100 per year, for people with 5 to 10 years of experience

11. Increased relocation expenses from \$1,200 to \$1,500

12. An evergreen clause that extends the contract after it expires until a new agreement is ratified

13. Two steps removed from the beginning of the salary schedule with some balancing of steps after which the following adjustments for each year of contract - 3.25%, 2.5%, 2.5% and 2.25%

14. Other editorial changes and the appropriate date changes



# USU Retains Attorney

After an extensive interview process the USU Board voted at their November meeting to retain the legal services of the Milwaukee based Law Offices of **Mark A. Sweet, LLC**. This action was taken based on a recommendation from a committee comprised of Chair **Steve Cupery, Deb Byers, Dennis Eisenberg, Melissa Thiel Collar, and Louise Uphoff**.

After reviewing several law firms the committee interviewed two. Based on those interviews and checking with references and backgrounds, the committee highly recommended Mark Sweet. One

of Mark's references said this about him and his law firm: "We couldn't do better. They were very pleased with his work." The reference went on to use the following words, "competent, thorough, our members and representatives enjoy working with him, very timely and conscientious, with a deep commitment to the labor movement."

The retainer is based on a per member charge and is for preliminary advice. Should we need him for front line representation an additional per hour charge applies. Based on how much we use him for preliminary advice, the retainer in future years will be adjusted up or down.

# Sears-Kmart Mega-Merger . . .

(Troy, Michigan-AP) Nov. 17, 2004 - Kmart and Sears, Roebuck have agreed to merge in a deal that will create the nation's third largest retailer.

The new company, named Sears Holdings Corporation, will have 2250 full-line and off-mall stores, and 1100 specialty retail stores with approximately \$55 billion in annual revenue.

The fifth-ranked Sears and tenth-ranked Kmart businesses will continue to operate separately under their respective brand names. The agreement was approved unanimously by both

firms' boards. Headquarters will be located in suburban Chicago, but Kmart will also keep a base in Michigan.

The merger is expected to take place in March of 2005 and could help the struggling companies bounce back from bankruptcy filings and sagging sales. K-mart emerged from bankruptcy in May of 2003 and last March posted its first profitable quarter in three years.

Competitors Wal-Mart and Target have taken the biggest chunk out of revenues for Sears and Kmart over the years.

# . . . and the Impact on American Workers

According to SEIU, the Sears-Kmart merger underscores a dark American economic reality: The retail corporations that have been struggling to stay afloat because of Wal-Mart are now mimicking the same business model that threatens them.

"A predatory business model that sends wages spiraling across several industries, exploits workers by failing to provide decent pay, and destroys responsible competition should be eliminated, not emulated," said Stern. "Corporate bottom-feeding may lure consumers with low prices, but it's far from a bargain for the American economy."

Last week Andy Stern, President, Service Employees International Union, presented a bold 10-point plan—called "Unite to Win"—to change the labor movement's priorities and structure to take on 21st century global corporations and improve workers' lives. The first and most pressing point is to challenge the "Wal-Marting" of American jobs. The plan proposes that organized labor flow an initial \$25 million per year to combat Wal-Mart's low-wage, no-benefit business model that threatens to drag down standards throughout the economy.

More can be found at [www.UniteToWin.org](http://www.UniteToWin.org)

