

JUNE 9TH, 2020

AFSCME 3 NEWSLETTER

Member Spotlight: Relford Matthews

Facilities Maintenance Tech, University of Maryland Eastern Shore



We organized this caravan to stand up for what is right. Our union has always been on the vanguard of the civil rights movement. We planned an event in Salisbury to honor the past and fight for the future. Working at the University of Maryland Eastern Shore gives me the opportunity to meet and assist young black people during a critical time in their lives. I am here to lead the fight for students and staff to have a safe campus regardless of skin color.

COVID 19 PANDEMIC AND MARYLAND STATE AND HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

As Maryland looks to reopen its state office buildings and public higher education institutions, ensuring health and safety in the workplace must be the highest priority. AFSCME Council 3 has been demanding testing, personal protective equipment (PPE), plans and emergency pay for essential employees who have been showing up to work daily during this crisis. The Department of Budget and Management (DBM) and the University System of Maryland (USM) have often been slow to react, and inadequately prepared. This has left workers on the frontline without the resources they need to effectively fight the virus, and Marylanders in need of public services unable to access them.

Reopening workplaces is far more complex than closing them and it is imperative that occupational health and safety regulations, procedure's, and systems provide the basis for return to work, as well as in situations where work has continued. In these documents, we outline the necessary steps and best practices that all State Agencies and the USM need to follow to ensure that workers, those they serve, and their families stay safe during this pandemic.

We also recognize the disproportionate impact the COVID-19 virus is having on black and brown communities in Maryland. The unprecedented demand for state services exacerbated by racial inequities in healthcare, the economy, and the criminal justice system, means that now more than ever we need every state and higher education employee on the frontline fully equipped and ready to serve Marylanders. An unprotected worker is an unprotected community.

Please visit our website to download the full guide!

First Maryland Correctional Officer Loses Life to Novel Coronavirus

AFSMCE Maryland extends our deepest condolences to the Officer and her family. Over 70% of positive COVID19 cases in DOC are among staff. With staffing levels already critically low prior to the pandemic beginning in March, many Officers are working extra shifts and mandatory overtime to maintain staffing levels. It's critical that Governor Hogan act immediately to fund the frontlines and support frontline workers who continue to report to all facilities, especially congregate care facilities. Returning and re-opening our economy safely necessitates prioritizing the health and safety of frontline workers and the Governor needs to take immediate action to provide clear guidance to all state agencies on how to safely resume operations.

JUNE 9TH 2020

AFSCME 3 NEWSLETTER

An Update from Council 3 President Patrick Moran:

As union leaders, as community leaders we are disturbed by those who wrap themselves in the flag to defend behavior that we know runs counter to what we strive for as Americans. There are those who are pushing and working hard to convince us that bullying, taking advantage of the impoverished and those without power, is somehow an "American Value". It is un-American for any person to be killed in the custody of those that are sworn to protect them. It is un-American for citizens to have to fear for their lives because they are of a certain race, class, religion, origin, or orientation. It is un-American to call citizens "hoodlums" or "terrorists" when they are peacefully exercising their first amendment rights of freedom of speech or assembly. It is un-American to call racists and Nazis, "good people." As union people, we are used to fighting the good fight.

Every day at work we are working to right wrongs, to give a voice to those who are afraid to speak. We need to continue our struggles in the workplace and out into society as a whole. Despite the grave injustices in our history we are proud of being Americans. Although sometimes the goal seems far away, we can and must build a country where one is judged by their character and not the color of their skin. It is VERY AMERICAN to expect that EVERY member of our society has a right to engage in their community without fear of reprisal. It is VERY AMERICAN to live a life peacefully and productively regardless of one's race, class, religion, origin, or orientation. It is VERY AMERICAN to call out those in power when they are denying us our right to peacefully practice our freedom of speech or assembly and threaten us with violence by using our own military against us. It is VERY AMERICAN to stand up to racists and Nazis.

That is the America EVERYONE is owed, not just the rich and powerful, ALL of us! That is the America we must stand for and not expect anything less. Just like with anything else in life, this world will not just be given to us, it is a world we have to struggle for, and to build together. We stand with the majority of Americans that stand for ALL!

HEALTH AND SAFETY NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM OF MARYLAND AND UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND, COLLEGE PARK

Last week leaders from AFSCME's University System schools met with Vice Chancellor Carolyn Skolnik and her team to begin negotiations about safe re-opening of campus. Members raised serious concerns about how as a system folks should be following the same protocols, and getting the same necessary equipment. We are awaiting written responses from management and dates to follow up. Also last week AFSCME leaders from UMCP bargained with senior mgmt. about ongoing health and safety issues as well as re-opening. Members were joined on the call by Del. Joseline Pena-Melnyk who emphasized the need for a real dialogue and conversation. Members spoke out about being pressured to return to work when it was unsafe as well as the University's failure to communicate with AFSCME and our membership. More dates for talks are on the horizon. Other AFSCME represented schools, Morgan State and St. Mary's College of Maryland have dates to meet with management in the coming weeks.

AFSCME 3 NEWSLETTER

BALTIMORE CITY & THE BOARD OF ELECTIONS: YOU JUST KEEP US HANGIN' ON...

As of Friday morning, the city of Baltimore didn't know who their new mayor would be - but did know it wouldn't be the incumbent. They also didn't know who their City Council President would be, nor did they know their next City Comptroller. In addition, at least six City Council seats hadn't been decided. What happened?

Unfortunately, a perfect storm of misprinting, mis-proofing, and a large number of Coronavirus induced mail-in ballots are causing the delays. None by themselves would cause delayed citywide results. Together? It could be days before official results are submitted, which had to be done by June 12. Of the votes counted so far in the race for mayor, former Baltimore Mayor Sheila Dixon led with less than a third of the vote total (30%), followed by City Council President Brandon Scott (25%). Two other candidates received over 10%. Dixon, who has a strong core of supporters but also high negatives because of a gift card scandal during her previous term, seemed to benefit most from the highly segmented outcomes, creating calls for election reform.

Some have called for a "top two" run-off if no one receives 50% of the vote. Others have called for "ranked-choice" voting, which asks voters to rank in order of preference the candidates. Results would then be finalized as the voters' ranked choices eliminated candidates. For more information on ranked choice voting, please go to www.fairvote.org/ranked_choice_voting.

The proofing error occurred in the City Council District 1 race, causing a manual recount of the votes cast. This in turn has delayed the counting of mail-in ballots for the other races. Leadership of the Maryland General Assembly have called for a hearing to investigate the issues, and it seems likely that some type of action will be taken to attempt to correct the errors committed.

As stated in Friday's Baltimore Sun: "State Senate President Bill Ferguson said he understands the decision to triage and focus Thursday's canvass on the district race with the most apparent problems. What matters now, he said, is getting the rest of the results 'as quickly, accurately and transparently as possible.' Along with other leaders of the General Assembly, the Baltimore Democrat has called for a legislative hearing later this month to go over what went wrong. 'We will certainly hold the appropriate officials or agencies accountable,' he said. 'We can't have this happen again in November.'"

