



DIANA HOLMES

Several St. Louis County Basic & Merit bargaining unit members joined the City of Duluth members and negotiations team in solidarity on the steps of Duluth City Hall on October 4, 2024.

## GET TO KNOW YOUR UNION

### Sick Leave Bank Committee

One of the negotiated benefits in our Union contract is the Sick Leave Bank. If employees are unable to work for an extended period of time due to illness or injury and have exhausted available sick leave, they may borrow hours from the Sick Leave Bank to help them through the medical crisis.

This benefit is separate from the donation of vacation time to individuals who have exhausted their leave and is also separate from the short-term disability plans employees can buy.

To utilize the Sick Leave Bank, employees must enter into an agreement to reimburse 100 percent of the funds borrowed. A committee of Union members reviews and approves the agreements and oversees the Sick Leave Bank to ensure adequate hours are available.

Employees contribute to the Sick Leave Bank after they have reached their maximum accrual rate for sick leave. At that point, one day is donated to the communal fund.

The Sick Leave Bank is especially beneficial for our newest employees, who do not accrue much sick time a pay period, and for those forced to use

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# Know your rights

With the political season kicking into high gear, it is important for employees to know their rights. Minnesota protects your right to engage in political activity without facing reprisal from your employer.

The annual political activity memo from the county, distributed in August, created confusion among employees. Of particular concern was the final point in the memo:

“As an employee, if you are requested to perform what you

believe to be an activity associated with a candidate’s campaign, please politely decline to do so, both for you [sic] protection and the candidate’s, and bring it to the attention of your supervisor.”

Some viewed this as an implication any political activity is no good, but that is not the case.

The basic rules to follow are noted in the memo. Don’t use anything owned by the county for your own

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## Q&A Corner

**Q: Can I use sick leave for an absence covered by Minnesota's Earned Sick and Safe Time (ESST) law?**

A: Yes, but there is a catch.

The St. Louis County ESST policy dated Dec. 19, 2023 states employees may use "any combination of sick leave, vacation or personal leave." An employee's first 48 hours of leave taken – or up to 80 hours if an accrual is carried over from prior years – will be designated as ESST. Leave taken **in excess** of the annual ESST entitlement is governed by the St. Louis County Emergency Conditions Policy and language of our collective bargaining contract. The Emergency Conditions Policy does **not** allow employees to use sick leave to cover absences for things like school closures.

**EXAMPLE 1:** You have used 70 hours of vacation and 10 hours of personal leave as of Dec. 1. On Dec. 2 a blizzard causes the closure of your child's school. Because you have used your full annual accrual of ESST, you **cannot** use sick leave to cover your absence from work.

**EXAMPLE 2:** You have used 10 hours of vacation as of Jan. 15. On Jan. 16 a blizzard causes the closure of your child's school. You **can** use sick leave to cover your absence from work because the hours count toward your designated ESST.

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sick time more frequently (employees with school-aged children, for example).

Members of the Sick Leave Bank committee are appointed by the Union. The committee currently has two vacancies: one for a Merit member and one for a Basic member. Anyone interested in serving on the Sick Leave Bank committee is encouraged to contact Carmen Langevin at [cdlangevin@gmail.com](mailto:cdlangevin@gmail.com)

Current members of the Sick Leave Bank committee are: Matt Farden, Carmen Langevin, Liana McDonald Seuvaai, Amy Sylvester and Kathy Vake.

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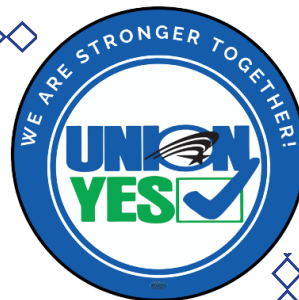
political activities, and don't engage in political activities while on the clock. Easy enough.

If you wish to be abundantly cautious, ensure you represent your opinion as your **personal** opinion; you are speaking as a private citizen, not representing where you work.

On social media, it is a good rule of thumb not to not affiliate yourself with your employer on anything but your professional account. If you are unsure whether an account is "professional," think about what you post. If you use an account to post your funny memes, share your incendiary opinions, and otherwise participate in recreational amusement, that is not your professional page.

Finally, if you believe you are being disciplined for engaging in political activity, it is always advisable to involve a steward who can help clarify points and advocate for you. You never need to attend a disciplinary meeting alone.

# We Need You!



Are you looking to become more active in the Union?  
Here are a few ways you can get involved:

- **Become a steward or Member Action Team leader**
- **Distribute copies of the Basic/Merit newsletter**
- **Take part in a New Employee Orientation session**
- **Send feedback and ideas to the BMOC members at: [afscmebmoc@gmail.com](mailto:afscmebmoc@gmail.com)**