

December 23, 2008

Dear

A year ago, your state organization and several others disaffiliated from the United American Nurses, AFL-CIO. This action was taken after a long standing internal dispute between several state organizations and the national organization was not resolved. In the months leading up to this decision, and in the months since, the national AFL-CIO has been involved in trying to find a mutually acceptable resolution to this dispute.

Earlier this year, your organization and the UAN agreed to enter into formal mediation conducted by the AFL-CIO. I assigned Associate General Counsel Sarah Fox, and former National Labor College President Professor Sue Schurman, to represent me in these discussions. I have now received the report from them on the results of this effort.

Leading up to the decision to disaffiliate, and in the months since then, we have been made aware of a number of issues of concern to the disaffiliating organizations. These concerns began under the presidency of Cheryl Johnson and continued after Ann Converso took over as president last October.

I am informed that there were, and still are, significant differences of opinion over a number of issues, including whether individual nurses may be members of the national union. The state associations, as I understand it, believe that they, rather than individual nurses, should be the members of the UAN. There are also significant differences concerning the relationship between the state organizations and the national union, and the appropriate role for both. Since the state organizations, as affiliates of the ANA, have both collective bargaining and non-collective bargaining members, and Federal laborlaw proscribes certain relationships with non-collective bargaining members (under the so called "insulation doctrine"), such a difference of opinion is understandable.

Since the state associations disaffiliated from the UAN, the UAN has made a number of personnel and organizational changes, and continues to review its internal procedures and policies. More importantly, President Converso has made it clear that she wishes to engage in a process that will address and resolve the issues of concern that have been raised by the disaffiliated state organizations.

Since last February, AFL-CIO staff have attempted to bring the two parties together to discuss these matters. Although the UAN was quite flexible in making itself available for the mediation, I understand that it was very difficult to get an agreement to meet from the disaffiliated states, and the representatives of the AFL-CIO both felt that the disaffiliated states felt no urgency to address these matters.

Finally, in late September, a face to face meeting was held. At the meeting I am informed that President Converso stressed that the UAN wished that the now independent state associations re-affiliate, that she realized that the UAN leadership had made some mistakes, and that she believed that the objectives stated by the disaffiliated organizations (in a joint statement at this meeting) could be achieved. Then, with no attempt to enter into serious discussions, the disaffiliated state organizations informed the UAN and my representatives that they did not wish to come back into the UAN and that they were interested in creating their own organization.

Given this report, I believe that there is nothing else that the national AFL-CIO can do to persuade you to reconsider your decision to leave the UAN. I believe that this is regrettable, and I am disappointed that there was a decision by the disaffiliated states not to engage in a good faith effort to resolve your differences..

As you are aware, in January of this year, I advised our state and local federations that the disaffiliated states would not be able to participate in the AFL-CIO at the national, state or local level. At the same time, I urged you to participate in good faith negotiations with the UAN, and told you that any future participation in the AFL-CIO would have to be approved by the Executive Council. The Council's approval, I noted, would likely only be given with the consent of UAN's leadership. My view on these issues has not changed. The AFL-CIO will continue to work with the UAN, as one of our major healthcare affiliates, and provide them with as much support as we can during this difficult time.

I wish you and your organizations well.

Sincerely,

John J. Sweeney  
President

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