



Merger Talks Continue Between Bayland Educators and UNE

For almost a year, the Bayland Educators' and United Northeast Educators' (UNE) Boards of Directors have been discussing the pros and cons of merging the two UniServs. The most obvious reason for thinking of a merger is to save money. Bayland Educators and UNE share the Associate staff, the same building, much of the same equipment, and have several joint committees that utilize the time and expertise of two UniServ Directors (one from each UniServ). In the course of the past year, the Boards have looked at budget, constitution and by-laws, dues structures and other processes within both UniServs in an effort to discover efficiencies as well as potential pitfalls.

The Boards have determined that a vote to merge the two UniServs will come to the membership in their respective Representative Assemblies on May 19, 2010.

What is a UniServ?

Maybe the first question many of our members have is "What is a UniServ?" For some of you reading this article, you may not have any direct contact with your UniServ and wonder what this merger will mean for you and your local.

A UniServ (Unified Services) unit is a group of local associations, in the same geographic region, whose combined membership generally totals between 1,200 and 1,500. A UniServ is created by our members to efficiently provide our locals with a powerful way to work together to accomplish common goals. It is also created to provide our members and their local Associations with professional labor relations staff services. The Southern Door Education Support Personnel, for example, is affiliated with Bayland Educators UniServ, and the Gillett Education Association is affiliated with UNE.

Each UniServ unit – in financial partnership with WEAC and the NEA – hires staff to assist locals in collective bargaining, member rights, public relations, professional development, political action and other areas. Each UniServ has its own elected governance – a Board of Directors. The Board of Directors meets monthly to direct the business of the organization and to carry out the policies set by the Representative Assembly (RA). Each local Association elects representatives to the RA – 1 delegate for every 25 members. The RA meets in the spring, and has the task of setting the UniServ policies, approving the annual budget, and electing the Board of Directors.

UniServs also elect one representative for every 1,200 members to serve on the WEAC Board of Directors. Five large locals serve as their own UniServ units: Milwaukee, Madison, Racine, Kenosha and Green Bay.

What Will Change?

For most members, nothing is expected to change. Both UniServs anticipate cost savings and more efficient use of staff time. It is expected that Local Associations will keep their current UniServ Director assignments. Dues structures, if changed, are not likely to cost any members additional dues (some may even go down!), and the services locals receive is not projected to change in any way. The structure of a merged UniServ Board may change and that is a topic that is being discussed in a separate joint Board subcommittee.

Stay Tuned

The Boards of Directors will be distributing further information about the proposed merger in various formats for our members, including regional meetings that you can attend and ask questions about the process.