Local 80 Membership Update

Dear Sisters and brothers,

Sometimes it feels as though this crisis will never end. The industry has pretty much been in a lock down since March 13th, which in some ways feels like a lifetime ago, yet with the days bleeding together can feel as if it were just yesterday.

At the offices of Local 80, we continue to be closed till such time that the County Health department lifts restrictions on operations such as ours. We are doing our level best to accommodate you in any way that we can. Because the offices are closed to all but essential employees, we have set up a system that we hope still provides the services and response that you have come to expect. Due a member not being able to visit the office in person to pay dues, we have removed all fees that would normally be associated with making payments through the web site. Because we had to institute a system whereby the clerks work from home, if you call, please leave a message. The message is retrieved by the clerks and they will return the call to assist you in your needs. The clerks are working from home the calls will be returned from a blocked number. If you have called the local and shortly thereafter receive a call from a blocked number, the chances are good that it is one of the clerks returning your call.

With regards to dues, Local Eighty will be maintaining its policy adopted for the 2nd quarter of this year which is that each member will only be charged 50% of the dues owed but not less than the cost of the per capita stamp from the International plus $5.00 (Currently $62.00).

Even though this is a tremendous hit on the treasury of the local, your officers are keenly aware of the burden that we all are facing because of the crisis that has swept the country.

To address this, we have taken steps to drastically reduce our cost. We have reduced the size of the work force, and among the representation department cut hours or implemented salary cuts. I should add that the office is busier than I have ever seen it.

A word or two about Unemployment benefits. This has been a great deal of frustration for more than a few our members. As soon as the shut down started Local 80 developed the step by step Filing for Unemployment Benefits Guide. This guide proved to be a very useful tool for our members, and members of other locals as well. We organized the webinar with EDD. I’m proud of what we did and how many members we were able to assist, but the fact of the matter is the system was so overwhelmed that too many of our members were left struggling as they tried to navigate the system. Never in the history of the EDD system have they experienced the volume of claims in such a short period of time. Even with all the problems and challenges that members face with the system I would like to give kudos to Julie Su who has oversite of EDD. She and the Governor did everything humanly possible to expedite the process and speed up claims. Not only transferring people from other departments, but also calling people out of retirement.

I’m hoping that the problems are resolved, but if not, please feel free to call the office to see how we can be of assistance.

Another item that our members are concerned about, and with good reason, is that of their Health Care benefits. The trustees of the Health Plan have been working overtime to ensure that those who have health benefits don’t lose those benefits. Up to the date of this writing, we have addressed three qualifying periods to ensure ongoing benefits. Most recently, those who have a qualifying period ending in May will have continued coverage provided they have at least 100 hours of work, or 100 hours in their bank, or a combination of worked plus banked hours equaling 100 hours. We are addressing this on a month to month basis because as time goes on, we have to find the method that is most cost effective.
for the Plan, while at the same time making sure that our members maintain their coverage. At a monthly cost of approximately $70 million this is no easy feat. But we are committed to do everything within our power to take care of our members and their families.

As if this were not enough, we are working on guidelines looking forward to getting our members back to work. This is taking place on several fronts. First, I want to give a shout out to Kent Jorgensen, Local 80’s Safety and Training officer. Kent is the labor Co-Chair of the Industry Wide Safety committee, which is charged with the responsibility, along with the management side, in developing guidelines for going back to work. To manage a committee of that size is no easy task, and he should be commended for the way that he handled the task. The committee is made up of Union Representatives and safety officers from all the Industry Unions as well as Representatives and Safety personnel of the major employers. Both sides, labor and management have hired some of the brightest and most respected medical professional in the field to consult and review the guidelines. These guidelines are meant to act as the framework for the industry to allow for the safe re-entry of the workforce once the restrictions have been relaxed. We must recognize that we cannot eliminate 100% of the risk, but we are working toward the goal of providing for the safest workplace possible. There is a deep understanding of the perils if we don’t get it right.

At the local level we have several committees working on Back to Work guidelines that are meant to address of specific crafts. The committees are broken up into a couple of groups. Those groups are Studio departments, Production Rigging and TV Production. I want to thank each member who is giving their time to serve on these committees. It’s time consuming and not an easy task. In the interest of space, I am not going to list each member of the different committees now. Rather, when we send out the recommendations of the committees, we will give full credit to the members.

We also have quite a bit going on in the state capitol also. Due to the success of the California Film and Television Tax Credit program we have found ourselves in a position of possibly being over subscribed in certain areas of the program. We are working to make necessary corrections to keep the program as robust as effective as possible.

Through the Governor’s office we are working for the adoption of Back to Work guidelines at the Sate level that are consistent with what the Industry Wide Safety Committee comes up with. There is no doubt that we are so fortunately to have a Governor that not only wants to get the economy moving again but is also committed to hearing from the workers as he moves forward. This was exemplified the other day when he had one of our own, Danny Stephens with him on his listening webinar. And I can tell you firsthand, that Governor Newsom has committed that he will not be putting profits over people like we are seeing in some other states. He, and those in his administration are using science and data to make their decisions.

There are many more things to talk to you about, and I will address them in the next update next week. Be safe, please stay healthy, and if there is anything I can assist you with please do not hesitate to reach out to me.

In Solidarity,
Thom Davis