

Unfair to portray union library workers as obstructionist

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ABSTRACT

[...] readers should know that AFSCME members - 90 percent of whom live in Boston - continue to do their fair share to help close the budget gap, including agreeing to a wage freeze and significant increases in their health insurance costs.

FULL TEXT

THE FEB. 19 editorial "In crisis, Boston libraries need better board, more private funds," regarding the Boston Public Library's funding crisis, contained some good suggestions. Unfortunately, it also included an unfair attack on union workers who were portrayed as obstructionists for insisting on sound procedures for using volunteers.

The members of American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees Local 1526 agree with trustee president Jeffrey Rudman's call for the current board vacancy to be filled by a member of the Legislature or a philanthropist. We also agree with the Globe's assertion that trustees must do all they can to increase funding before making drastic cuts.

However, we object to the allegation of union inflexibility on volunteerism, especially since AFSCME supports the use of volunteers for initiatives such as English-language courses, tax preparation assistance, and after-school programs. Some of our recommendations included common-sense measures such as criminal background checks for volunteers - a requirement for new employees.

We do not support the misguided notion that volunteers can replace the important, modest-wage jobs our members do to keep the library running smoothly.

Finally, readers should know that AFSCME members - 90 percent of whom live in Boston - continue to do their fair share to help close the budget gap, including agreeing to a wage freeze and significant increases in their health insurance costs.

President

AFSCME Council 93

Local 1526

AFSCME Local 1526 represents approximately 270 library assistants, custodians, and clerical and maintenance workers in the Boston Public Library system.

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