

Dear PEF Division 240 members:

I am writing this letter out of concern that if the petition for upstate offices to secede from Division 240 is successful, then the interests of all PEF members at SIF will be seriously damaged. The reason for my concern is simple: **A divided union membership in the face of a united management can only result in disaster.** It would be ridiculously easy for management to play off one division against the other; to chip away at our hard-won rights and our power as unionists.

Let's take PEF Contract Article 12.17 for an example of what could happen. This is the article which prohibits management from requiring PEF members to report to a timekeeper. If secession happens, imagine how easy it would be for district office managers to impose timekeeping rules of their own making that erode the protections of 12.17. **Without the resources and unity of purpose of a state-wide division to monitor** such threats and deal with them effectively, we could find a situation where PEF members in one office will become subject to timekeeping practices that could be imposed on all others. If the division representing that office fails to deal with this issue properly, management could well say that "The timekeeping rules in District Office X have been in place for some time now. We will now consider these rules to be a past practice that we will now enforce throughout the SIF." This is not a hypothetical problem as you all should know that timekeeping issues are constantly being grieved. **If we are divided, these types of threats will only become more numerous.** Do you want your union protections to be at the mercy of the leadership of a division over which you have no influence?

Let me deal with **two issues** raised by the **secessionists**; dues money being spent on travel to meetings and upstate issues being ignored due to the leadership of Division 240's alleged New York City bias.

Travel expenses: The secession petition asks for a new division to be created comprising the Buffalo, Syracuse, Endicott and Melville offices. The last I heard, none of these offices are within walking distance of each other so members attending meetings at these offices will still be spending dues money on travel. It also seems unlikely that any division will have its council meeting and labor-management meeting on the same day, so there will still be overnight expenses paid out of dues money. This is a non-issue. Division 240 is scheduled to have its next council meeting in Albany and if members in other offices want to have meetings where they work, they only have to raise it at a council meeting.

Upstate issues: In the more that **12 years** that I have been a **steward** I have never had any difficulty putting an issue that concerns me or my constituents on a council meeting's agenda and having that issue discussed. **There is nothing in Division 240's constitution that says only issues of concern to New York City members can be dealt with.** If you feel that upstate issues have not been properly addressed or that they are failing to find their way on a meeting's agenda, then perhaps **you need to speak to the stewards who represent you and ask why they are not doing their jobs.** Dividing your union is not going to help. Let's also remember that two of Division 240's most important committees, Labor-Management and Health and Safety, are chaired by upstate members. Two other important positions of Statewide Division 240 that of **Secretary and that of First Assistant Council Leader** are held by upstate members.

Let me leave you with this thought: **While a few may think that their interests as PEF members are best served just within their own offices, management has no such illusions.** They know real power is exercised agency-wide, and they are always thinking of how their positions will affect SIF as a whole. PEF should do no less. We have 1700 strong membership. In unity is our strength. **Vote NO on secession!**

In Unity,

Hal Friedman

**Steward and Parliamentarian-Division 240 and Associate Attorney, Legal Department,
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