

Union Wins Free Speech Fight

by Allison Mosshart

Citizens Communications at the Board of Trustees meetings has always been a place for open and forthright comment from citizens. Little did Mark Goodrich, Past-President and Grievance Chair for the ACC/AFT, know when he stepped up to the mike at the August 2007 board meeting that soon his job and his speech would be in jeopardy. Mark has always been known for his strong feelings, but he also is quite knowledgeable about the intricacies of the college, so when he speaks, most people listen. He spoke on that evening in a very impassioned but controlled way about mercury problems at Rio Grande and lack of union voice in compensation and grievance

processes. He also rationally criticized the Board itself and its hiring practice in the hiring of our current president. Not too popular a stance, but his to claim, right? He then sat down. Not three days later was there a memo threatening him with a reprimand and telling him not to speak again on such topics. Sounds like an attempt to shut him up, doesn't it?

Well, that's why we have a union! Our lawyer took one look at that memo and said, "Illegal, that is in violation of your free speech." So, we filed suit with the moral support and legal expertise of our state and national federations. And early this spring the suit was settled out

of court, totally in Mark's favor. We are very proud of Mark for standing up for these ideals. Mark spoke on his issues because he feels a responsibility—to his co-workers and to the college—and ultimately to the community it serves. But the college has a responsibility also, and that is to take this as a lesson learned. The union is here to bring employees together and to share ideas to make the college better. In this we can only ask to be heard in a positive and open basis. As the May elections move us into a new dynamic Board of Trustees, I hope that we will move into a more open and trusting communication with the Administration.

Interfaith asks candidates to pledge for adjunct health insurance option

Our ACC/AFT partnership with Austin Interfaith has quickly led to an energized action. We joined our signatures with a collection of 5,000 others to show our support for an agenda of social issues ranging from *living wages* and *career track to state funding for community colleges* and *programs like Capital Idea*.

Sunday evening, April 20th, the sanctuary at St. Ignatius Church was filled with about 800 Austin Interfaith members and leaders who gathered to let candidates know how much they cared about their agenda. As individuals told their stories, candidates were asked tough questions and forced to answer either "yes" or "no" with no time to quibble. School Board and City Council candidates were also there, but Tim Mahoney and Harrison Keller both agreed quickly to all three ACC questions:

Would they support...

- 1) More money for Capital Idea?
- 2) Working with the legislature to find more money for community colleges statewide?
- 3) A health care option for adjuncts?

We had a short amount of time to collect signatures so extra-thanks to everyone who helped - we're still adding to our list.

The important thing is to **VOTE!**

COPE Endorsements
Committee On Political Education

Place 1
Tim Mahoney

Place 2
John-Michael Cortez

Place 5
Raul Alvarez

