



On The Move

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For the record, it must be said that the entire membership of Local 234 has been doing an outstanding job at a time when our country needs us the most. While large numbers of businesses and industries across the country have come to a sudden halt, due to the coronavirus, Local 234 continues to practice what we preach: "We Move Philadelphia."

The coronavirus pandemic has turned the world as we once knew it upside down. We have never faced anything like this in our lifetimes. The virus has sickened at least 150,000 people and killed more than 6,000 people globally, and in the United States the numbers are increasing every day. To follow the path of the virus' destruction, all you have to do is turn on the TV or radio to any news outlet to get a report of the devastation this killer is causing worldwide.

As most of you know here in the City of Philadelphia and surrounding counties, stores have been ordered to close. Some counties have imposed curfews on residents and the local economy is heading in the wrong direction. For anyone to believe that Local 234 and SEPTA are exempt from the devastation that this virus is causing is not being realistic.

SEPTA has reported that the ridership is down by over 50%. Unfortunately, but not surprisingly, our health and welfare is not SEPTA's concern. The only thing SEPTA cares about is about the bottom line. Today, SEPTA management sent the Union a copy of a special Saturday picking. They want us to conduct the picking tomorrow. The Union is not in agreement with the picking for a number of reasons, but in labor law the rule is you must "suffer and grieve," which under the circumstances is a big problem, because by the time the grievance gets to arbitration, the damage will have already been done.

If this membership decides not to pick at the scheduled picking, SEPTA will fill you in. It's better to pick your work and fight SEPTA in other ways. If you have been paying attention, there has been nothing put in place that protects the members from this deadly virus. I find it hypocritical that 1234 Market is closed and the managers working from home because of coronavirus, but the members of Local 234 are expected to carry on with business as usual.

It appears that the Authority believes that we are somehow immune from contracting the virus. Brothers and Sisters, we will file a grievance over the way this picking is being forced down our throats. But as I stated earlier, we have to suffer and grieve. I know that you are upset and I'm upset as well, but we have to follow the law. We cannot fight off our emotions. I don't believe that anyone should be stripped of their seniority and forced to work on a Saturday or a Sunday, just because SEPTA is trying to save money. I ask you to be patient and give us time to fight this battle the only way it can be fought.

This is the first time in our lifetime that any one of us has had to deal with this type of situation. We at Local 234 did not create this pandemic, nor did SEPTA create it, but we believe SEPTA is dealing with the crisis all wrong. SEPTA is putting its scheduling problems ahead of the health of the people. You will be hearing from us in person on how we plan to fight back against SEPTA's mismanagement of the coronavirus crisis.