

December 17, 2007

Dear WILPF members,

Many of you have written to the board seeking answers to questions, since receiving the email letter announcing staff layoffs.

Even with all the differences of opinion it is clear that we all want the same thing: a vibrant WILPF that is part of the growing movement for political change. We all do not agree on how that would happen but this board has put forth a process for a strategic plan. This plan has been criticized for only dealing with structure. Our present structure could be more supportive of our National program entities and local branch work.

During the 9 years of the campaign structure, we've learned that while branches appreciate educational materials (like study guides) and activist toolkits (including flyers, relevant resources like water bottles), they generally do not focus on two of the many issues that are important to our League. The strategic plan we have developed allows for a more fluid give and take between branch-based grassroots activism and national issue committees by giving both entities access to our program budget. We truly appreciate the hard work of the current campaign leadership teams and past campaign leadership teams - our hope is that the new program structure will provide members a way to coordinate nationally through issue committees and stronger support for branch and member initiated actions.

Attached to this letter are the monthly averages of income and expenses for 2007. The figures for 2007 show a monthly shortfall of just over \$9,000, accumulating to over \$90,000 for the year. This is on top of a handful of longer term debts that will be coming due within the next couple of months. While the situation came to a crisis this fall, during the tenure of this board (2005-08) we have consistently failed to bring in enough income to cover our expenses.

Periodically, WILPF thankfully receives bequests and has often used these funds immediately to cover the ongoing operating expenses of our national office. There has been a growing discomfort on the board to continue this practice combined with an equally growing desire to honor bequests using them more wisely, to increase the impact of our political work and secure the long term stability of our organization. In 1999 and again in 2006, the national board passed a policy requiring that a percentage of every bequest would be put into a savings account; the policy contained a provision for "borrowing" from this account in the case of emergencies.

Because of the generosity of one of our members who passed last year, in January '07, we were able to put over \$50,000 in the bequest savings account. By summer, traditionally the slowest-revenue time in WILPF's calendar year, we needed to start borrowing from that savings account. Normally in the fall, revenue increases as most memberships come up for renewal at that time of year, and people make year end charitable donations.

This year, the revenue kept dwindling. Expenses remained constant: staff, office, printing, etc. We borrowed on the credit card, put off some bills and waited for another bequest. At the fall

board meeting, we decided to liquidate the remaining investment and bequest funds, but we also recognized that the growing debt and dwindling revenue needed a stopping point. Therefore we resolved that if we had to go in debt more than an additional 5% of the budget, we would call an emergency board meeting and discuss a lay-off of staff. Thus an executive session of the board was held on December 3 and 5, and a decision was reached which was shared with you in the e-mail we sent last weekend.

Some have asked why staff members were subsequently suspended. As many of you know, staff sent out an email on the morning of Friday, December 7, 2007, using their wilpf.org email identities and WILPF's listservs. This message not only pre-empted the board's message explaining the rationale for and terms of staff layoffs, it also clogged up our electronic messaging system effectively preventing the board's message from being distributed. The staff's message contained inaccurate and misleading information. Their email went far and beyond the WILPF membership and was damaging to the organization. It was impossible to determine staff's intention at the time, and, Laura Roskos—a board member who is serving as interim executive director but who lives in Cambridge, MA with her family--chose to suspend the staff for three days until the extent of the staff's actions could be determined and further risks to the organization analyzed and mitigated.

We have received questions about the union. We want to be as transparent as possible in all matters. However, we can not comment on these matters until after the grievances our employees have filed against WILPF with the National Labor Relations Board are resolved.

Others have questions about why Laura Roskos has stepped in to fill role of Interim Director. In addition to her position of "branch representative", and now secretary, on the national board, Laura has served the organization in many capacities over the 15+ years she has been a member, most recently providing leadership in reactivating the CEDAW issue committee initiated by Ione Biggs and transforming it into the Advancing Human Rights Issue Committee. When Mary Day Kent resigned, we were not prepared financially or strategically to fill the vacant Executive Director position, yet, as the fiduciary stewards of WILPF, we felt we needed to have a board presence at the office. It is not uncommon for a person to have two hats and we felt that Laura, with her experience in leading organizations, could wear the interim director hat during the week and her board hat for board situations.

These are challenging times for all of us, but perhaps particularly for those of us serving on WILPF's national board; we need to deal with the consequences of our drastic action to lay off staff even while moving the organization forward toward our strategic vision. Although there are consequences to laying off staff, the consequences of having an organization that does not have resources to support programs, nurture and recruit members, prepare leaders for the next generation and build a movement for political change seem to us even more dire. So, again, we ask you to join us as we embark on a new WILPF.

We have an opportunity to bring new creativity into WILPF. The board elections will be coming up in 2008. The next issue of Peace and Freedom, scheduled to be mailed by the end of January,

will have the listings of the new board positions and we are soliciting members to nominate themselves or others to run for the National Board. One of the new positions is a Nominating Committee Chair. Having nominations as a priority, we will constantly be seeking new leadership for the organization. Members can join this committee as non board members, with the goal of having a diverse committee culturally, geographically and generationally.

Board elections will occur by mailed paper ballot later this spring and the newly elected board will be seated at the June Congress. We look forward to the 2008 Triennial Congress (June 25-28), hosted by the Des Moines branch, at Simpson College, as a time of renewal for WILPF, U.S. But there is lots of pro-active work that can be done even before then to strengthen WILPF's foundations and future.

We thank you for your thoughtful e-mails and look forward to your creative suggestions. Over the coming weeks, we are going to focus on the issues most immediately at hand and may not be able to answer all correspondence in a timely manner. We will continue to provide you with information about our next steps as it becomes available. We will be scheduling membership calls again in January. In the meantime, board members are personally phoning members to renew their dues and to follow up with the Every Member Letter.

Thank you for your passion,

Ellen Murtha
Treasurer
Branch Member, Santa Cruz, CA

Pat O'Brien
Development Chair
Branch member, Boston, MA

Attachment: A Typical Month at WILPF 2007 (financial data)