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As you know, MCA Detroit and Local 636 have been meeting for months to negotiate a contract. This could be the most important contract ever. Our futures are at stake. This is why I am speaking directly to you about the negotiations and why we need to get this deal done.

Some Locals located in more prosperous areas have received increases greater than Detroit customers will accept. Times are very tough. Michigan has been in a one-state recession since 2005. We have the highest unemployment and have lost more jobs than any other state. Businesses and people are leaving Michigan in record numbers. New construction is near all-time lows. Manufacturing plants are closing left and right. Fuel and material prices are at record highs, and Michigan's business taxes are strangling many of us. We know many of you are hurting. We and our customers are hurting, too. The dilemma we face: if we raise our cost as high as we can for our heaviest industrial customers we will price ourselves out of our other markets.

Non-union, out-of-town contractors and other unions know this and are making troubling inroads. Even our industrial customers are using more non-union labor and/or cheaper trades because they have to cut costs anyway they can. We have to work together to save our industry and preserve our jobs. We have no choice, and the time to act is now. If we do not act now to protect and expand our market, your pension, health, and other benefits will suffer as well.

Many Detroit employers and unions understand this and have acted. The UAW has agreed to major wage and benefit cuts to save jobs. Some area construction trades have agreed to wage freezes, benefit cuts, and overtime pay reductions. Of the 20 or so construction contracts negotiated in Michigan this year, the average annual wage increase is about 2.3% or \$1.15 per hour. The UA local in Flint agreed to a one-year wage freeze. The Painters have been offered \$.50, all of which goes to pension. The Electrical Workers got a 2.3 % raise. The Operators, Carpenters, Laborers, and Bricklayers have agreed to low raises, plus given up some overtime pay and other language, and unlike us, they are awarded many state and federal projects. The Ann Arbor UA Local, who have a stronger market position than us, nonetheless have a package \$2 less than Detroit Fitters.

We know how important you are to us and our industry. That's why, unlike others, the employer negotiating committee did not propose a wage cut or freeze or other give-backs. Rather, we came to the table in good faith. Our latest offer of a 2.5% annual increase is above the 2008 average. It preserves 636 as the highest piping wage package local in Michigan. The few language changes we proposed are standard in many contracts and will help us preserve and increase market share by improving quality and efficiency. We are proud of this. But we will jeopardize your jobs, our company, and the industry in general if we do not reach a reasonable contract.

We need your help like never before. Please encourage your co-workers to demand a vote. We cannot afford to wait, and a strike would only cost us more jobs. Thank you for all your hard work, and please let me know if you have any questions. Also, please visit www.mcadetroit.org for further information and updates, and please send your email address to info@mcadetroit.org to receive information from a different perspective...we report you decide.