



Denton, Texas June 6, 2010

Dear Delegate,

Let me begin by saying thanks to all of you who've called and written urging me to seek the office of President of the American Federation of Musicians of the United States and Canada. You have led me to make the decision to run, but I know you didn't come calling just for me, you did so because you believe in what our Union can be. In the face of our internal wars, you believe there can be peace. In the face of our financial anguish and pain in the workplace, you believe there can be hope. In the face of a political machine that has shut you out, that has told you to settle for little or nothing, that has divided us for too long, you believe we can be one grand organization working together, reaching for our potential, building a better Union.

For those of you who do not know me, let me acquaint you with a bit of my background. As some of you know, I am not a Texas native. I moved to Denton thirty-five years ago to study jazz at North Texas State University (now UNT). I had just graduated with a Bachelors of Music Education degree from the University of Southern Mississippi. I knew practically no one in Dallas-Fort Worth, and had very little in the way of resources other than my drum set and my Brilliant Blue 1969 Volkswagen Bus. I came to Denton as a member of two small Mississippi locals – Jackson Local 579 and Hattiesburg Local 568 - and I transferred immediately into Fort Worth Local 72. I was motivated then by the idea that a large group of local professional musicians – a *Musicians' Union* – would be advantageous to my career. Upon enrolling in graduate school, I was offered a teaching fellowship. My teaching position, along with plenty of good gigs, enabled me to earn a decent living in music.

During school and after earning my Masters in Jazz Studies at UNT in 1977, I zoomed into an exciting life in music that took me on the road and back, to the niteclubs, the showrooms, the ballrooms, the lounges, the concert stage, the recording studio, the jingle house, the television studio, the TV-Film set, the one-niters, the headliners, the back-up bands of every size, shape and style. From the east coast to the west, from the south of Texas, north to the Canadian border, I grappled with the bookers, the managers, the producers and the record companies, the big and the small, the good and the bad. I began to understand how the business of music was based not upon musical excellence as I had been trained, but upon exploitation. I saw that the problems musicians faced weren't simply local in nature - that the decisions to sign a band, book a room, shelve a record or steal a band's name were made many times by distant executives. I learned that no matter how well we played or how much money the bookers, managers and producers made, it was never enough. The rich and powerful in the entertainment industry always had plenty of reasons to justify their unfair treatment of professional musicians. They eventually won the right to classify us as "independent contractors" and hoped that we would be left to hazard the pitfalls of the music business isolated and alone. To a young idealistic musician like me, it burned a hole in my heart that nothing could fill.

It was in those years of earning a living in the music business that I received the best education I ever had, and where I learned the true meaning of "Unionism" – and what it meant to stick together against a dishonest, unscrupulous industry. And all along the way, I had the American Federation of Musicians by my side. The Union helped me. It was concerned about me. The knowledge and strength of the Union leveled the playing field. To the

Union, I mattered. The Union collected some important claims for me. I was a believer, and I gladly paid my dues. I knew early on that I would be hard pressed to ignore the Union's calling, if and when it ever came.

After eight active years in the music business here and teaching drum set at North Texas, I answered the call and became President of Fort Worth Local 72 exactly twenty-seven years ago, on June 6, 1983. I literally walked off a nightclub stage at 2am and went to work at the local at 9am the next morning. I made the change because I wanted to try to right the wrongs that plague our profession. Despite the immense problems we would face every day in the local office, I looked forward to waking up every morning, knowing that I had another day ahead where I might take on the employers and make a positive difference in musicians' lives.

It was at my first Convention in Phoenix in 1983 and as a young local officer in Fort Worth where I saw the Union from the inside – symphony orchestra members, recording musicians, rock and rollers, western swingers, church musicians, jazzers, rock-a-billy, big bands, polka bands, rodeo bands, small groups, music teachers, part-timers, full-timers, all of them with a story to tell, all of them seeking representation, all of them clamoring to be heard, all of them desperate for a strong Union. I made lasting friendships with many great musicians – and unexpectedly, with many folks on the other side of the table.

It was in my early years in Fort Worth that I learned what heading up a Union is really about. It is about serving the members. It is about organizing and bargaining. I learned to disagree – and disagree strongly, without being disrespectful - that it's possible to compromise so long as you know those principles that can never be compromised; and that so long as we're willing to listen to each other, work together, find common ground and build unity, we have a chance to do things that will make the Union stronger and improve our members' lives.

That's why in 1992 we were able to unite the members of two medium sized locals, Fort Worth Local 72 and Dallas Local 147, to create a single dynamic local to service a major metropolitan area here that grew from 1400 members initially to some 1700 today. That's why we were able to organize and bargain new collective bargaining agreements where none existed before. That's why we were able to pioneer the multi-stage, free-to-attend outdoor festival format in North Texas in 1985 with shows that started small but now attract an annual audience of more than 700,000 attendees – events that are among the largest of their kind in Texas. That's why in 1994 we succeeded in forming a successful booking agency, AFM Entertainment, to find gainful employment for our members. That's why Local 72-147 has thrived – without a local dues increase in 18 years. We did things that our critics and detractors said could never be done.

It was here, as a local officer in Dallas-Fort Worth, home to every kind of musical group and style, played by the very best musicians in the world, that I came to understand that by organizing, promoting and bargaining effectively for our members, we could build a greater Union – one that could preserve, protect and defend the interests of our talented members.

I recognize there is a certain daring or boldness to this announcement. I went into this convention season thinking I would remain a candidate for re-election to the International Executive Board. It was just a couple of weeks ago, soon after the May 5 letter I sent to some of you – it is still posted at www.afmmatters.com – and in the aftermath of a failed mediation attempt I had helped arrange between the AFM's leadership and an important segment of our membership, that I began to seriously consider running for President. I haven't spent a lot of time campaigning for President, but I've been on the IEB long enough to know that the AFM's leadership must change. I am certain that without an immediate leadership change, the AFM will not survive much longer.

The genius of our founders is that they designed a system of Union governance that can be changed. And we should take heart, because we've changed the AFM's leadership this way before. Years ago, in the face of leadership that would not listen to the members, a determined Convention brought an administration to its knees. Now we are called once more - and it is time for those of us who hold this Union dear to answer that call. People who love their Union can change it.

All of us know the challenges facing us today – an expensive internal war that continues to expand with no end in sight and that has caused a financial crisis that threatens our future. Our Locals and our members are struggling with the recession despite working as hard as they can. We know the challenges. We've talked about them at the Conferences.

What's stopped us from meeting these challenges is not the absence of ideas or sensible plans. What's stopped us is the failure of leadership, the smallness of our politics - the ease with which we're distracted by the petty and trivial, our chronic avoidance of tough decisions, our preference for scoring cheap political points instead of rolling up our sleeves and building a working consensus to tackle big problems.

For the last few years we've been told that borrowing from our Relocation Fund doesn't matter, because we're never going to buy a home for the Union and because we have no choice but to pay rent forever to the enrichment of a Times Square landlord. We've been told that the anxiety we feel about our internal divisions is an illusion. And when all else fails, when our Pension Fund is certified to be in critical status, or when the Trust Fund says it will shut down, we've been told that our crises are somebody else's fault. We're distracted from our real failures, and told to blame that local, or this player conference, or the big locals, and so on.

And as people have looked away in disillusionment and frustration, we know what's filled the void. The emails from the top. The public relations firms. The law firms. They write the copy to hide the failures of our leadership and you get stuck with the bills. The time for bad politics is over. It's time to turn the page.

But repairing the self-inflicted damage that has beset our Union for decades and especially over the past several years won't be easy. We'll have to set priorities and make hard choices. And although hard work and new leadership will play a crucial role in bringing about the changes we need, those things alone will not get us where we want to go. Everyone must be involved. Each of us, in our own locals, will have to accept responsibility for positive change, for adapting to a new digital age, for helping to organize and strengthen our membership, and sharing some measure of sacrifice. Let us put away our divisions and begin this hard work together. Let us come together during the 98th Convention and change this Union for the better.

Let this be the Convention that restores credibility and trust by electing leaders who possess the ethics and integrity of *Honest Leadership*, who have a strong belief in the worth of diverse opinions, a disposition toward openness, who will demonstrate those qualities through their everyday actions, and who can withstand close scrutiny. Such leadership transcends time and circumstance.

Let this be the Convention that demands the truth from our leadership, free from self-serving political manipulation. As local officers, we give our elected officials a good deal of power over our Union, and we send the Federation a great deal of money. Because the system of checks and balances is limited, it is critical that we be able to trust those to whom power is given. AFM officials certainly owe us a job well done, but they owe us more. They owe us honesty and *Straight Talk*.

Let's be the Convention that is *Right on the Money*, that finally understands the terrible cost of our internal warfare. You are being asked to raise more money to pay for our ongoing unresolved internal conflict, despite the fact that the conflict itself represents a large reducible cost. The turmoil has escalated drastically and it continues to spread. Conflict resolution will save more money than can be raised through any finance recommendation. The current cycle of pain – the endless fighting within – must end now. I promise you, I will end it.

Let's be the Convention that requires leadership to *Put the Union First*. That means putting the members first and an end to blatant self-dealing. Leaders who see the well-being of the Union as critically important to their own interests will move the Union forward. They will benefit politically from the Union's progress. Rebuilding our Union into a unified organization that is better able to improve members' lives is the reward every leader should aim for. It is certainly enough for me.

I know there are those who don't believe we can do these things. I understand the skepticism. After all, every two or three years, candidates make similar promises, and I expect this Convention will be no different. All of us running for office have traveled throughout Federationland offering our suggestions. All of us will trumpet those qualities we believe make us uniquely qualified to deserve your vote. Our leadership will make grand Convention speeches about a litany of achievements in spite of the so-called aggravation from that local or that player conference. Then, you will hear the promises to straighten out all of our ills if we do everything that leaders ask of us. Once, at the 2003 Convention, we had reason to hope. But too many times, after the election is over, and the campaign material is thrown away, all those promises fade from memory, and the PR firms and the lawyers and the politically favored move in, and local officers turn away, disappointed as before, left to struggle on their own.

Let's be the Convention that comes together for change, that embraces fully the concept of Unity. By ourselves, a change will not happen. Divided, we are bound to fail. Fighting each other, we undermine our Union, our locals and our members, and we benefit those who profit through our exploitation. *Every minute of disunity is one minute closer to our destruction.* But beneath the differences in instrumentation, style, locality, conference status, country, venue, and station, we are all musicians. We are, and should only be, one Union. Only in unity will we ever find the strength we need.

That is why this campaign can't only be about me. It must be about us - it must be about what we can do together. This campaign must be the occasion to promote Unity. It will take your time and your energy. This campaign has to be about reclaiming the meaning of Unionism, restoring our sense of common purpose, and realizing that few obstacles can withstand the power of our music or tens of thousands of musicians calling for fair and just conditions of employment.

Let's be the Convention that makes future Conventions proud of what we did.

That is our purpose, and that is why I am a candidate for President of the American Federation of Musicians of the United States and Canada. Not just to hold the office, but to gather you together to rebuild our Union. If you will join me in this cause, if you can see as I do the unlimited potential that has always stretched before us, if you believe as I do that the time is right to heal our divisions and put our house in order, then I'm ready to work with you and for you. Together, let us go about the important work of building unity not just within, but wherever groups are gathered and music is performed.

I am looking forward to seeing you In Las Vegas in a few short days.. Thank you so very much for your consideration.

Sincerely and fraternally yours.



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