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**FIRE FIGHTERS**  
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LOCAL 145, I.A.F.F.

*Affiliated with:* INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FIRE FIGHTERS AFL-CIO, SAN DIEGO-IMPERIAL COUNTIES LABOR COUNCIL, CALIFORNIA LABOR FEDERATION, CALIFORNIA C.O.P.E., SAN DIEGO COUNTY C.O.P.E., CALIFORNIA PROFESSIONAL FIRE FIGHTER'S / P.A.C. 

July 16, 2010

TJ Zane, CEO  
Lincoln Club of San Diego County  
P.O. Box 16224  
La Jolla, CA 92039

**SUBJ: Offensive Comments Regarding Labor Leaders**

Mr. Zane,

This letter is written on behalf the Board of Directors of San Diego City Firefighters Local 145 and is in response to your offensive and unprofessional remark *"City politicians and the public labor union bosses to whom they are beholden are like drug addicts. And our tax dollars are the drug of their choice."* This surprising comment was captured in coverage by the Voice of San Diego and in your interview with KUSI news in response to the ½ cent sales tax proposal.

We recognize that our organizations may often disagree on city issues and how they should be handled. However, such disagreements are never an excuse for rude and unprofessional behavior. Your choice of clearly inappropriate language escalates an already divisive issue and does nothing to develop comprehensive solutions to the City's financial problems.

Our board is diverse and represents the common interest of firefighters, which is to help the public. Like you, many of our board members are family men with kids in our local schools, serving on PTA boards, coaching their kids' sports teams and paying taxes. As a father, imagine having to explain to your son why some person on the news is comparing your efforts to that of a drug addict. Simply put, your choice of rhetoric is over-the-top and lacks the professionalism that we would associate with an organization such as the Lincoln Club.

Despite the continual efforts by some to demonize firefighters, and public employees in general, today you'll find San Diego firefighters actively working on staffing issues to ensure we have what we need to protect the public in the most effective way. These efforts are on behalf of the taxpaying public we serve and are intended to stop the further degradation of Fire-

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Rescue services. Further staffing reductions, or the continuation or expansion of 'Rolling Brown-outs' will increase response times and further reduce our ability to respond quickly enough to make a difference. Longer response times can lead to higher property loss rates and potentially higher insurance rates for homeowners and business owners – something that should cause great concern to your members.

San Diego's firefighters have also been doing our share by agreeing to concessions over the last five years to assist with the City's claims of financial hardship. Since 2005, the board of San Diego Fire Fighters Local 145 has worked with our membership to produce agreements that contained wage and benefit concessions. The following reforms and concessions have been implemented over the course of the last five years:

- Four years of a pay freeze
- Elimination of retiree health-care for employees hired after 7/1/05
- Elimination of DROP for employees hired after 7/1/05
- Elimination of Purchase of Service for employees hired after 7/1/05
- Elimination of 13<sup>th</sup> Check for employees hired after 7/1/05
- Reduction of DROP interest rate
- Elimination of DROP interest language from MOU & give authority to SDCERS
- Reopen negotiations on DROP (definition of Cost-Neutrality)
- Increase eligibility standards for Retiree health eligibility
- Suspension of Retiree Medical Benefit Automatic Benefit Escalator provision for two years
- Reductions in health care coverage for majority of active employees
- Elimination of 74 Full time positions
- 50% Reduction in uniform allowance
- Elimination of Employer Retirement contribution offset (10% of pay)
- Elimination of 140 hours of holiday pay
- Firefighters and police officers are facing an additional 2-3% salary reduction as a result of CERS/City requirement that they pay a substantially equal portion towards their disability benefit.
- Elimination of all overtime for operations personnel through the 'brown-outs' of eight engines; overtime that was paid to maintain constant staffing and keeps those engines in service

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You should also know that San Diego City Fire Fighters Local 145 was the first to step forward in 2009 and reach agreement for a continuation of concessions for another two years. Why? Because San Diego firefighters are working to be part of the solution.

San Diego City firefighters know leadership and teamwork – many times those traits can mean the difference between life and death. Consistent with our training and approach to crisis management, we expect that leaders in this city should be working to unite varied interests to address these historic challenges for the benefit of all San Diegans. Unfortunately, your comment was completely void of such leadership and very offensive to the elected leaders of our City, and to our Board of Directors who have provided leadership and teamwork sufficient to produce ratified labor agreements that included many of the concessions listed above.

Your comments give no credit to the years of agreements on concessions and reforms that only materialized through the hard work of the union leaders; the same labor leaders you so blatantly defame. Your extreme rhetoric does not invite discussion of further concessions for the sake of the City's long term stability. What a shame that you would make such an irresponsible and hurtful comment about San Diego City Fire Fighters' leadership, given our years of working with the City in a collaborative manner.

As the new leadership of the firefighters union, we have seen the need to work with the City even though it's been publically acknowledged time and time again that we are already severely short-staffed and lack the resources available to meet recommended standards of service to the public. Yet even with those conditions, San Diego's firefighters have stepped up time and again to do their share, only to find some city officials and organizations such as yours slamming the door on a revenue proposal that would be only one part of an overall solution to address the City's structural deficit.

In closing, we think you owe the Local 145 Board of Directors a public apology for your unprofessional and offensive remark. In the alternative, we ask that we be invited to come and speak to your board to provide detailed information as to the efforts made by the board of San Diego Fire Fighters Local 145 and its 900 members. Should you choose not to exercise either option, we will be left with a belief that you, your board, and your membership condone such

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unprofessional and offensive discourse and should not be viewed as a credible voice in future efforts to work out San Diego's significant problems.

I look forward to your response.

With great disappointment,



Frank De Clercq  
President

cc: Board of Directors, Local 145  
Mayor Jerry Sanders, City of San Diego  
City Councilmember Sherri Lightner  
City Councilmember Kevin Faulconer  
City Councilmember Todd Gloria  
City Councilmember Tony Young  
City Councilmember Carl DeMaio  
City Councilmember Donna Frye  
City Councilmember Marti Emerald  
City Councilmember Ben Hueso  
Brian Marvel, President, San Diego Police Officers Association  
Tony Ruiz, President, San Diego Municipal Employees Association  
Joan Raymond, President, AFSCME Local 127  
Ed Harris, Sergeant, U.S. Lifeguard Association  
Lani Lutar, President and CEO, San Diego County Taxpayers Association  
Local TV & Print Media