



Mervin R. Kennell

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My friends know me as Merv Kennell, the managers and malcontents I work with sometimes call me less flattering names... but it's all good. Born in Buffalo, N.Y., I was raised in Sarasota Florida from the age of 11 months. My brother became a Firefighter in 1975 which sparked an unquenchable interest in me. I became a volunteer Firefighter as soon as I was eligible at the age of 16 and was hired to work the night shifts the following year. Full time employment was offered after earning my EMT certification, and I became a Paramedic Firefighter before my 19th birthday.

Fast forward to today... I am a 33 year veteran of the Fire Service in Sarasota County and have been an active member of IAFF Local 2546 ever since it became available to me some 25 years ago. Having started my career with a Chief who said he'd fire anyone who mentioned "Union", I am fully aware of the benefits of organized labor. I abandoned my career goal of becoming a Battalion Chief to serve as the unofficial Chief of Labor... in my opinion a higher calling. I have served multiple terms in various capacities in Local 2546 including District Vice President, Business Agent and now as President.

Three years ago I was sworn in as 7th DVP for the FPF while continuing to serve as Business Agent for Local 2546. I am profoundly grateful for the work of the FPF's ole' soldiers, and proud to have had the opportunity to have mentored under President Emeritus Bob Carver, aka... ("The Master"). I am humbled to be thought worthy of working in this capacity as I enter my second term. I value the relationships I have formed with my FPF peers, as well as their sage advice and counsel. Many folks ask me why I have not yet retired. My family has endured several epic tragedies in the past five years, from Cancer that nearly took my wife, to the premature passing of my 19 y/o Firefighter son Travis. My Fire Service family stood by me through my darkest hours and I remain dedicated to preservation of the benefits we worked so hard for during the years I should have been spending more time with him.

We can only be as successful as we are invested. We need an energized membership that is fully engaged to survive the present attacks. In these tough financial times with anti-labor politicians in control of the legislature I urge all members to offer their full support to their Union leadership including their hands, feet, votes, and yes I'll say it... even your wallets.