

Dear USA Members,

My name is Thor Hansen and this spring I took over the remaining term as USA's Treasurer. USA's Finance Committee has produced a proposed budget for the 2027 fiscal year which will be presented to the membership for approval at an All-Members Meeting on October 14th, 2026. In advance of that meeting I'm writing this letter to present to you the budget highlights from last year and how they impacted our proposal for this year. I encourage you to review the budget proposal including the budget FAQs prior to the budget meeting, where we will answer any additional questions the membership may have, to the best of our abilities.

Last year the Treasurer and Finance Committee presented a fairly lean budget proposal, and over the past year the Executive Board managed to underspend even that. We also collected slightly more dues than planned for, although making a conservative estimate of forward-looking dues is just good budgeting practice.

FY2026 Budget:	\$402,000	
FY2026 Dues Collected:	\$439,403	
FY2026 Expenses:	(\$367,652)	[including \$340,049 remitted to MTA & NEA]
FY2026 Operating Surplus:	\$ 71,751	

Some of the biggest savings last year were from simply not spending on budgeted items. We had \$4,000 budgeted to replace the union owned laptops, which eventually we will have to do, but for now we were able to squeeze one more year of life out of them. We had budgeted \$15,600 for a part-time office staff member but ended up not filling that position last year. Those duties were instead covered by the President and the E-Board. We have now reframed that part-time job as an organizer/office support and are moving forward with hiring, so that savings will not be repeatable this year. Other than that, we have a generally thrifty E-Board that takes all spending decisions made on behalf of the membership very seriously.

Most of the line items for the 2027 proposed budget are equal to, or small increases compared to, the 2026 budget. The chief exception to that is the new line item for Arbitration. Arbitration is the 5th and final step in our grievance process, and taking grievances to arbitration requires the union to pay legal and administrative costs. Historically, taking a grievance all the way to arbitration is very unusual, but as management has become more brazen in violating our contract and less amendable to resolving grievances at lower steps as they did in the past, we are compelled to push back harder.

We already have one grievance scheduled for an arbitration hearing later this month*, and the union is prepared to take our Kronos grievance to arbitration if we don't agree with the step 4 decision we're waiting for from the President's office. We were told by our MTA Field Rep to expect arbitration to cost \$7,000-10,000. Our budget proposal includes \$30,000 to cover three-and-a-half arbitrations this year. Much like the Computer Expense line item, if we budget for it and then don't need it, so much the better. But we didn't want the E-Board or the membership to be blindsided by these costs now or in the future, when it seems to be just a part of working at UMass moving forward under adversarial management.

For fiscal year 2027 MTA and NEA have raised their annual member dues by \$19.75 and \$15, respectively. The Finance Committee believes that, due to last year's operating surplus, we can absorb these increased costs for this year and keep our member dues at their current level, as we did the year before. Therefore, we propose to run a small budget deficit this year covered by last year's surplus.

USA currently has lower dues than AFSCME and PSU, and we would all love to keep it that way, but we also have the lowest membership of those 3 unions. The work USA does is important, and we get a lot done with a ton of volunteer hours, but some things just cost money. It would be great if we could keep our dues the same forever, but unfortunately that's not how inflation works. So, I would encourage you to get involved **now** with the Fair Wages Now campaign and/or the upcoming bargaining cycle. The more engaged our members are with both of these efforts, the more likely they are to succeed. If we can secure real meaningful wage improvements, then it won't sting quite as much when we are eventually looking at a modest dues increase.

Thank you for taking the time to look at this year's budget materials, and we look forward to seeing you at the meeting!

In solidarity,

Thor Hansen, USA Treasurer

*full disclosure – I happen to be the lead grievant in the grievance that is headed to arbitration this month. Decisions on whether a grievance should be taken to arbitration are made by USA's Grievance Committee, led by our duly elected Grievance Officer. The decision to proceed to arbitration, or not, is based on many factors including the merits of each case, strategic considerations of the union, etc. I do not sit on the Grievance Committee, and, if I did, I would recuse myself from voting on any grievance in which I was the primary beneficiary.