

SEIU Local 721  
President's Report to the Executive Board  
July 8, 2009

## Organizing

### **City of Los Angeles Engineers and Architects Association**

On June 22, the Employee Relations Board (ERB) made a challenged ballot determination, completed the ballot count and announced final results in the election to decertify MOU 8 and 17, the engineering units with a total of over 2,000 LA city professional employees:

An **outright majority** of MOU 17 voters elected to decertify EAA and join SEIU Local 721. The 500 employees will officially join the Local 721 family as our newest bargaining unit as soon as they are officially certified by the ERB. They are already building their union, circulating membership applications and bargaining surveys.

A **plurality** of MOU 8 voters supported the decert (Local 721 was the top vote-getter) but not quite an outright majority (a few voters supported the option of "no union"). So, a run-off election between SEIU Local 721 and EAA will be held, most likely in mid-August. A meeting is tentatively scheduled for July 7 to set the election schedule.

### **Center for Public Accountability (CPA)**

CPA staff remain intensely focused on developing plans to organize privatized public services employees, probing in areas including Mental Health, Public Health (PPPs) and Developmental Disabilities. CPA staff are also working with External Organizing to support the EAA campaign and other current organizing efforts.

## Bargaining/Budget

### **City of Los Angeles**

Faced with a projected \$500 million budget shortfall, the Los Angeles City Council adopted a budget which includes up to 7,000 layoffs across every City department, 26 mandatory furlough days – equal to a 10% pay cut – and @ 15% funding cuts to every City department.

Bolstered by a fierce budget/contract fight back campaign, the Coalition of City Unions reached agreement with the city on contract modifications that preserve services, jobs, and standards of living. A tremendous achievement by Local 721 members in the city of Los Angeles! Highlights of the agreement:

#### Two Year Extension of Current MOUs

Extension through June 30, 2014.

Except as specifically changed by this agreement, all provisions of the existing MOUs shall remain in full force and effect through June 30, 2014.

#### Continued Mutual Commitment to LA's Future

Mutual Commitment to LA's Future will remain in effect, allowing either the Coalition or the City to engage under Mutual Gains process to solve any problems.

#### No Mandatory Furloughs

City will not attempt to unilaterally implement mandatory furloughs on Coalition units in fiscal year 2009-10 or fiscal year 2010-11.

#### No Layoffs

No layoffs in fiscal year 2009-10.

No layoffs in fiscal year 2010-11, except under strict circumstances. Before laying off any employee in a Coalition unit, the City must meet a series of measures showing that they have accessed and utilized all available funds.

#### Full Early Retirement Incentive Program (ERIP)

An ERIP will be implemented with a target of 2,400 participants.

The ERIP will be open to workers who are already eligible for unreduced retirement, or who can reach eligibility with a combination of five years age and service credit. All workers hired before 1983 will also have a chance to take the early retirement option.

#### COLA Delay with Incentives

Currently scheduled salary movement will be delayed by two years, according to the new schedule below.

Workers will receive cash payments of 1.75% of annual salary, to be delivered in lump sum separate checks, on the first paycheck following 11/1/2011 and 11/1/2012.

An additional 1.75% COLA increase will be added on 7/1/13.

On June \_\_\_ the Local 721 bargaining committees voted unanimously to recommend the deal, and on June 26 the LA City Council passed the plan unanimously. The agreement now goes out to the members of Local 721 and other coalition unions for ratification.

### **Los Angeles County**

Faced with state budget proposals to eliminate CalWorks, on June 22 Local 721 members in the Department of Public Services led a march of 1500 workers, seniors, students, disabled persons, and advocates for public services in a rally and march from the LA County Hall of Administration to the Ronald Reagan State Building. The action was covered by CNN, KTLA 5, KABC 7, KMEX 34, Noticias 22, Korean language TV, the Los Angeles Times, and La Opinion.

One week later on June 29, Local 721 led a 750-person rally at the Los Angeles office of Assembly Speaker Karen Bass. The "Stay Strong" rally took place while Speaker Bass was engaged in 11<sup>th</sup>-hour budget negotiations with the "Big 5" (Governor and legislative leadership) in Sacramento. The rally was covered by KABC, KMEX/Univision (a live shot with out courts

reporter and another story on the 11 p.m. news), Channel 62, Channel 22 and two cameras from Fox 11.

On June 30, Local 721 members participated in a lunchtime protest at the State Building as the fiscal year was drawing to a close without a budget. And, on July 2, after learning that the Governor would be holding a morning press conference at the State Building, Local 721 members gathered once again to stage a protest.

Meanwhile, bargaining in LA County has gotten underway. Initial proposals have been submitted and bargaining is scheduled to begin at the Common Language table on June 18 and on the Fringe table on June 25. Unit negotiations will get started in July.

### **Los Angeles Superior Court / Children's Law Center of LA County**

Facing a projected \$90 million deficit in 2009-10 (and a recent proposal from the Governor's office to cut even more), the LA Superior Court announced its intention to close courthouses one day each month starting on July 15. With no relief, Court management asserts that there will be large-scale layoffs in future years.

Meanwhile, the Children's Law Center is also facing a significant reduction in funding which would result in a \$1 million shortfall, large for a small non-profit that operates with a small margin. They have proposed 4-8 furlough days and suspension of employer contributions to our members' 403B (retirement) plan

With huge deficits leading to demands for court closures, furloughs, layoffs, and benefit cuts, Local 721 members in the LA Superior Court and the Children's Law Center have been engaged in a campaign to win fair funding from the Judicial Council / Administrative Organization of Courts (AOC). On June 16 Local 721 members conducted a lunchtime protest at the local AOC office in Burbank. Nearly 200 court employees marched into the office and presented officials with petitions calling for the AOC to redirect funds currently earmarked for a new computerized case management system to keep courthouses open and court employees on the job. The protest made front page news in the Daily Journal.

Our campaign is making significant progress. In early June, the AOC announced that it would free up \$50 million previously earmarked for the new case management system to offset court deficits. But, following our actions, the Legislature directed the AOC to provide over \$100 million in additional funding to the trial courts!

### **Riverside County**

Riverside County negotiations are entering the final stages. Two huge meetings of SEIU721 members have been organized with 420 and 720 workers respectively attending. Management still has over 30% cuts to wages on the table.

The Local 721 Communications Department produced a video to inform members about the progress of bargaining. It will be mailed soon to all Riverside County members. Here is the link:

<https://rcpt.yousendit.com/707646126/bbe932f3d9b87972f0f6f5a3bce574fc>

## **Santa Barbara County**

At a June 9 emergency meeting with county unions, Santa Barbara County officials presented Local 721 members with options to close a projected budget gap including furloughs, or suspension of raises. Local 721 members are reviewing the budget and developing a response.

## **Ventura County**

Bargaining commenced on July 2. So far, the County has not indicated an intention to demand concessions.

# **Politics**

## **Employee Free Choice Act**

Senator-elect Al Franken will finally be seated giving us the ability to move Employee Free Choice forward. A plan is being developed by SEIU and our coalition partners on next steps to win legislation that gives more control to workers in deciding whether or not they want a union.

## **Fixing National Health Care**

Legislation is expected to come out of Congressional Committee in the coming weeks. The real battles will come down to ensuring there is a true "public option" to protect our public health care safety net by making them competitive with the privates and fighting off any unfair taxes on health benefits people already count on.

## **Budget Crisis**

Huge TV ad buys, more than 15,000 phone calls into the governor's offices, two huge rallies led by SEIU 721 and our community allies, and statewide actions yesterday kept the pressure on Democratic Legislators not to buckle under Schwarzenegger's veto threat as last night's fiscal year came to a close.

The Governor and Republican Legislators failure to compromise on taxing oil companies and cigarettes for more cuts on seniors, kids, and people with disabilities will force the state to begin issuing IOUs this Thursday and will balloon the deficit to more than \$26 billion. A new special session of the legislature is expected to begin today.

While the situation remains very fluid in Sacramento we have to keep our foot on the gas locally with members and their family calling the Governor's office non-stop telling him he can't have his all-cuts budget. Our local's produced more than 3,500 calls frustrating several offices within the Governor's administration. So we're continuing our call the governor campaign and nightly reporting until a deal is reached. We'll also be doing daily delegations to the Governor's offices, frequent district visits to key legislators, and are making plans for civil disobedience actions.

The Governor's budget that we are fighting so hard to block would strip in-home support services from 231,567 people who need physical assistance to live with respect and dignity in

their homes; would eliminate Cal Grant financial aid to 22,000 college-bound students; and would leave jobless adults in a quarter-million families without employment training or child care to seek a job.

## Representation / Members Services

### Advocacy

Some highlights from the past month:

- Riverside: Assisted a Riverside Police Department member in negotiating a return to work and resolving proposed discharge.
- LA City: Negotiated settlement of discharge and secured reinstatement; negotiated return to work of EAA represented member based on ADA.
- LA City: Worked on several cases that persuaded Civil Service Commission to clarify intent of its rules. There had been cases where Departments did not allow an employee who promoted to return to the former position during the probationary period and other cases where Departments refused to accommodate disabilities. Civil Service accepted Union argument that effectively removing an employee deprived them of due process rights.
- Ventura: Secured supervisory bonus pay for employee at Behavioral Health.
- LASD: Worked to settle grievance resulting in Additional Responsibility bonus.
- LA County: Worked to rescind involuntary transfer for Parks & Recreation member.
- LA County: Won grievance over an improvement needed Performance Evaluation. The work on this grievance led to an investigation and discipline of a managerial level employee who issued the document

### Union Wide Stewards Council

On June 27, a Local 721 union wide Steward Council meeting was held in Los Angeles. The body adopted a set of principles and guidelines for meetings, and launched a survey of stewards' training needs and priorities.

## Other Notable

### Fresno Decert Defense

During the week of June 1-5 Local 721 sent 19 staff and members to Fresno to help SEIU-UHW workers there beat back an effort to decertify their union. In June ballots were counted, and SEIU-UHW prevailed by a narrow 200-vote margin. Local 721's contribution may have been decisive! Congratulations to the Fresno team!