

SEIU Local 721
President's Report to the Executive Board
November 4, 2009

Organizing

City of Los Angeles Engineers

Thousands of City professional employees represented by the Engineers & Architects Association (EAA) have been taking steps since summer 2008 to switch to SEIU 721. Many of the 1,500 employees in MOU 8, the City's professional engineering unit, voted in a mail-ballot election that concluded on October 9.

The results:

SEIU: 602

EAA: 438

The MOU employees join those in MOU 17 who voted earlier this year to decertify EAA and unite with SEIU Local 721. Though still awaiting certification by the city's Employee Relations Board (ERB), the 2000 former EAA professional employees are well underway in preparations for bargaining their first SEIU contract. EAA continues to employ stalling tactics, but we are hopeful that the ERB will certify both units on November 23.

Regional Organizing Campaign Development

We are probing units in all counties: LA County/Riverside/Central Coast/OC. We are strategically prioritizing organizing targets which will help build the union's power in all outlying counties.

Contracted-out Private Services

Probing by 10 members of our organizing staff, has allowed us to develop an aggressive plan to launch a substantial effort to organize government-funded services in 2010.

Center for Public Accountability

Through the AccountableCalifornia.org website, we've been working to raise L721's profile as an advocate for quality, cost-effective public services. Over the past month, we've run a series of stories about misuse of government money to enrich executives of non-profit "charities" funded by LA County and the State.

Based on tips from Arnella Sims and others, we've also started shining a light on outrageous overspending at the Administrative Office of the Courts.

We will be encouraging members to send tips about waste of government funds to info@accountablecalifornia.org.

Bargaining / Issue Campaigns

City of Los Angeles

SEIU Local 721 members in the City of Los Angeles gave a strong vote of approval to a new hard-fought collective bargaining agreement hammered out over the past several months.

The results:

MOU	Yes Votes	No Votes	Total Votes	% Yes	% Turnout
04	1,459	124	1,583	92%	47%
14	376	163	539	69.8%	56%
15	273	58	331	82.5%	36%
18	379	191	570	66.5%	39%
29	201	199	400	50.25%	79%
Totals	2,688	735	3,423	78.5%	47%

Nearly 50% of SEIU Local 721 members voted, historically a very strong voter turn-out, and a reflection of the strong member involvement campaign.

City of Riverside

With over 500 members voting, a new SEIU Local 721 contract with the City of Riverside was overwhelmingly ratified.

Ventura County

Bargaining continues in the County of Ventura. Management's demands for employee sacrifices keep shifting. Their latest proposal focuses on what they are calling "pension reform", but what amounts to a pay cut for employees. The proposal includes a 3% shift from the County to employees who would need to contribute a larger share toward the cost of retirement benefits. The County is also proposing to suspend its matching contribution to employee 401k plans. Finally, the County is proposing to freeze its contribution toward employee health plans, which would result in significantly higher costs to SEIU Local 721 members.

SEIU Local 721 members have united in a coalition with other Ventura County unions, including the Firefighters, Nurses, and Deputy Sheriffs. The coalition is launching a campaign aimed guided by three unifying principles:

1. Shared Sacrifice – No concessions, unless County managers do their share.
2. No Permanent Cuts – Temporary solutions, to resolve a temporary problem.
3. Protect services and paychecks – Seek solutions, where possible, that preserve current levels of service and family incomes.

Los Angeles County Contract Campaign

Ratification elections are currently in progress for all of SEIU Local 721's LA County bargaining units, as well as the Fringe agreements covering employee benefits. Worksite meetings are being held throughout the County to give members and bargaining committee members to discuss the contract settlement. The ballot count will be conducted on November 9.

Los Angeles County Social Workers: Coming Together for Solutions

County officials and community allies came to our Union to listen to Social Workers concerns and solutions to protect our population's most vulnerable. "We are using this opportunity to make sure positive changes that help children, families and workers are adopted as a result." - Tony Bravo, a supervising CSW in the Belvedere office and SEIU 721 executive board member.

As part of their next steps Social Workers proposed:

- Recommendations for positive change in LA County DCFS policies.
- Forming alliances with community groups and advocates.
- Changes in State and Local policy
- Improving social workers' public image.

Los Angeles County Eligibility Workers: *Protecting Clients and Safeguarding Taxpayer Dollars*

Mark your calendars - November 7th, SEIU 721 members will convene an Eligibility Worker Summit from 9a-2p at DWP (111 South Hope, Los Angeles). With the Governor trying to privatize eligibility determination services, EWs are getting started to build a strong campaign to show Legislators how contracting-out puts these critical services at risk.

LA / Orange Cities, Regional Centers, Other

▪ **City of San Fernando**

The full-time unit ratified an agreement; managers unit ratified as well, awaiting Council approval; part-time unit still in bargaining.

▪ **City of Compton**

SEIU Local 721 members ratified and the City Council in October approved a three-year agreement with a re-opener on wages and health benefits.

▪ **City of Santa Clarita**

Bargaining for a successor MOU commenced on September 30. The current agreement expires on December 31. Bargaining is ongoing, and a new agreement is expected by the end of November.

▪ **City of Pico Rivera**

SEIU Local 721's seasonal workers in the City of Pico Rivera are currently in bargaining for a first contract.

▪ **American Red Cross**

The SEIU Local 721 bargaining committee is preparing to return to the bargaining table. Local 721 has been communicating, sharing and coordinating strategies with other unions that represent American Red Cross workers throughout the US.

Politics

November 3 Election Results

A full account of our fall electoral efforts will be provided as part of the COPE report.

Health Insurance Reform: Making History for Working Families!

On Thursday Oct. 29th, joined by SEIU members, The House of Representatives delivered on their promise to bring affordable, quality healthcare for all Americans and unveiled their merged Healthcare bill- *Affordable Health Care for America Act (HR3962)*.

The House bill:

- Includes a Public Option to create greater choice for Americans
- Does not add a time to the deficit
- Includes employer responsibility
- Does not put a tax on working families hard fought healthcare plans
- Is paid for by restoring the tax on the wealthiest Americans
- Reforms “Big Insurance” by:
 - Banning denial of coverage for pre-existing coverage
 - Mandating wellness and prevention coverage
 - Capping out of pocket expenses
- Help control the skyrocketing costs of healthcare so we can keep the coverage we have

The Senate Gets the Message: After 330,000 phone calls into Congress on Oct. 20th, and a recent poll showing majority of Americans support the Public Option, Senate Leader Harry Reid announced that the Senate Healthcare bill WILL include the Public Option. SEIU 721 was the top performing Local in the state in generating calls.

Stop Big Bank Greed: Taxpayers say Enough is Enough

Showdown in Chicago: Thousands of SEIU members (including our own Erma Hall-Wood) joined community activists and crashed the Big Bankers’ party in Chicago and demanded an end to the greedy Wall Street practices that led to an economic meltdown. These Big Banks crashed the economy- then lobbied the Government for a bailout, meanwhile forcing millions of Americans into foreclosures. Now, these same banks who have received billions of taxpayer dollars are using our money to:

- Pay their CEO’s millions in bonuses
- Block the very reforms we need to ensure they can’t crash our economy again
- Charge outrageous fees

President Obama’s proposals to re-regulate banks and the financial service industry, and protect consumers from Wall Street abuses are currently moving through Committees in the House. **SEIU721 members will meet with Congressional Members during Veterans’ Day Recess and share their personal stories of why need to reform the Big Banks.**

Santa Ana: SEIU 721 Members victorious against contracting-out, but the struggle continues

Members successfully fought back the expansion of private contracts within the Graffiti Abatement Department. Through meetings with City Council members and public testimony at Council meetings, members were able to defeat the expansion. The struggle now continues against the layoffs within the Planning and Building Department that hit Spanish

speaking residents hard. The Department no longer has certified bilingual staff to answer residents' questions about construction regulations, and city permits. Members and staff came together for a rally denouncing the cuts earlier this week.

Secure Retirement: Protecting Working Families' Futures

CalPERS run-off election campaign. Our endorsed candidate, Cathy Hackett, is in the final runoff. Ballots will land the week of November 9. Worksite fliers are available to recruit Worksite Leaders who will help Get Out The Vote for Cathy Hackett before Dec. 4th **Santa Barbara County Employees' Retirement System, SBCERS**: Members begin to plan for the January Election of anew **SBCERS** trustee.

Court Workers: Fighting for Accountability of Taxpayer dollars

On Wed Oct 28th, 13 SEIU721 court workers joined law enforcement, judges, and children advocates testified in our State Capitol about the court system's lack of public oversight. The administrative arm of the courts has been operating behind closed doors making decisions about millions of dollars in resources without worker or public input. Court workers testimony comes on the heels of a 3-week lobbying blitz to local Legislators. Court workers are outraged by the courts move to fund \$2 billion in IT improvements while closing court rooms. Press coverage of our members' participation in the hearing was covered in the Sacramento Bee. www.sacbee.com/topstories/story/2286743.html

Safety on the Job: Members use COPE dollars to create a safer work environment

In a major Health and Safety victory, Governor Schwarzenegger recently signed Assembly Bill 169 authored by Assemblymember Anthony Portantino (La Canada-Pasadena) which adds hundreds of Jail Detention Officers represented by Local 721 to list of job classifications who may seek to have an arrestee's blood tested for possible communicable diseases in the course of their duties. The passage of AB 169 was a joint effort of SEIU 721 and the Laborers Local 777 which represents Jail Detention Officers and Supervisory Jail Detention Officers in the Los Angeles Police Department.

Other Notable

Family Picnic

The Bi-Annual Local 721 Family Picnic for members in the LA area was held at Whittier Narrows Park on Saturday, October 24. Over 2000 Local 721 members and guests attended this year's event, which featured a carnival theme with booths, games, family competitions, and, of course, fabulous picnic and novelty foods.

Building Search

Local 721 representatives will be touring two promising prospects for our new headquarters: the old Metropolitan Water District building at 111 Sunset, and the old LA Times building at Broadway and First.

Bylaws Election

Planning is underway for a membership election to ratify the bylaws developed by SEIU Local 721 members over the past two years. We are receiving quotes from election services providers, and will soon select a vendor to conduct the union-wide election.