

SEIU Local 721

President's Report to the Executive Board

January 13, 2010

Bylaws

YES!

Seventy-six percent of members in all regions voted to move forward in SEIU 721 and approve union bylaws that will provide a strong democratic structure for our union.

YES	6,986
NO	2,147

Next, an election committee will be appointed to oversee a first-quarter, 2010 election for a permanent Executive Board.

Organizing

Economic Conferences

Planning is underway for Economic Conferences in Riverside County (January 30), Orange County (February 26) and Tri-Counties (March, TBA). The idea of the conferences is to unite Local 721 members with city workers who are not yet part of SEIU to discuss strategies for dealing with the difficult economic conditions that are creating significant challenges for all public employees in Southern California.

Bargaining / Issue Campaigns

Ventura County Contract Campaign

On December 14, the County of Ventura gave Local 721's bargaining committee a last, best and final offer that includes a 3% shift of pension contributions from the County onto workers, and a 2nd tier pension contribution plan for new hires. Local 721 refused to accept the County's arbitrary deadline for conclusion of bargaining, and on January 5 the County declared that the parties had reached an impasse. A mediator has been called in to try to help the parties resolve outstanding issues. A mediation session has been scheduled for January 21.

The Local 721 bargaining team has come up with a short-term plan to protect members' family incomes by discontinuing an add-on retirement benefit (2% COLA). SEIU 721 is also leading a coalition of Ventura County unions in a campaign to win long-term solutions through funding policy changes at VCERA, the County's retirement system.

City of Los Angeles Pensions

The Los Angeles City Council is considering placing a measure on the April ballot to create a 2nd-tier lesser retirement benefit for new hires. SEIU 721 has been working with the Coalition of City Unions on political and legal strategies to defend pensions, as well as real reforms to reduce the City's pension obligations.

Tri-Counties Regional Center

On December 22, Local 721 members ratified a new five-year agreement with no takeaways, an additional bereavement day, increase in the employer's contribution toward health insurance to offset a 12% increase in premiums, up to seven months pregnancy disability leave, and a January, 2012 re-opener on wages and telecommuting.

LACERA Funding Policy

On December 9, after hearing testimony from SEIU Local 721 representatives the LACERA Investment Board approved proposed changes to funding policies. The policy – inclusion of the STAR COLA Reserves as a valuation asset for determining the system's funding ration - will save the County an estimated \$40 million in 2010-11.

City of Los Angeles, Engineers/Professional

Our two newest Local 721 bargaining units, LA City units 8 and 17, have begun to bargain their first SEIU contracts!

City of Santa Clarita

The Santa Clarita bargaining committee reached a tentative agreement on December 10, 2009. The contract was ratified by the membership on December 17, 2009 and will be approved by the City Council on January 19, 2010.

American Red Cross

SEIU Local 721 bargaining committee members at the American Red Cross (ARC) has been busy drafting bargaining proposals and learning from other unions that have been in bargaining recently with ARC. A "Red Cross" coalition meets via telephone conference on a weekly base to share information. Some members of the Coalition will be meeting with 721 on January 20, 2010 to share their experience face to face. The meeting will be held at 520 S. Virgil, 3rd floor conference room from 9:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

Riverside County Campaign to Reduce Reliance on Registry Nurses

Intensive Care Unit Registered Nurse Mark Grays went before the Riverside County Board of Supervisors Tuesday to ask the Board to consider a 60 day moratorium on spending \$17.5 million on registry nurses. The Board voted to meet with SEIU 721 and begin to find ways to reduce funding for registry nurses and come up with a plan to retain and attract full time nurses.

Representation

Advocacy Task Force

An Advocacy Taskforce has been created to represent our members and address the discipline of two dozen Social Workers that have been linked to the child deaths in the DCFS. The taskforce is made up of three 721 Advocates who have gone through an in-service on the department's policies and procedures, processing of cases and winning strategies along with four Social Worker stewards and Danny Ramos, former Social Worker. This taskforce will become the experts in handling and representing these and other DCFS/Social Worker cases.

Civil Service Commission Reform

An initial discussion with staff and our attorneys around developing a plan to reform the LA County Civil Service Commission took place on 1/11/10. Discussions will continue next week.

Steward Principles

At its December 5, 2009 the 721 Steward Council adopted the attached set of Steward Principles.

Politics

Health Insurance Reform

The Government Relations team has been reaching out to our Members of Congress on the Senate's proposed "excise tax," lobbying them to not tax healthcare benefits for middle-class families.

Moving forward, we'll be calling on House members to make the following improvements to the health insurance reform bill:

1. **AFFORDABILITY**
Make healthcare more affordable to low and middle income families
2. **Improve Employer Responsibility**
Make sure employers are sharing responsibility for health care
3. **Don't Tax Health Care Benefits for Middle-Class Families**

Next Steps: Democratic leaders in the House and Senate will work on a compromise bill to be voted on in the House, and then sent to the Senate. The President is requesting a final health insurance reform bill be on his desk by the State of the Union address – likely February 2nd.

State Budget: Governor's State of the State

In his 1/6/10 State of the State the Governor discussed:

- Not cutting any more from education, after years of devastating cuts that have left our state on the verge of violating federal mandates on education funding levels
- "Job Creation," and also eliminating safety net proposals that keep families afloat while they search for jobs
- Pitting prisons against higher education, and claiming windfall savings by privatizing prisons.

Governor's Proposed 2010 Budget

(See attached.)

Inland Area Endorsement Town Hall

SEIU 721 Members will interview Riverside County District Attorney Rod Pacheco to whether to endorse him for another term as District Attorney. Pacheco does not face a challenger in his re-election bid. Also, SEIU 721 Members will interview Sheriff Stan Sniff and challenger Frank Robles. SEIU 721 represents over 500 members within the county public safety departments.

Tri-Counties: Building Electoral Coalitions

In keeping with our commitment to raising future leaders we have invited members and other community leaders to attend the next training "Power Analysis of Local Governments" on January 19, 2010. This training will help us understand how elected officials from school board to city council, really do affect our jobs, our education, and other opportunities.

TriCounties Region members will have their follow up meeting on Jan 25th with potential candidates for city council and other seats in Santa Barbara County as a next step and to help “groom” future leaders. Other organizations attending: PUEBLO, the Democratic Committee, SEIU 620, and the Builder’s Union.

Other Notable

Building Search

Local 721 opted NOT to enter into escrow at the property we had been considering at 1111 West Sunset in Los Angeles. Instead, we are investigating a 100,000 square foot property at 1545 Wilshire. Our broker has drawn up a Letter of Intent and we will be scheduling a Building Committee tour in the next few days.

Acknowledgments

- Cathy Hackett sent SEIU Local 721 a note to thank members for our financial and organizational support in her unsuccessful bid for a seat on the CalPERS Board of Retirement. Cathy lost by 2% in a very tight election.