

SEIU 721

May 2015



PRESIDENT'S REPORT

721 CALLS ON LA MAYOR TO FIX LA

April Blitz of Actions and Protests Brings Negotiators Back to the Table



Members of Fix LA and SEIU 721 demonstrate at LA Mayor Eric Garcetti's State of the City address at the Valley Performing Arts Center at Cal State Northridge on April 14th.

After nearly a year of actions, protests and marches that have drawn tens of thousands of Angelenos to the streets, there is some indication that Mayor Eric Garcetti may finally heed calls to "Fix L.A."

Last year, SEIU 721 joined with nearly three-dozen community and faith groups to form Fix LA and expose how bad deals with big Wall Street banks were siphoning off millions from the City of LA, crippling the city's ability to restore service cuts and hurting neighborhoods and public workers.

SEIU 721 members finally drew the line on April 10th and voted by an 86 percent margin to authorize a strike. To put things in context, LA City employees have not gone out on strike for nearly 30 years.

Fix LA followed up with a three-day blitz: marchers calling for a \$15 an hour minimum wage for all Angelenos shut down city streets; protestors disrupted Mayor Garcetti's State of the City address at the Valley Performing Arts Center at CSUN; and a group of women activists from all over LA launched a 15-day fast at Mayor's doorstep. When the dust settled, city negotiators had called SEIU 721 and its

Fix LA allies back to the bargaining table.

While things appear to be moving in the right direction, we're still far from a deal on a new contract and other Fix LA demands, so we must keep the pressure on.

Stacey Karnya, a member of the bargaining team from the Environmental Monitoring Division, put it best: "Nine months ago we began a journey, determined to fix LA by protecting and growing the good jobs that keep our city running...but workers have been left with little choice because we do not have a firm commitment from City Hall on our proposals that would generate revenue to fix our streets, trim our trees, clean our beaches, help children get to schools safely, and ensure our own kids have a secure future... We are now ready to strike if that is what it takes for Mayor Garcetti and the City Council to finally address what ails LA."

Bob Schoonover, President

Bob Schoonover



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PUBLIC EMPLOYEES JOIN FAST FOOD AND OTHER WORKERS ACROSS LA TO FIGHT FOR 15



Nearly 3,000 SEIU 721 members and Fix LA allies rally at the LA County administration building for the Fix LA platform, which includes \$15 for all and a fair contract for city and county workers. At noon they joined thousands of fast food workers and unionized employees from a variety of industries took to the streets in front of a Downtown McDonald's to call for \$15 and a union.



721 PREPARES FOR LA HEALTH CARE OVERHAUL

LA County is engaged in a massive overhaul of its health care delivery system and SEIU 721 is in the mix, advocating to protect public health and working conditions for thousands of county workers. The plan is to merge the county's mental health agency with its public health department — which is responsible for preventing and responding to disease outbreaks, managing substance abuse programs and inspecting restaurants, nursing homes and other facilities — and the existing Department of Health Services, which operates county hospitals and clinics. Since February, 721 members and staff have helped organize 7 townhall meetings on health care integration and scheduled meetings with all five members of the Board of Supervisors to weigh in on how to structure the merged agency. In May, 721 will focus on specific recommendations through the County Health Intergration Task Force. Here, SEIU 721 President Bob Schoonover, LA Department of Health Services Director Mitch Katz and SEIU 721 members and staff talk integration.

SB COURT WORKERS JOIN 721



On April 8th, San Bernardino court workers voted overwhelmingly to leave the San Bernardino Public Employees Association and join SEIU 721. A total of 671 court workers — 68 court reporters and 603 court support services staff — are the second set of San Bernardino workers join our union. "Today, the men and women from the court reporters and support services unit demonstrated they are ready to uplift their work and their families," Bob Schoonover told the San Bernardino Sun newspaper. "SEIU Local 721 is ecstatic to welcome our newest members and hit the ground running so we can make big things happen."

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LA CITY WORKERS AUTHORIZE STRIKE

"WE'RE READY TO GO IF THE MAYOR WON'T FIX LA"



Members of the SEIU 721 LA City bargaining team count strike authorization ballots on April 10th.

LA City members authorized a strike by an 86 percent margin. LA City workers have not gone out on strike in 30 years.

PAY INCREASES FOR 400 VENTURA WORKERS

On April 13th, the Ventura County Board of Supervisors approved out-of-contract pay increases of between 5 and 15 percent for county workers whose wages were determined to be below market rate. These pay increases will take effect in June, and all SEIU 721-represented employees will receive a negotiated 3 percent increase in August. Regional Director Joe Kahraman, who negotiated the increase, and

Tri-County Executive Board members Grace Sepulveda and Ted Perez testified at the Board of Supervisors meeting in support of the raises. "Our work on the Fight for 15 campaign has encouraged raises for low-wage workers and this clearly had an impact on the Board," said Kahraman. SEIU's efforts will increase wages for some classes, like water workers and legal assistants by 15 percent.

MICHAEL GREEN FEATURED AT NAN



SEIU Regional Director Michael Green served as a panelist at Al Sharpton's National Action Network Convention in April. Green brought SEIU 721's perspective

to panels on economic development and Labor at the conference, which was attended by President Barack Obama. NAN's LA Chapter has been a key ally in Fix LA and the LA City contract campaign.

SEIU 721 FIGHTS BACK FOR RIVERSIDE MEMBER



John Huggins

Regional Flood Control Supervisor John Huggins, a 22-year Riverside County employee, was terminated on trumped up charges in retaliation for his work as co-negotiator of the county contract. SEIU 721 intervened and won Huggins' reinstatement after 15 days of arbitration. The county sued to overturn the arbitration and lost but continues to fight. "If not for the intervention of my union, SEIU 721, I already would have lost everything," said Huggins. "The county isn't giving up, even though I've won every round so far. But I've got a great team behind me and I know we're going to win in the end."

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LA WOMEN FAST FOR 15

Fast by LA Women Community Activists Captures Attention from Media and Mayor



(Pictured, left to right) Denise Barlage, Maneva Currie, Alexandra Nagy, Maria Gomez, Gilda Valdez, Angie Godoy, TJ Michels, Mari Carmen Farfan and Elena Popp.

In 38 years in the Labor movement, I've seen a lot, but nothing has inspired me as much as the courage of fast food workers fighting for \$15 an hour and a union.

Recently I met with a group of fast food workers — nearly all women of color — who inspired me to take Fight for 15 to LA City Hall and Mayor Garcetti's doorstep.

Women like Mary Carmen Farfan, a 46-year-old mother of four who works for \$9 an hour as a cashier and cook at Burger King. "I work so much and can't make ends meet. I'm fighting for my children and to be able to meet their basic needs," she told me.

Mary Carmen's arms are crisscrossed with burn marks from lifting heavy fryer baskets in between making sandwiches at her station. "It's not fair. All that work for one person and just \$9 an hour?" she asks.

Still, Mayor Garcetti won't commit to raising the minimum wage to \$15 today. Right now the city is only considering raising the minimum wage to \$15.25 by 2019.

This is why I joined eight other women from all walks

of life in LA on September 16 to launch a 15-day fast on City Hall's South Lawn — to let City Hall know that anything less than \$15 an hour is not enough in LA and that working women in LA can't wait five years to earn \$15.

The experience isn't for everyone — after 15 days without any solid food, you feel constantly dizzy, tired and cold — but we attracted the attention of the local media and even got Mayor Garcetti to join us on the South Lawn for a discussion about LA's minimum wage.

History has shown us that 'hunger tactics' are used for serious reasons. Paying working people enough to survive is serious business. Right now, 48 percent of workers in Los Angeles make less than \$15. I pray that the Mayor and the Council have the courage to do what's right for the working people of LA.

Gilda Valdez, Chief of Staff

Gilda Valdez

