

SEIU 721

PRESIDENT'S

MARCH 2016
REPORT



Worker Victories Over Right Wing Attacks the Result of Sound Strategies, Hard Work, Organizing and a Little Luck

Workers scored two huge victories this month: The Supreme Court rejected a challenge to their basic union rights and the California Legislature adopted a \$15 minimum wage for all workers. As the old saying goes, “sometimes you are lucky, sometimes you are good.”

In *Friedrichs vs. California Teachers Association*, the landmark challenge to workers’ rights argued before the Supreme Court in January, workers were lucky. Funded by an army of ultra conservative, anti-worker think tanks, the *Friedrichs* case was shepherded from the trial court level to the Supreme Court — a kind of legal smart bomb designed to harm workers. Then the death of conservative jurist Antonin Scalia deadlocked the Supreme Court at 4-4, preserving workers’ ability to fight back against well-funded attacks at the bargaining table and the polls.

In the Fight for \$15, on the other hand, workers were amazing. Several years ago, our union SEIU Local 721, decided to launch the Fight for \$15 in L.A. Even though most of our members make more than \$15 an hour, we took up the cause of fast food and other low-

wage workers. We were attacked by everyone from right wing foundations to corporate think tanks and even abandoned by some of our allies. But we stayed strong. We refuted the bogus studies. We organized. We hit the streets over and over and over.

And then we won in L.A. City. We won in L.A. County. And our victories lit a fuse that exploded in statewide victory. At presstime, Governor Brown is pledging to sign a \$15 wage for every worker in California. You, the members of SEIU 721, made history!

But make no mistake the hyper-wealthy anti-worker special interests behind *Friedrichs* won’t take this lying down. The Koch Brothers are funneling millions into the presidential race to capture the White House and name Scalia’s replacement.

But I am also confident we will prevail. From the bargaining table to the ballot, we have the power to build a better future — not because we’re lucky, but because we’re good!

Bob Schoonover, President

Bob Schoonover



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Stopping Workplace Bullying at L.A. DHS

SEIU 721 Members Meet with L.A. Health Services Chief in the Wake of Worker Suicide



L.A. DHS Director Dr. Mitch Katz



SEIU 721 Members share stories about workplace bullying.

The recent death of a High Desert Registered Nurse and a suicide attempt by an LAC+USC healthcare worker and shop steward galvanized SEIU 721 members in the L.A. County Department of Health Services to demand a meeting with top L.A. DHS officials. Dozens of SEIU 721 members packed the union's L.A. and Lancaster offices for meetings with L.A. Health Services Director Dr. Mitch Katz to share their alarming stories of overt bullying and silent retaliation at the hands of managers. Members called on Dr. Katz to investigate and immediately discipline offenders and to develop a robust anti-bullying program. From the tone of the meeting and the response of Dr. Katz — he promised to investigate and report back with corrective action within 30 days — members have found an ally in the DHS Chief.

GETTING READY TO LIFT UP VENTURA

Worksite Organizers Fan Out Across the County to Help Workers Prepare for Nomination and Election of Bargaining Team



Worksite organizers and 721 staff blitzed Ventura County with a series of worksite meetings with county workers to circulate and explain bargaining surveys and distribute bargaining team nomination forms. County workers are ready to LIFT UP VENTURA!

721 Court Workers Say: It's Time to Reboot the San Bernardino County Courts!



The San Bernardino Superior Court spent \$4 million on its new Tyler Odyssey computer case management system. Now prosecutors can't access criminal records, the public is stuck in long courthouse lines because they can't pay tickets online and, on several occasions, alleged criminals have gone free because the system reported incorrect bail amounts. Expected to clean up the mess, San Bernardino's overworked court employees have launched multiple actions on court management, including a customer service survey aimed at capturing the stories of irate court customers stuck in long courthouse lines.

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SEIU 721 MEMBERS ELECT NEW BOARD

Elected Member Leaders Pledge to Continue Our Local's Efforts to Lift Up Working Families, Fight Back Against Efforts to Diminish Workers' Rights, and Strengthen Workers' Voices Across Southern California

L.A. COUNTY



CAROLYN DASHER (721M1ST)
COURT REPORTER, SC



LYDIA CABRAL (721M1ST)
PATIENT RESOURCES WORKER



PATRICK DEL CONTE (721M1ST)
REC. THERAPY SUPERVISOR



GRACE SANTILLANO (721M1ST)
STAFF ASSISTANT I



ADOLFO GRANADOS (721M1ST)
ELIGIBILITY WORKER II



VERYETI VASSEL (721M1ST)
MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELOR RN



STEVE HOVAGIMIAN (721M1ST)
SOCIAL SERVICES SUPERVISOR



OMAR PEREZ (721M1ST)
INTERMEDIATE TYPIST CLERK



ALINA MENDIZABAL (721M1ST)
MARKETING REPRESENTATIVE



SHARONDA WADE (721M1ST)
CHILDREN'S SOCIAL WORKER III



VALENCIA GARNER (721M1ST)
NURSING ASSISTANT, SHERIFF



RON McMULLEN (721M1ST)
ELIGIBILITY WORKER II



ARCELIA LOPEZ (721M1ST)
REGISTERED NURSE II



JOSE SANCHEZ (721M1ST)
TRAFFIC PAINTER



TONY F. MENDOZA (721M1ST)
EVIDENCE CUSTODIAN



CHARLES HARRINGTON (721M1ST)
BUILDING INSPECTOR II



ROSA CASTRO (721M1ST)
COURT PROCUREMENT



LIZA ROCHA (721M1ST)
CLIENT BENEFIT SPECIALIST

TRI-COUNTIES



SHANNON ABRAMOVITCH (721M1ST)
CHILD SUPPORT SERVICES



CHRISTINA SINGER (721M1ST)
FOOD SERVICES ASSISTANT II



ROBERTO CAMACHO (721M1ST)
BENEFITS SUPERVISOR, VENTURA



PAMELA MEADOWS (721M1ST)
ELIGIBILITY WORKER III



GRACE SEPULVEDA (721M1ST)
CLIENT BENEFITS SPECIALIST II



CORINNE PARKER (721M1ST)
SENIOR OFFICE SPECIALIST



ORACIO DIAZ (721M1ST)
SOCIAL SERVICE PRACTITIONER



TIM BURKE (721M1ST)
LEAD OPERATOR



REBECCA BAIN (721M1ST)
RESP. CARE PRACTITIONER II



ED TOOLE (721M1ST)
MINIBUS DRIVER



DAVID WARPNESS (721M1ST)
CHILDREN'S SOCIAL WORKER



ROGER NUNEZ (721M1ST)
SOCIAL SERVICES ASSISTANT

L.A. CITY



CAMMIE DUDEK (721M1ST)
VICTIM SERVICES ADVOCATE II

SEIU 721 OFFICERS



BOB SCHOONOVER (721M1ST)
PRESIDENT



LINDA DENT (721M1ST)
VICE PRESIDENT



DAVID GREEN (721M1ST)
TREASURER



LILLIAN CABRAL (721M1ST)
SECRETARY

Results pending for eight L.A. and OC Cities seats

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SEIU 721 VP Linda Dent
with Senate President Kevin
De Leon in Sacramento.

“They thought we were crazy, but SEIU Local 721 never gave up. We lit the fuse and now every worker in California has \$15. ”

**Linda Dent
Vice President, SEIU 721**

They Thought We Were Crazy: But We Fought, We Organized, We Struck, We Fasted and We Won!

A couple weeks ago, after California’s Assembly and Senate leaders reached a deal to pass a statewide \$15 minimum wage and Governor Brown signaled he’d sign it, I walked out the rooftop fire escape of our union and wept. When SEIU 721 voted to launch the Fight for \$15 in Los Angeles two-and-a-half years ago, people said we were crazy, including some in the Labor movement. They said the big corporations and the wealthy 1% would spend huge sums to crush us and our allies would abandon us.

But in 2013 we joined with fast food employees and other low wage workers and took to the streets. Our actions got bigger and bigger. Then, in 2014, we shut down entire parts of L.A. with huge street protests. We built coalitions with other unions, community and faith-based groups and led some of the biggest marches the city has ever seen.

And then we won.

We passed a \$15 minimum wage in the City of L.A. The County of L.A. followed shortly after. *USA Today* said our victories triggered the University of California

and the New York City Wage Board to follow suit.

In 2016, we joined with other groups across the state to gather the signatures to place a \$15 statewide minimum wage on the ballot. In March, we took over the State Capitol until the legislature passed a \$15 wage for every worker in the state. And we won.

It’s a victory not just for the 5.6 million workers who’ll get a raise and a fighting chance to feed their families, it’s a victory for every worker. For years, rich corporations and right wing politicians have tried to pit low-wage, non-union workers against union workers by stoking jealousy. “Look at their pensions and their workplace protections and their wages,” they say.

This time, instead of turning to unionized workers and asking “why do you get a living wage,” fast food workers turned on their bosses and asked “why do you refuse to pay us one?”

Gilda Valdez, Chief of Staff

Gilda Valdez

