

MAY-JUNE 2019

# PRESIDENT'S REPORT TO THE MEMBERS OF SEIU 721



## HOW WE FIX THE GIG ECONOMY



### A MESSAGE FROM SEIU 721 PRESIDENT BOB SCHOONOVER

LA area rideshare drivers join with fastfood workers and supporters from SEIU 721 and Fight for \$15 on May 23rd.

**O**n May 23, more than 100 LA rideshare drivers shut down an Uber hub to protest low pay and poor working conditions before joining striking fast-food workers to disable the drive-through of an Arlington Heights McDonald's by repeatedly ordering "fair wages" on the microphone.

This first-of-its-kind joint action, organized by SEIU 721's newly formed Mobile Workers' Alliance and Fight for \$15 LA, is part of our strategy to build power and raise standards for all workers by bringing together union members with fast-food and gig economy workers who seek to organize unions, improve working conditions, and raise wages.

Both groups are victims of unbridled corporate greed. Contrary to the myth that fast-food workers are high schoolers looking for work experience, the average fast-food worker is 29 years old, and more than 50 percent must work a second job just to survive. Fast-food workers also are regularly subjected to wage theft, such as shorted paychecks and mandatory off-the-clock work.

Rideshare drivers face similar challenges. While Uber and Lyft recruit drivers with the promise they can earn up to \$90,000 per year, the average driver takes less than minimum wage after expenses — like gas, car payments, repairs and insurance. The low price of Uber and Lyft rides has decimated the traditional cab business in many big cities, increasing demand for ridesharing drivers and further depressing ridesharing pay rates.

Now both groups are fighting back with the organizing muscle of SEIU 721 on their side.

This historic action won't be the last. We're on the road to justice for fast-food and gig economy workers and we're not stopping.

*Bob Schoonover*



## PRESIDENT'S REPORT MAY-JUNE 2019



### LA Rideshare Drivers Join with Fast Food Workers and SEIU 721 in Mobile March for Justice



**Hundreds of Los Angeles area Uber and Lyft rideshare drivers took part in a massive all-day protest on May 23 to raise awareness of the plight of “gig economy” employees and other low-wage workers.**

The mass action began with the takeover of an Uber hub in the West Adams neighborhood, where drivers descended in a huge parade of vehicles, all decorated with car flags and placards bearing the insignia of the Mobile Workers Alliance – the umbrella group started by SEIU 721 to organize gig economy workers.

The rideshare drivers joined up with a group of fast-food workers striking for a union and other low-wage workers from Fight for \$15 LA at a Washington Boulevard McDonald’s. The driver caravan helped fast-food workers effectively shut down the restaurant as one after the other

ordered “fair wages” on the drive-through window intercom.

“Uber’s entire business would be impossible without drivers,” said Linda Valdivia, a rideshare driver. “We are the reason Uber and Lyft make millions. Yet the majority of Uber and Lyft drivers still earn less than minimum wage. This is wrong. it’s unjust. And it should be illegal.”

Rideshare drivers with the Mobility Workers’ Alliance are demanding a \$30/hour living wage – \$15/hour in pay and \$15/hour to cover unreimbursed expenses – a rollback of Uber’s recent 25% rate cut, and an end to arbitrary driver deactivations.

“Rideshare workers throughout Los Angeles are ready to take the wheel and take control of their economic destiny,” said Bob Schoonover, President of SEIU California and SEIU 721, which is organizing members of the Mobile Workers’ Alliance.

# PRESIDENT'S REPORT MAY-JUNE 2019



## Members Speak Out on the LA County Budget

Dozens of SEIU 721 members who keep LA County running testified at the May 15 Board of Supervisors meeting about the challenges they face keeping LA County safe, clean, and healthy. Members highlighted dozens of ways the county could improve services, increase efficiency, save money, and make LA County a better place to work and live:

**Library budget hole:** The proposed LA County budget proposes reducing library spending by \$37.8 million from the current year and \$51.2 million from Fiscal Year 2017-18. While underserved communities depend heavily on LA County library programming, the proposed budget will almost surely result in major staffing and program cuts.

**Caseload freeze in In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS):**  
— The typical IHSS Social Worker now carries more than 400 cases, almost double the 249 caseload benchmark in the official MOU between LA County and SEIU 721. The county has failed to fill vacant positions and continues to dump excessive caseloads on workers.

**High caseloads in Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS):** Though LA County's work with SEIU 721 has resulted in significant progress towards reducing DCFS social worker caseloads, the numbers are still too high—and the expiration of the Title IV-E Waiver threatens to derail our progress.

**Animal Control response times:** The accepted standard for U.S. counties is one Animal Control Officer for every 18,000 residents. LA County, which spans nearly 4,900 square miles, has just one officer for every 33,000 residents. That means officers can respond quickly to only one out of every three high-priority calls.

**"Proposition A" jobs:** County supervisors are on record saying the county should be providing vital services with county employees instead of for-profit contractors, but they must appropriate the necessary funding and make the hires to make this policy a reality.

**Health Information Management (HIM) backlogs:** The Department of Health Services uses an expensive HIM registry to fill many open positions. Outpatient HIM staff could be trained to fill desperately needed inpatient vacancies, but DHS must be given the authority to do so.

**EVS contract:** We've made great strides on improving the EVS contract by hiring full-time, permanent workers in place of contractors. This practice should be replicated across LA County.

**Fixing Standby Coverage:** Constant staff shortages in the Department of Health Services Cardiac Lab, Interventional Radiology, Neuroradiology, Intravascular Neurosurgery, Vascular Surgery and Cardiac Electrophysiology mean that IR Technologist radiology staff must be called in to fill staffing gaps. DHS should add positions to help reduce high staff turnover and pay reasonable compensation for standby coverage.

**Work-based enumeration for the 2020 Census:** An undercount of one million people in the State of California would result in a loss of \$20 billion in federal funding. Our union recommends enumeration stations be set up in Department of Public and Social Services lobbies, health center waiting rooms and other similar public-facing facilities staffed by LA County workers trained and equipped to guide residents through the enumeration process.

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT MAY-JUNE 2019

In Landmark Union Election,

# OCCIDENTAL COLLEGE FACULTY VOTE TO JOIN SEIU 721



**"Congratulations to non-tenure track faculty  
who voted to form a union and join SEIU 721!"**

**LINDA DENT, VICE PRESIDENT, SEIU 721**

Congratulations to non-tenure track faculty at Occidental College who voted May 14 to form a union and join SEIU 721!

The landmark union vote, announced after ballots were counted by the National Labor Relations Board, caps a months-long organizing drive that brought scores of students and faculty together to raise standards and improve working conditions for faculty at the nationally renowned liberal arts college.

Occidental College faculty are the latest in a nationwide movement of faculty and graduate students fighting corporatization of higher education through unionization. Their victory marks the 5th successful Los Angeles union election in SEIU's Faculty Forward initiative.

Faculty at Occidental will join more 60,000 unionized college and university faculty on more than 70 campuses nationwide who have organized to raise standards with SEIU.

"We're heartened by the strong showing of support in today's vote by Occidental's faculty," said Brian Clearwater, Assistant Professor of Religious Studies. "This helps us get a contract that reflects the excellent teaching and service provided by Occidental's non-tenure track faculty."

This win comes on the heels of successful unionization efforts at colleges and universities across the country, including the University of Southern California, Howard University, University of Chicago, Boston University, Loyola University Chicago, Georgetown, and Tufts University.

# PRESIDENT'S REPORT MAY-JUNE 2019



## LA CITY WORKERS RATIFY STRONG NEW CONTRACT



It's official. On May 9, L.A. City Members voted to ratify their new 3-year contract by a 95% margin.

The vote brings closure to a contract campaign that mobilized SEIU 721 members from every corner of the city and inspired massive actions in Downtown LA and the Port of Los Angeles.

SEIU 721 members' hard work paid off in a strong 3-year contract that includes raises retroactive to October 28, 2018.

### SEIU 721 MEMBERS IN OXNARD LEAD THE FIGHT AGAINST LAYOFFS AND SERVICE CUTS

SEIU 721 members in the City of Oxnard are fighting back in the wake of city management's surprise announcement of cutbacks that will shut down vital city services and trigger layoffs for dozens of frontline city workers.

"Together, we have fought back against attacks by this same city council, attacks by Big Oil, which thinks our dear city is a dumping ground, and attacks by many others," SEIU 721 member Patricia Garcia said at the May 7 city council meeting.

"Together, we can find solutions that don't require drastic cuts to our workforce – my co-workers – or to the vital city services residents depend on," she continued.

SEIU 721 is still reviewing the list of surprise budget cuts, which include plans to shutter cultural landmarks, cut key services in the La Colonia part of town, and lay off frontline city employees, but our union already is gearing up to bring the fight to Oxnard to protect key services and the workers who provide them.

### SEIU 721 LA City Contract Highlights

- We secured 9.65% in raises over the life of the contract for every worker
- We maintained the 12-step salary structure
- We beat back city proposals to shift health care cost increases onto members and protected 100% employer-paid care at the Kaiser Family rate
- We enhanced family leave
- We protected our overtime pay
- We stopped the city from outsourcing and contracting out our work

Our collective strength as union workers made this happen!  
When we fight, we Fix LA!



## PRESIDENT'S REPORT MAY-JUNE 2019



### LA CITY LIFEGUARDS ALERT PUBLIC TO WATER QUALITY PROBLEMS AT HANSEN DAM



**SEIU 721 City of Los Angeles Lifeguards are sounding the alarm on outbreaks of “cercarial dermatitis” – better known as “swimmer’s itch” — caused by water-borne parasites at the Hansen Dam Recreational Lake in the San Fernando Valley.**



“Despite lifeguards raising serious concerns about the water quality at the Hansen Dam Recreational Lake, we were simply ignored and told it was ‘safe’ to go in during a mandatory open water skills testing on April 27,” said Jasper Kim, a 13-year veteran lifeguard based out of the Hansen Dam Aquatic Center, who has suffered severely from cercarial dermatitis.

“Lo and behold, 20 of us were immediately stricken with nasty body rashes and had to seek immediate medical attention. My body welted up with red bumps and blisters, which I still have not recovered from.”

Kim and his fellow co-workers have filed a formal grievance to demand accountability and to ensure water quality testing at Hansen and other recreational facilities throughout the City of Los Angeles, public notification of water quality issues and public access prohibition at Aquatic Center until it is safe.

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT MAY-JUNE 2019

# MEMBER LEADERS PLEDGE TO "RECLAIM RIVERSIDE"



SEIU 721 member leaders in Riverside County met Saturday, May 18th to strategize a plan to take back our county.

With bargaining on the horizon, regional director Eloy Alvarez, union attorney Hannah Weinstein and executive board members Cheylynda Barnard, Christi Bell and Tim Burke briefed member leaders and plotted strategy for the upcoming fight.

Legally, the county isn't required to return to the table until December, but Riverside County members are hard at work now building strength at every worksite.

Keynote speaker and union activist Carol O'Neil of Chicago's Local 73 fired up Riverside 721 members with the story of how her union's member-to-member organizing program defeated Illinois governor

Bruce Rauner, one of the leading architects of the "Right to Work" union-busting movement. Riverside member leaders discussed how they could put the strategies and techniques used by Local 73 to work.

Member leaders also got to work organizing the nuts and bolts of contract action, signing Contract Action Team pledge cards and preparing demand cards for delivery to the Riverside Board of Supervisors, asking them to bargain in good faith, and protect our community by committing to quality public services.

If you or a Riverside member you know should represent us at the table, you can file a nomination online at [www.seiu721.org](http://www.seiu721.org).

To join the CAT team, email [Ernesto.Guerrero@seiu721.org](mailto:Ernesto.Guerrero@seiu721.org).

**When we fight, we win!**

## SEIU 721 ADVOCACY IS RESTORING OUR COURTS

After years of downsizing and layoffs, the LA Superior Court is filling staff vacancies and adding positions with 75 hires since the start of 2019. The restoration of services follows an intensive lobbying effort in Sacramento by our union SEIU 721 to restore cuts in our judicial system that have threatened equal justice for all.

The fact that every single one of the new court hires has joined SEIU 721 and most have signed up for COPE is a testament to the union's commitment to rebuilding the courts and the efforts of our member leaders to communicate our successes at New Employee Orientation sessions. Court workers understand all too well the importance of a strong union for preserving funding for vital services, preventing layoffs and preserving retirement security.

## SEIU 721 HOLDS BENEFITS FAIR FOR LA COUNTY MEMBERS

We fought hard for our negotiated benefits and SEIU 721 members learned more about them at the SEIU 721 Benefits Fair on May 21 at the Hall of Administration building in DTLA at Grand Park. More than 400 LA County workers visited information tables from SEIU 721 and carriers like Kaiser Permanente and UnitedHealthcare, and learned about retirement plans from LACERA and supplemental retirement plans from Horizons.

Members also learned about our Workers' Compensation Attorneys, Ford & Wallach, the SEIU Member Connection and a host of other union-sponsored benefit plans from providers like Dental Health Services, US Legal Services, VSP and Zenith American.

# THE STATE OF OUR UNION IS STRONG



**"IT TAKES AS MUCH ENERGY TO WISH AS IT DOES TO PLAN" - ELEANOR ROOSEVELT**

**North County SEIU 721 Members Hold State of the Union Conference to Plan Strategy**

**O**UR union's slogan "When we fight, we win" is a bold statement. The reason we can afford to make it is the hours of strategizing, organizing and preparation we put into every contract campaign and the commitment we make to fight for every member in every corner of the territory we represent. No fight is too big, no fight is too small — but they all begin with a strategy.

That's why we're getting together in Lancaster for our North County State of the Union. Much of the future growth in LA County will occur in the North. With more residents comes a greater need for public services and more demands on our members. Our union must be ready there like we have been in other communities around Southern California to ensure our leaders invest in quality services and provide our members with resources and support. We also must be there to ensure our members have the protections, support, compensation and security to do their very best.

Your voice is important in this discussion, and I encourage you to attend.

## **North County State of the Union**

Saturday, June 22, 2019

John P. Eliopoulos Hellenic Center  
43404 30th St. W  
Lancaster, CA 93536

9 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

Full breakfast served at 9 a.m.

*Gilda Valdez, Chief of Staff*



**Want to verify that you are receiving all the benefits and protections of union membership?**

**Call the SEIU Local 721 Membership Department at: 1-877-721-4YOU.**