

APRIL-MAY 2020

PRESIDENT'S REPORT TO THE MEMBERS OF SEIU 721



**A MESSAGE FROM SEIU 721
PRESIDENT BOB SCHOONOVER**

Public workers literally are holding our society together, often risking their own health and safety to keep cities and counties running. While big corporations collect billions in cash bailouts, public workers across Southern California are on the front lines, often without adequate protection. Now they face the added threat of losing their jobs as state and local governments teeter on the brink of bankruptcy.

The County of Los Angeles, facing a projected budget deficit of more than a billion dollars, has imposed a hard hiring freeze and instructed departments to prepare to cut 15 to 20 percent from their budgets.

Riverside County, which just ratified a new contract with SEIU 721, projects an \$80 million deficit in what Supervisor Kevin Jeffries is calling "a perfect storm of finance."

Meanwhile, heroes like Natalie Gordon, a nurse at LAC+USC Medical Center, are fighting to save patients from COVID-19 while struggling to obtain proper protective gear. Gordon recently ordered a tent so she can sleep in her backyard between shifts to protect her husband and two young children. She's not alone.

Esbeida Refugio is disinfecting hospital rooms used by COVID-19 patients. Simboa Wright is keeping LA City sewers from overflowing.

Ruben Rios is maintaining the gas system that powers 30,000 LA homes. SEIU 721 workers at St. John's Clinic are working with the LA Black Worker Center to provide COVID-19 tests in the hardest-hit communities. At LA County Corrections, one nurse has died and 17 inmates have tested positive for the virus. The list goes on and on.

While workers put themselves at risk to protect our communities, rich bosses are collecting giveaways. Now, they want the same workers to accept take backs and furloughs? No way.

We have to come together and demand a #Stimulus4Workers that includes puts working families before corporations and provides \$500 billion in aid to state and local governments to support the services our communities need and that public workers deliver.

Get ready and watch for messages from our union. We may not be able to take to the streets, but we can make sure the politicians, the corporations and the media hear our voices.

In solidarity,

Bob Schoonover



April 28, 2020

Los Angeles Times

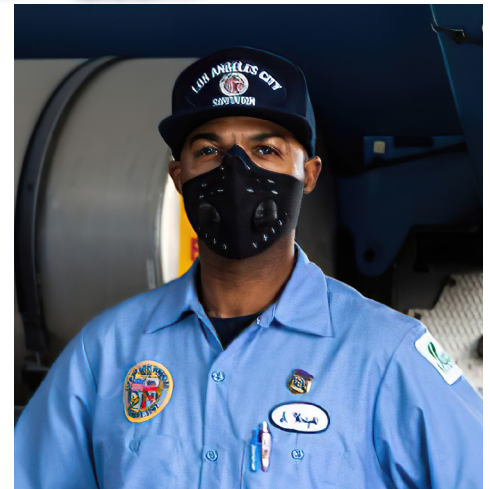
Essential workers describe what their lives are like during the coronavirus outbreak



ESBEIDA REFUGIO



RUBEN RIOS



SIMBOA WRIGHT

Esbeida Refugio, 39, disinfects hospital rooms at LAC + USC in Boyle Heights. She's been on the job for eight years and loves what she does. She takes pride in knowing that her work is giving the patient who takes over one of her disinfected rooms the opportunity for a clean slate. "That's what I'm here for. I'm trying to avoid other people getting infected with the virus." On any given day she cleans up to five rooms that were spaces for COVID-19 patients. "I'm here for patient care" but also "to protect the doctors and nurses too." They all have families, just like her.

Ruben Rios is a senior maintenance and construction worker at the Puente Hills landfill. He helps maintain the gas system, where the gas is trapped, sent to an energy plant and used to create electricity, servicing some 30,000 homes a day. At work, social distancing is strictly enforced: Workers do not change in the locker room at the same time, and their schedules, including start times, break times and lunch times, have been staggered. Rios says that his employer has been great during this time. "They've been really good at responding to what we need."

"First off, as union members, we are proud to serve Los Angeles and protect the environment," says wastewater collection worker Simboa Wright. "We are fearful, of course, of catching a virus. We are here to maintain 6,700 miles of sewer system. We have the largest municipal sewer system in the nation. My wife is a nurse. We're really concerned with her being on the front line. . . . she does have to deal with patients with the virus, unfortunately. "

"Every day union members are putting ourselves out there on the front line. . . to continue to maintain all these essential services that many Angelenos take for granted."

PRESIDENT'S REPORT MARCH-APRIL 2020



"Our LA County workers really are heroes. Many of them have felt disenfranchised by COVID-19 and this town hall allowed them to question county managers directly."

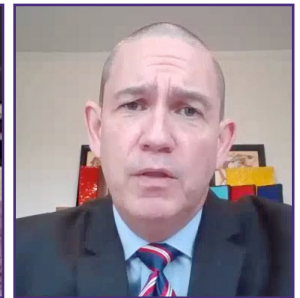
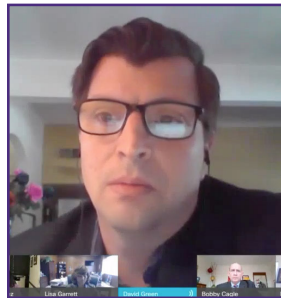
**David Green, CSW
Treasurer, SEIU 721**



"This town hall gave LA County DPSS and DCFS workers an opportunity to voice their concerns about social distancing, telework assignments and leave policies."

**Michael Green, Director
LA County, SEIU 721**

MORE THAN 700 DPSS AND DCFS EMPLOYEES JOIN SEIU 721 VIRTUAL TOWN HALL ON COVID-19 TO QUESTION LA COUNTY DEPARTMENT HEADS



In response to concerns raised by SEIU 721 LA County DPSS and DCFS workers, SEIU 721 organized an April 16 virtual town hall meeting, hosted by LA County Supervisor Hilda Solis.

The town hall featured a Q&A session with Bobby D. Cagle, Director of DCFS; Antonia Jimenez, Director of DPSS; and Lisa Garrett, Director of Personnel.

SEIU 721 Treasurer and CSW David Green and SEIU 721 LA Regional Director Michael Green moderated members' questions

about problems with workplace social distancing, difficulty getting telework assignments approved and denial of paid sick leave and FMLA emergency leave.

Members can watch both the full hour-long town hall and a 20-minute highlight summary at seiu721.org.

And for real-time updates, text SEIU to 31996 so you can always be in the loop on important news affecting our union. Together, we rise.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT APRIL-MAY 2020



SEIU 721 FACES FROM THE FRONTLINES: EMERGENCY ROOM NURSE NATALIE GORDON

Natalie Gordon knew she would face long hours, emotionally exhausting days and physical demands that would sometimes leave her body sore and bruised when she became a registered nurse in the ER Trauma unit at LAC+USC Medical Center.

Natalie didn't expect she and other health care workers would struggle to obtain protective to prevent themselves from becoming infected with COVID-19 while they fight to save critically ill patients, or that she would be preparing to live in a tent in her backyard to keep her husband and two young children from becoming infected.

"This is what we do. We stand by people who need us because, if not us, then who will do it?" she asks.

A member leader in 721, Natalie says she wants nurses to be able to use PPE they already own when it meets the standards and guidelines. "This virus is a beast and healthcare workers need all the protection we can get."



SEIU SETS CONVENTION FOR AUGUST 8, 2020 PREPARES FOR MEMBERS TO UNITE VIRTUALLY

SEIU has set August 8, 2020 as the new date for the International Convention and committed to a virtual format that will allow all members the opportunity to make their voices heard and participate in a democratic process to elect the International Union's

leaders, while protecting the health and safety of members.

"As we fight for the health and safety of working people during this public health crisis and continue our fight for economic and racial justice, we are also committed to modeling the best practices that we demand from employers for our own members and for all working people by putting the health and safety of our members, workers fighting to win unions, and staff first," said International President Mary Kay Henry.

Service employees are on the front lines of the COVID-19 pandemic. Now, more than ever, we must come together to create a framework for the future — one that supports front line workers who are holding our society together.

Save the date and stay tuned for details on how delegates can join.



PRESIDENT'S REPORT APRIL-MAY 2020

SEIU 721 Executive Board member Cheylynda Barnard is a social worker serving older adults through Riverside County's Adult Protective Services department, visiting seniors' homes to ensure they have food and other basics to get through quarantine. But just when her clients need her most, she's been prohibited from visiting them because Riverside County doesn't have enough N95 masks to keep her or her vulnerable clients safe.

Cheylynda and other social workers had the opportunity to talk with Governor Newsom directly by video conference to urge him to get masks and other PPE to front line social workers in California counties.

"If our workforce doesn't have the PPE or testing to make home visits viable, I'm worried the next knock on the door will come too late for a senior we serve," Cheylynda said.



RIVERSIDE SOCIAL WORKER CHEYLYNDA BARNARD PUSHES GOVERNOR NEWSOM ON MASKS AND PPE

SEIU 721 TELLS LA CITY HALL THEY "CAN'T BALANCE THE CITY BUDGET ON THE BACKS OF HEROES"

April 15, SEIU 721 LA City members, along with our partners in the Coalition of Los Angeles City Unions, met with City of LA leaders to review Mayor Garcetti's proposed 2021 budget and register our opposition to a proposal to balance COVID-19-related budget shortfalls through up to 26 furlough days for civilian city workers. Our union already has won a commitment for no layoffs, the preservation of all city services, and an agreement to fund all currently agreed upon future salary increases for city employees.

SEIU 721 President Bob Schoonover told city leaders that 721 members have been called into duty as emergency workers, helping to relocate the city's homeless population and working at corona virus testing centers. "We cannot call these men and women heroes and then turn around and attempt to balance the budget on their backs," Schoonover told the LA Times.



PRESIDENT'S REPORT APRIL-MAY 2020



SEIU 721 SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY MEMBERS RATIFY STRONG NEW CONTRACT

Despite the current pandemic and social distancing, San Bernardino members were able to make their voices heard and participate in a groundbreaking virtual contract ratification campaign.

Members met digitally with the bargaining team and worksite organizers several times over the course of the ratification period and cast their votes electronically.

Membership overwhelmingly voted to approve the new contract, which includes across-the-board raises, equity increases for various classifications, yearly medical subsidy increases and twice-yearly step increases.

The San Bernardino Board of Supervisors approved the contract on April 21, locking in our wins!



SEIU 721 LA COUNTY CORRECTIONAL WORKERS DEMAND PROTECTION AFTER NURSE DIES



"COVID-19 is spreading in LA County jails and now a nurse is dead. It's time for the Board of Supervisors to step in and protect workers!"

**Linda Dent
Vice President, SEIU 721**

After the death of a correctional facility nurse from COVID-19 and the disclosure that 60 staff members and 17 inmates have tested positive for corona virus, SEIU 721 is calling on the LA County Board of Supervisors step

in and force LA County's jail system to protect workers and inmates.

Nurses in county correctional facilities are demanding action from the county now that more than 1,000 inmates have been moved into quarantine.

They say that, despite pressure from SEIU 721 nurses and a Cal/OSHA complaint filed by their union, LA County Correctional Health System Director Jackie Clark failed to implement county policy that would have provided correctional health staff with N95 respirators. Correctional facility nurses say that workers who've complained about safety protocols have been singled out for intimidation and harassment.

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App-based rideshare and delivery drivers organizing with Mobile Workers Alliance (MWA) are sounding the alarm on gig companies' refusal to comply with Mayor Eric Garcetti's Worker Protection Order, which directs employers to provide cloth face coverings and other protections to workers deemed essential during the COVID-19 pandemic. Drivers are calling on City Attorney Mike Feuer and Mayor Eric Garcetti to hold gig companies accountable.

"I have continued to work throughout the pandemic — I have no other choice," says UberEats driver Luz Laguna. "Uber and Lyft's predatory business practices — like misclassifying drivers as 'independent contractors' — are putting us at risk by cheating us out of basic workplace protections."



MOBILE WORKERS ALLIANCE CALLS OUT GIG COMPANIES FOR PUTTING WORKERS AT RISK

SEIU 721 MEMBERS AT ST. JOHN'S CLINIC PARTNER WITH BLACK WORKERS' CENTER ON TESTING

There's an old saying that perfectly sums up what Black workers are facing during the corona virus pandemic: "When America catches a cold, Black people get the flu." While COVID-19 has brought hardship to many, it has impacted Black people disproportionately and exposed vast inequities in access to testing.

A study by Mother Jones Magazine found that in 20 of 28 states that tracked the race and ethnicity of COVID-19 patients, Black people have disproportionately contracted and died from the Corona virus.

That's why SEIU 721 workers at St. John's Clinic partnered on April 24 and May 1 with the LA Black Worker Center to provide COVID-19 tests for some of LA County's hardest-hit communities.



WE NEED SWEEPING ACTION FOR WORKING PEOPLE



While millions of Americans shelter in place, working people are keeping our country afloat. But because of a lack of federal leadership, many of these same working people are facing cuts, furloughs and unemployment.

The Corona virus stimulus bills passed by congress have awarded billions to giant publicly traded corporations and wealthy executives while workers on the front lines — many at risk of contracting COVID-19 — are left to face pay cuts and unemployment. This is outrageous.

We face an unprecedented national emergency, and it's time to move past business as usual. Quarterly U.S. Gross Domestic Product fell by 5% this quarter and 26 million Americans lost their jobs between March and mid-April.

Our union, SEIU, is joining with workers from across all sectors to demand sweeping action from government and industry to protect workers with:

- \$500 billion in aid to fund the vital services that our communities need and that public service workers provide.

- **Fully-funded and accessible healthcare for every worker in America**, including 12 weeks' paid leave and 100%-paid testing and treatment for COVID-19.
- **Job, wage, and economic security for every worker** through industry funds for lost wages, child care costs, debt relief, and housing assistance.
- **Immediate investment in the health and safety of every worker**, including continuing access to personal protective equipment and training, now and in the future.
- **Working families at the center of every emergency relief package**, with healthcare and financial support for working families prioritized over executive pay, shareholders, and profits.

It's time to get angry, get organized and hit the phones to congress and fight for workers and the services we provide!

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.