

MARCH-APRIL 2021

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

TO THE MEMBERS OF SEIU 721



A Woman's Place is IN HER UNION!

A MESSAGE FROM SEIU 721 PRESIDENT LINDA DENT

It's an honor to serve as President of SEIU Local 721. We're a union dedicated to change, to fixing society's problems and creating a more just economy.

I'm a symbol of that change. As both the first Black and the first woman President of SEIU 721, I wanted to use my inaugural issue of the President's report to recognize Women's History Month and give a shout out to women in the Labor Movement and other fields who are reshaping our society and our economy, beginning with Vice President Kamala Harris.

Harris used her inauguration speech to thank the women whose shoulders she stood on — "women who fought and sacrificed so much for equality and liberty and justice for all." Many of these shoulders belong to women heroes of the Labor Movement:

Mary J. Harris Jones, AKA "Mother Jones," once named "the most dangerous woman in America" by mine owners and sweatshop operators at the end of the 19th century for her relentless campaign for child labor laws.

Francis Perkins, the first woman to serve in a presidential cabinet, served as Labor Secretary under FDR and helped create many of the New Deal programs that rescued millions of unemployed Americans

from poverty during the Great Depression.

Lucy Parsons, the powerhouse Black labor activist and creator of the Industrial Workers of the World, organized seamstresses in Chicago and led so many mass actions that Chicago police called her "more dangerous than 1,000 rioters."

Vice President Harris also stands on the strong shoulders of the women of SEIU 721. SEIU represents workers in service professions — many are historically "pink collar" jobs occupied mostly by women, such as healthcare and social work. It's our LVNs and RNs in Ventura County, Los Angeles County, Riverside County and San Bernardino County and beyond that have risked their lives under excruciating and exhausting circumstances. It's our social workers helping families and children cope with the impacts of the pandemic and an economic meltdown. It's court workers and clerical workers and elections workers that literally keep our society and our democracy running.

I honor all of you! And never forget — a woman's place is in her union!

Linda Dent



LA COUNTY HEROES PAY FOR ALL



“ Brothers and sisters, if we want to win Heroes Pay for All, we can't just sit back and hope that our bargaining committee is successful. We must make our voices heard – loud, clear, and in big numbers! ”

**Linda Dent
President
SEIU 721**

LA COUNTY WORKERS GEAR UP FOR CONTRACT FIGHT AT TELEPHONE TOWNHALL MEETINGS

SEIU LA County members overwhelmingly endorsed a plan to pursue a strategic one-year contract with an emphasis on Heroes Pay for All on two March Telephone Townhall meetings organized by SEIU 721.

SEIU 721 President Linda Dent, Vice President David Green, Secretary Lillian Cabral, Executive Director Bob Schoonover, Health Services Regional Director Katarina Del Valle Thompson, and LA County Chief Negotiator Ruben Soto led the calls attended by thousands of callers and answered the most frequently asked questions about the upcoming contract fight.

SEIU 721 Executive Director Bob Schoonover laid out a five point plan for bargaining:

1. **Negotiate a Strategic One Year Contract** — Don't lock yourself into a long-term deal in bad economic times. You'll be stuck with it when the economy turns around.
2. **Demand a Heroes Pay increase for ALL SEIU 721 Members** — The Board of Supervisors has gone on record supporting Heroes Pay for frontline workers in private industry. They should support it for their own workers.

3. **Secure Fringe Benefits Improvements** — We know medical premiums will go up next January. Premium increases will eat up our take-home pay unless we negotiate an increased County contribution.
4. **Address Urgent Countywide Issues** — This isn't a year for laundry lists of demands. We should focus on the critical issues like job security and health and safety protections.
5. **Launch a Unity Campaign with one central bargaining table** — In tough economic times we must remain unified. We've chosen to bargain with a unified voice — our Bargaining Policy Committee, comprised of elected representatives from every unit.

SEIU 721 Vice President David Green discussed strategies for negotiating Heroes Pay. He and Chief Negotiator Ruben Soto discussed how the passage of the \$1.9 trillion stimulus bill has improved the County's fiscal position and will allow it to fund a fair contract.

SEIU 721 Secretary Lillian Cabral, Katarina Del Valle Thompson and emcee LA County Director Michael Green concluded the call by reminding participants to watch for, fill out and return a bargaining survey to help guide BPC negotiators.

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LA County has administered 3.9 million COVID-19 vaccine doses as of March 25.

SEIU 721 NURSES AND HEALTHCARE WORKERS LEAD MASSIVE LA COUNTY VACCINE PUSH

SEIU 721 LA County nurses and healthcare workers have spent the last year in the trenches in harrowing battle against COVID-19 that has claimed 23,000 lives. Now, they're shifting to a new front — the mass vaccination of Angelenos — that they hope will crush the pandemic and bring a return to normalcy.

SEIU 721 members are staffing the County's 5 MegaPod sites — huge drive-through vaccination sites at the LA Forum, Cal State Northridge, Magic Mountain, LA County Office of Education and the Pomona Fairplex. LA County's vaccination plan includes more than 500 vaccination sites; the MegaPods alone have the capacity to vaccinate 20,000 people per day, according to LADPH.

SEIU 721 Registered Nurses and Allied Health members in the LA County Department of Public Health pushed for and won a seat at the table to help design LA County's vaccination plan.

They ensured adequate supplies of PPE, safe staffing levels and certifications and proper monitoring of working conditions during long shifts and 7-day workweeks. SEIU 721 RNs and healthcare workers also demanded that they staff the frontlines of the County's flagship vaccination effort.

"It was really helpful to have a voice at the table to share our concerns around the operations of the MegaPods," said SEIU 721 Public Health Nurse Adriana Bascurco.

"By sharing our stories, we were able to help make the assignment not only better for the membership, but better for the community as well."

On March 25, LA County announced it had administered 3.9 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines since March 25. The same day, California Governor Gavin Newsom announced all Californians age 50 and over will be eligible beginning April 1, expanding to all residents over 16 on April 15.

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SEIU 721 CELEBRATES PASSAGE OF LANDMARK \$1.9 TRILLION RESCUE PACKAGE

On March 11, President Joe Biden signed the \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan, a massive two-pronged program for ending COVID-19 through a huge national vaccination effort and restarting the wrecked U.S. economy.

The American Rescue Plan is a landmark bill for working people. It contains stimulus checks and an extension of unemployment benefits, money for schools, and rescue funds for state and local governments hammered by the economic downturn — with \$42.6 billion earmarked for California.

It is a vivid example of the power of organizing to improve people's lives.

Here's how it will help SEIU 721 members and other workers:

- Rescue funding for state, county and municipal governments and local agencies will keep them operating and prevent crippling cuts to services and mass layoffs of public workers.

- \$1,400 stimulus checks and an expanded child tax credit will help working families make ends meet.
- \$21.6 billion in low-income rental assistance will help prevent an estimated 4 to 6 million evictions.
- Expanded unemployment benefits and access to the Affordable Care Act help millions of American workers sidelined by the struggling economy.
- \$93 billion for COVID-19 testing, contact tracing, vaccination programs and other public health measures aimed at ending the pandemic.

One disappointment: The bill did not include a \$15/hour federal minimum wage, as originally proposed, but we in the Labor Movement are undaunted. We'll harness the momentum of this historic moment to continue the Fight for \$15 and, eventually, we'll win.

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READY TO STRIKE!

WATTS HEALTHCARE WORKERS TELL MANAGEMENT TO BARGAIN IN GOOD FAITH, VOTE 100% TO SUPPORT UNFAIR LABOR PRACTICE STRIKE

Watts workers are sending the message loud and clear: Enough is enough!

With an overwhelming 100% YES vote, workers have approved escalating their campaign for a fair contract up to and including an Unfair Labor Practice strike.

The vote comes after months of WHC management foot-dragging and labor law violations.

Management has continually undercut workers serving on the frontlines during the COVID-19 pandemic. By refusing to recognize the value of Watts staff and support them, Watts management puts patient care at risk.

The past few months have shown just how critical every moment can be, yet Watts leaders continue to engage in unfair labor practices.

These employees are dedicated to the work they do for our community and they are willing to go on strike for their patients if

that's what it takes to ensure their safety.

"Being here at Watts is more than just a job for me and my co-workers, we really feel called to this and our patients are like family to us," said Mireya Holder who is also a member of the Watts Bargaining Team. "It's downright disrespectful that management would choose to fight workers and take our work for granted this way."

In addition to the unfair labor practices, Watts leaders are proposing a minuscule 1.5% wage increase over three years while increasing worker health insurance contributions for their dependents. They're also in danger of losing senior, qualified staff by failing to honor their years of service and dedication with adequate longevity pay increases to retain them.

Stay tuned for more information as workers continue to fight for patients and a fair contract. United on the Frontlines and Stronger Together!

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The County of Riverside Re-opener Bargaining Team election results are in. Congratulations to our elected bargaining team and thank you to all of the dedicated County of Riverside members who ran to represent us at the table!

Our five elected bargaining team members are:

- Ali Williams, Physician Assistant II
- Andrea Lewis, Employment Services Counselor II
- Chad Young, Business Process Analyst III
- Donnelly Valdez, Respiratory Care Practitioner II, Reg
- Misty Mejia, Behavioral Health Specialist III

Thank you again to everyone who participated in our bargaining team election — both as candidates and voters. When members get involved, we build power that translates to victory at the bargaining table!



SEIU 721 members across Southern California have staffed the frontlines since the pandemic began.

For the past year, our union has fought tirelessly to protect member health and

defend the vital services we provide. As COVID-19 vaccinations become available, SEIU 721 will continue to secure vaccine doses for the members who have kept our communities running throughout the pandemic.

If you want to learn more about the vaccine, visit our COVID-19 Vaccine page at: www.seiu721.org/covid-19-vaccine-faqs.php

SEIU 721 RIVERSIDE COUNTY MEMBERS CHOOSE BARGAINING TEAM FOR RE-OPENER

SEIU 721 MAKES COVID-19 VACCINE AVAILABLE TO MEMBERS AT SEIU721.ORG



**SEIU 721 Members:
Visit seiu721.org
to sign up for the
COVID-19 vaccine!**

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SEIU 721 MEMBERS AND COMMUNITY ALLIES RALLY IN SUPPORT OF AMAZON WORKERS

SEIU 721 members joined with elected officials, clergy, community members, and other Labor allies on Monday, March 22 in Downtown Los Angeles to rally in support of the unionizing efforts of Alabama Amazon workers and to shine a light on the outrageous tactics of a growing union-busting industry paid by large corporations to suppress workers' rights across the nation.

The march began at Grand Park and converged at the front of the headquarters of Morgan Lewis, a notorious union-busting firm hired by Amazon and employed by some of the largest corporations in the world. Every year, corporations spend billions of dollars on union-busting consultants to interfere with workers' right to organize.

The union election in Bessemer, Alabama has received national attention over the last few months as workers fight to join Retail, Wholesale, and Department Store Union/UFCW, in an effort to establish the first unionized facility in Amazon's history.

Amazon workers in Bessemer describe heavy-handed union-busting tactics, including wave after wave of anti-union flyers and ads in work areas, break rooms and even employee restrooms. Union-

busting consultants even changed the timing of stoplights around the warehouse after watching union organizers talking with Amazon workers in their cars at shift changes.

Amazon's heavy-handed tactics have attracted an unusual set of allies: Progressive Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders and Conservative Florida Republican Senator Marco Rubio both have endorsed the organizing effort.

"This is a David and Goliath story, and there will always be sympathy for David," said UCLA Professor Robin Kelley, author of a book on the modern history of Labor organizing in America. "Even if the union loses the vote in Bessemer, there will be lot more organizing all over the country. [The union] is going to keep fighting until they win at some Amazon warehouse. This is like a prairie fire. It's going to spread even with a loss."

Note: As we went to press, the NLRB is counting ballots, but it could take days or even weeks until we know the results. That's because the NLRB's counting process is slow and exacting.

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SEIU 721 Leads Car Caravan and Aid Drive for Refugee Children Held at the U.S. Border

SEIU 721 helped organize a coalition of essential workers, immigrant rights advocates, and community leaders for a March 11 car caravan from McArthur Park to Downtown Los Angeles' Metropolitan Detention Center to demand the reunification of migrant children with their parents, an end to the separation of families by Federal authorities, and creation of a pathway to citizenship for the 11 million undocumented immigrants in the United States.

The immigrant rights coalition is urging the Biden Administration to act swiftly on stopping the deportation of working families, many of whom have been on the frontlines of pandemic response as essential workers throughout

the ongoing COVID-19 crisis. The action comes on the heels of a March 4 humanitarian aid drive by SEIU 721 and area clergy to deliver much-needed supplies to asylum seekers stuck at the U.S.-Mexico border,

The U.S. Border Patrol and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services are struggling to accommodate a growing number of asylum seekers from Central America arriving at the border.

An unprecedented number of them are children. As of March 24, there were 5,100 unaccompanied minors in U.S.

Border Patrol custody – about 70 are teenagers, but hundreds are under the age of 12. Another 11,900 children were in custody of the Department of Health and Human Services. Those children are staying either in permanent shelters – state-run facilities that are better equipped to administer care but have limited capacity because of COVID-19 – or temporary influx facilities. In addition, there are more than 600 children separated at the border from their parents under the previous administration who still are not reunited with their families.

“We’re calling for justice for asylum seekers and protection for these children.”



**Lillian Cabral
Secretary, SEIU 721**

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Occidental College members ratified their first contract with heavy turnout and a unanimous vote. The negotiating team is preparing to sign the contract with College leadership and plans to move quickly to finalize stewards and members of the Joint Labor-Management Committee. If you are interested in either or both, please let us know. We want to begin steward training as soon as possible. We have a very important economic re-opener coming in less than a year, and we'll need to start preparing now.

We want to thank the Contract Action Team — Sylvia Chico, Bridget Perez, Cris Sevilla-Pappas, and Chris Wawrinofsky — for their help in spreading the word to members about the contract and vote.

We also want to extend a very special thank you to Samantha Alfrey, Eli Chartkoff, and Sarah Zuno for helping us address the partial reopening of the Academic Commons.



SEIU 721 is celebrating National Social Workers Month and salutes our member social workers on the frontlines of pandemic response.

We need social workers now more than ever as our country deals with both the immediate crises and the entrenched problems stressing our society — from a global pandemic that has taken nearly 540,000 lives and triggered the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression, to the impacts of systemic racism. As professionals, social workers strive to help individuals, families and groups overcome barriers to live happy, fulfilled, productive lives. As a profession, social workers are tireless advocates for social justice. They are bending the arc of history toward a more just and inclusive society.

Social Workers are essential and SEIU 721 salutes you!

OCCIDENTAL COLLEGE ADMIN AND PROFESSIONAL MEMBERS RATIFY FIRST CONTRACT

SEIU 721 SALUTES SOCIAL WORKERS AS WE CELEBRATE NATIONAL SOCIAL WORKERS' MONTH

SOCIAL WORKERS ARE ESSENTIAL



“Social workers are holding our society together through unprecedented crisis.”

**David Green, CSW
Vice President, SEIU 721**

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SEIU 721 TRI-COUNTIES WORKERS WIN SAFER CONDITIONS AT VENTURA COUNTY HOSPITAL

SEIU 721 STANDS WITH ASIAN AMERICANS AND PACIFIC ISLANDERS TO STOP HATE

SEIU 721 member Rossana Calderon, a Medical Office Assistant II, and other members in the Admitting Department at the Ventura County Medical Center (VCMC) worked with our union to fix unsafe conditions at the hospital.

Calderon and her colleagues were transferred during the pandemic to a storage room at VCMC with poor air circulation and insufficient space to maintain social distancing. The room was stuffed with broken medical equipment, dirty mattresses, and broken furniture. One of our members reported she had been hit on the head by debris falling from piles of discarded equipment.

This situation put our members' health at risk and could have degraded patient care at the hospital. Tri-Counties worksite organizer Esmeralda Reynoso teamed up with members to win a complete cleaning and reorganization of the space and a safer working environment.



The recent shootings in Atlanta, Georgia are just the latest in a string of violent attacks against our Asian American & Pacific Islander brothers and sisters.

For decades, members of the AAPI community have faced the same discrimination, prejudice, and violence directed at Black and Brown people.

Hateful rhetoric around the Coronavirus pandemic — stoked in large part by the previous presidential administration and far right elected officials — has led to a sharp increase in attacks directed at our AAPI sisters and brothers. In the past year, there have been over 4,000 reported assaults on Asian Americans.

Our SEIU API Caucus is convening a national call with organizations in Georgia who are leading this fight. Locally, SEIU 721 is joining community partners and immigrant rights groups across LA to mount a response.

SEIU 721 stands in solidarity with our AAPI sisters and brothers against racist violence and white supremacy.

**STOP
AAPI
HATE**

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PROTECTING SEIU 721 MEMBERS BEGINS WITH STEWARD TRAINING

In this Month's Steward's Corner, we are reporting back on Steward Certification and Training.

As an SEIU 721 Steward, you have been selected by your co-workers as their representative in the workplace. You are a vital part of maintaining a strong union through representation and organizing. So how does this journey begin?

Once a Represented Member submits the required documentation and is approved to begin training, they must attend a New Steward Orientation and a series of classes: 1. Weingarten Rights/Informal Problem Solving; 2. Grievance Handling; and 3. Health-Related Matters. These trainings comprise the Core Trainings for Steward Certification and are offered monthly.

Upon completion of the core training, prospective Stewards

will be certified and will receive a letter welcoming them to Stewardship! The Union will notify the department HR that the member is a Steward, consistent with the Memorandum of Understanding with the Employer.

If you are a newly recruited Steward, or if you are Veteran Steward that wants to nurture and grow new Stewards, there is no better time to do trainings than now!

To register for Steward Trainings, visit www.seiu721.org and click on the Calendar to find a class and RSVP.

We will continue to report back on the work of our Shop Stewards and their victories. If you want help with representing a member, call the Member Connection at 877-721-4968.

When we fight, we win!

WHY THE AMAZON WORKERS' FIGHT MATTERS TO ALL OF US



By the time you read this, many of the 6,000 workers in an Amazon warehouse in Bessemer, Alabama will have voted on the question of whether or not to join a union.

The effort by workers in Bessemer has captured the national imagination for many reasons. But why do SEIU workers care? The vast majority of our members earn more than the Bessemer workers. Our contracts secure our jobs and our benefits, and our union would never allow the abuses endured by these workers.

Here's why. The Bessemer warehouse workers' fight brings everything into focus. It shows how one of the world's richest companies is getting richer during a pandemic on the backs of workers of color. It illustrates how a company earning profits bigger than most countries' entire economies will spend obscene amounts on law firms and consultants to crush a grassroots effort by workers to win a union to level the playing field. Frankly, it should serve as a wakeup call to public workers because these are the same tactics that outfits like the Freedom Foundation are aiming at you.

The worldwide pandemic exploded Amazon's business. Amazon sales grew by 38% percent in 2020 — increasing by \$100 billion in one year. Amazon profits swelled by 84%. Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos regularly tops the list of the world's richest men, depending on AMZN's closing price. Amazon can spend millions on "union avoidance" law firms and consultants without blinking.

At the same time, Alabama is notoriously unfriendly to unions. Alabama adopted anti-union "Right to Work" laws in the 1950s. It's a reliably red state with a Republican Governor, two Republican U.S. Senators and Republican majorities in both houses of the Alabama State Legislature.

But attitudes are changing fast. As the gap between rich and poor in America grows, the popularity of unions is growing. A 2020 Gallup poll found 65% of Americans favor unions — the highest approval rating in decades.

It's no secret why. Workers with unions take home more money, have more secure jobs and earn better health and retirement benefits. This is true of workers across the board, but it's even more striking for workers of color. Black and Brown workers with unions earn on average 5 times their non-union counterparts.

Black and Latino workers on the frontlines have borne the brunt of COVID-19. Black and Latino Americans are up to 10 times more likely to die of COVID-19 than their white counterparts. An estimated 85% of the workers at Amazon's Bessemer warehouse are Black.

The disparities are so stark and the injustices so clear, they are driving big political changes. On February 28, President Joe Biden issued an unprecedented message of support for the Bessemer workers, calling on employers to abandon union avoidance efforts. Republican Senator Marco Rubio on March 12 threw his support behind workers: "When the conflict is between working Americans and a company whose leadership has decided to wage culture war against working-class values, the choice is easy... and that's why I stand with those at Amazon's Bessemer warehouse today."

The fight in Bessemer is important, it is just, and we all need to get on board. But make no mistake, it's much bigger than a warehouse in Alabama.

Gilda Valdez, Chief of Staff



Gilda Valdez



**Digital
Union
Voices**

To organize during quarantine, we need Digital Union Voices. Text VOICES to 31996 today!