

JULY-AUGUST 2022

PRESIDENT'S REPORT TO THE MEMBERS OF SEIU 721



STRETCHED TO THE BREAKING POINT BY SHORT-STAFFING

**A MESSAGE FROM SEIU 721
PRESIDENT DAVID GREEN**



There's a short-staffing crisis in California local government. Whether it's visiting frontline SEIU 721 members across Southern California or talking with our sister SEIU locals around the state, everywhere I go, I hear the same thing: Workers are stretched too thin.

Mayors and county managers need to face facts and come up with a plan to avert disaster. Frontline workers in short-staffed emergency rooms, child welfare agencies, county road crews and other vital functions are burning out and quitting their jobs, and services are collapsing as a result.

Here's a particularly horrific example from Riverside County. As a career Children's Social Worker, I can tell you about the case of the Turpin Children — 13 siblings who were rescued after being starved, shackled and tortured by their parents, only to endure further physical and sexual abuse at the hands of foster home operators hired by Riverside County's child welfare agency and an outside nonprofit contractor. A blistering 634-page report by retired federal judge Stephen Larson, delivered on July 8 after a months-long investigation, concluded that the "county's social services system is short-staffed and underfunded, leaving workers struggling with high caseloads that made it hard to ensure safety and care for our most vulnerable populations."

The vicious cycle described in the investigation of the Turpin Children isn't unique to Children's Social Workers, it's endemic in public services. Here just a few recent examples from our sister SEIU locals around California:

- SEIU 1021 Mendocino County members report that a third of county positions are vacant. County management recently announced that they may have to let some paved county roads "collapse back to being gravel or dirt roads" because of short-staffing on road crews.
- SEIU 521 members at the Kern County Hospital Authority have threatened to go on strike to expose a "revolving door staffing crisis." More than 25% of nurse positions at Kern Medical are vacant and fewer than one-third of nursing positions are filled with nurses with more than one year of experience.
- In a survey of 33,000 hospital workers conducted by SEIU UHW-West, more than 83 percent reported understaffing at their facilities. Nearly two-thirds of workers say care has been delayed or denied because of short-staffing.

SEIU 721 is fighting back to protect public services and our members a variety of ways. We're enforcing staffing ratios and caseload caps in our contracts. We're pushing local governments to staff up with full-time workers and pushing back on the use of inexperienced temps and outside contractors. We're even appealing directly to the state for more money to fill vacancies — like our successful lobbying effort to win \$300 million to close the budget gap at LA County DCFS.

Workers are stretched to the breaking point. We're fighting back to end short-staffing.

David Green



PRESIDENT'S REPORT JULY-AUGUST 2022

LA COUNTY MEMBERS RATIFY NEW CONTRACT WITH 12% PERCENT RAISES AND MORE

New Contract Approved by 94% Margin Will Deliver an Immediate \$1,375 Bonus



By an overwhelming 94% margin, LA County members approved a new three-year contract — securing the biggest one-year raise in LA County history and the largest one-year salary increases since 2006.

This hard-fought victory is thanks to our on-the-ground organizing and on-the-street action over the last 18 months. We bargained hard and it paid off!

The new contract includes a 12% raise over three years, with:

- A 5.5% raise AND a \$1,375 bonus in 2022
- A 3.25% raise in 2023
- Another 3.25% raise in 2024

Our new contract also features:

- Up to \$195/month to cover projected medical premium cost increases
- \$100-\$375/month for childcare and elder care costs
- Money for life insurance, public transit subsidies and more

- A commitment from the county to expand telework opportunities, with reimbursements for required expenses

The LA County Board of Supervisors is expected to formally approve the new contract in the next few weeks. In the meantime, stay #UnionStrong and stay connected to our union for updates.

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All across America, from Amazon to Starbucks and beyond, we see people fighting like hell just to start a union. Our latest LA County contract shows why. Despite living in unprecedented times, SEIU 721 members delivered a 12% raise, subsidies for childcare and elder care, funding to cover healthcare cost increases and more.

***Adolfo Grandos, Treasurer
SEIU 721***

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LA City Workers Gear Up!



The LA City Bargaining Survey is Out Now. Complete Yours By August 12!

While LA City workers' contract won't expire for another 6 months, it's urgent that we hit the ground running to negotiate a successor MOU that considers all of our hard work and sacrifices over the past two years.

It won't be easy. The City of LA is at a major crossroads: A new mayor will take office in December; and our LA City Council will look drastically different. In addition, preparations for the 2028 Olympics will put unprecedented pressure on city services across LA.

Every SEIU 721 member needs to stay engaged and involved for us to negotiate and win a strong contract that lifts up city workers and protects good union jobs by stamping out privatization and investing in vital city services. That's why we need your response to the new City of Los Angeles Contract Bargaining survey. Watch your inbox and complete the survey by August 12!



We Need to Hear from You!

“At the height of the City's revenue shortfall, we were able to fend off layoffs and furloughs – extending our MOU until the end of 2022. Now, we're gearing up to fight for a strong new contract, and we need to hear from you!”

**Simboa Wright
Vice President, SEIU 721**

PRESIDENT'S REPORT JULY-AUGUST 2022



IGNITING THE FIGHT FOR RACIAL JUSTICE



“Each month, we take a closer look at key events, initiatives and programs focused on lifting up our union’s fight for racial justice.”

Simboa Wright, Vice President, SEIU 721



API VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR MIDTERM GET-OUT-THE-VOTE

As we get ready for midterm elections, 721 Asian Pacific Islander leaders joined a national call hosted by SEIU’s API Caucus to learn more about our union’s 2022 Civic Engagement Plan and strategies for mobilizing the community to vote in upcoming elections. Regional API Civic Engagement meetings continue in August, and we are looking for API Volunteers. To get involved, contact Susan.Li@seiu721.org



SEIU 721 BACKS LA COUNTY HIRING REFORM BILL

As part of our union’s fight for racial justice, SEIU 721 has endorsed a proposal by the LA County Board of Supervisors to eliminate the citizenship requirement for county employment. Our union hopes to work with LA County department heads to identify and remove other challenges and barriers that historically have slowed public sector hiring as a way to fill vacancies, alleviate short-staffing and improve access to good union jobs for all.

SEIU 721 LATINO CAUCUS MEETING IN VENTURA

Our Latino Caucus is meeting in person in Ventura on August, 20, 2022. To attend, please RSVP to Grace Sepulveda at sepulvedagrace53@gmail.com

LATINO HERITAGE CELEBRATION

SAVE THE DATE
9/24/22



MWA Drivers Blast Uber Lobbying Tactics



Lillian Cabral
Secretary
SEIU 721

“Drivers are sick and tired of Uber’s questionable behavior. Instead of exposing drivers to violence to further their own lobbying efforts, Uber should provide fair pay and a safe work environment.”

Southern California rideshare drivers rallied outside Uber’s Greenlight Hub in Historic Filipinotown on July 19, blasting the gig giant’s ethically questionable lobbying practices, including exploiting attacks on its own drivers in France by taxi company rivals to generate sympathy with politicians and regulators.

“Violence guarantees success,” texted former Uber CEO Travis Kalanick, to colleagues after they raised concerns for drivers’ safety. Kalanick had pushed for a company-sponsored protest in Paris, despite many reported attacks on Uber drivers in the country.

Uber’s aggressive, often ethically questionable, lobbying tactics were exposed in “The Uber files” — tens of thousands of documents leaked to media outlets by a

former company lobbyist. Leaked documents show how Uber used high-tech tools around the globe to evade law enforcement and regulators, and cozied up to politicians and other influential people — even Russian oligarchs — to win favorable laws and regulations.



PRESIDENT'S REPORT JULY-AUGUST 2022



HARBOR REGIONAL CENTER WORKERS RATIFY NEW 3-YEAR DEAL WITH RAISES, BONUSES AND MORE

SEIU 721 PRESIDENT DAVID GREEN TALKS STRATEGY WITH ARMENIAN CAUCUS



SEIU 721 President David Green with members of the Armenian Caucus.

After a long and hard-fought contract campaign, SEIU 721 Harbor Regional Center workers unanimously approved a new 3-year agreement with an 8% pay increase, a bonus, new holidays and expanded rights in the workplace.

All employees will receive a guaranteed Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) in the first two years, and a wage reopener in year three.

- July 11, 2022 5%
- September 4, 2023 3%
- May-June 2024 Wage Reopener Negotiations

The agreement also includes a lump-sum bonus, new paid MLK and Juneteeth holidays, an accelerated step system for salaries and an improved grievance procedure.



On July 19, President Green joined the SEIU 721 Armenian Caucus to discuss outreach and sign-up of members of Armenian descent, recent contract highlights, and for a strategy discussion around the staffing shortage in LA County.

"Our caucuses play a critical role in member outreach and education," said Green. "This is where the rubber meets the road, and I'm proud to work alongside the leadership of our Armenian Caucus to develop new strategies for building and strengthening our membership."

LA County is home to the largest population of Armenians outside of the Republic of Armenia. Many Armenians settled in Los Angeles after fleeing the Armenian Genocide in the wake of the collapse of the Ottoman Empire during World War I. An estimated 1 million Armenians died on forced marches and in concentration camps in an ethnic cleansing campaign run by Turkish nationalists.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT JULY-AUGUST 2022



SEIU 721 INTERVENES TO SAVE JOBS BY HELPING MEDICAL ASSISTANTS GAIN CERTIFICATION

CITY OF OXNARD MEMBERS VOTE YES TO RATIFY NEW CONTRACT AND BUILD UNION POWER



Congratulations to the City of Oxnard Bargaining Team and SEIU 721 City of Oxnard members for securing a strong new contract.

SEIU 721 intervened to help save the jobs of six Ventura County Medical Assistants at Ventura County's newly organized satellite clinics by helping them obtain necessary state certification.

The Medical Assistants, who have worked for Ventura County for years, were originally told they did not need a Medical Assistant Certificate in their new satellite clinic assignment. But last February, they were informed they needed to obtain certification by June 2022 or face termination or demotion.

SEIU 721 swung into action and worked with Oxnard Adult Program Director Valeria Balderrama to create a special

certification program class for the Medical Assistants. Professors from Ventura and Oxnard College volunteered to teach the classes required for completion of the program, and all six MAs passed the state exam and won certification.



City of Oxnard members delivered a resounding YES vote in support of a three-year contract with a 9% salary increase, a new salary and compensation survey, and a new dues alignment plan that will build power for our union to secure more gains.

Members overwhelmingly approved the agreement which will provide an immediate increase, effective for the pay period beginning August 6, 2022, with a 3% increase in salary to all employees who are within their new salary ranges. The city will provide two additional 3% salary increases in July 2023 and July 2024.

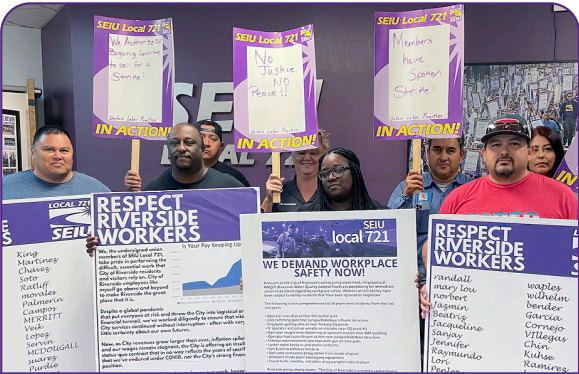
Members also delivered an overwhelming majority YES vote for a Dues Alignment that will help provide the resources and power to enforce new language and the Union Rights we were able to negotiate.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT JULY-AUGUST 2022

SEIU 721 INLAND AREA RISING



Refuse Unit Bargaining Chair Michael Sidoti



SEIU 721 City of Riverside Members



SEIU 721 City of Beaumont Members

CITY OF RIVERSIDE REFUSE UNIT RATIFIES HUGE WINS

SEIU 721 members of the City of Riverside Refuse Unit stood up to management and won big! In July, members unanimously ratified a new, three-year contract that includes an 18.6% raise, a \$10,000 Heroes Pay bonus and a \$7,500 settlement payment from an Unfair Labor Practice charge the unit filed against the City for contracting out good, union jobs.

These huge wins were possible because Refuse Unit members built union strength for years and across contract cycles. When they ratified their previous contract, Refuse Unit members voted to strengthen their union with a dues realignment — a plan that has already paid major dividends.

"More than a year ago, members decided to invest in a stronger union by voting to re-align our dues rate with all of SEIU Local 721. Our decision to make our union stronger has paid off with an 18.6% raise and protections against contracting out," said Bargaining Chair Michael Sidoti.

CITY OF RIVERSIDE MEMBERS ARE READY TO STRIKE

Unfilled positions, high turnover, long hours, more than two years without a raise, and Unfair Labor Practices, like denying the union access to observe working conditions and refusing to bargain in good faith — these are the challenges that City of Riverside members have endured as they fight for a fair contract.

Undeterred by the City's behavior, members are fighting back, voting overwhelmingly in July to authorize a ULP strike, if necessary, to protect their rights. At a July 30 strike training, members showed they are ready to do whatever it takes to win a fair deal.

UNITS ACROSS INLAND REGION RATIFY NEW DEALS

SEIU 721 members in the Inland Region are locking in big wins and setting themselves up for future success. Lake Hemet members won a strong three-year deal that includes COLA minimums of 3% a year, with the possibility of higher raises tied to the CPI. Beaumont workers locked in a similar agreement.

Lake Hemet and Beaumont workers join City of Hemet, Riverside County Refuse and Riverside County Per Diem workers in ratifying strong deals in recent weeks!

Honest

Discussions

Help CAP

LA County Caseloads



“CAP focuses on caseloads and we make things happen through the collaboration between management and the Union.”

**Priscilla Reyes
SCSW
SEIU 721**

When thousands of SEIU 721 Children's Social Workers at the LA County Department of Children and Family Services went on strike in 2013, caseloads were at the top of our Union's priority list. To keep a continual eye on the situation after the strike ended, we created the Caseload Accountability Panel — with five members from our Union and five from management, which meets monthly. Priscilla Reyes, an SCSW in the Resource Family Support Division who's been with DCFS for 16 years, remembers it well.

“It was truly compromising child safety in that Social Workers really couldn't keep up,” Reyes recalls. “I remember joining the county and being handed like, 45 cases. We've come a long way since then.”

Reyes ultimately got promoted to Supervisor — first in Continuing Services, then in Dependency Investigations and finally in the Resource Family Support Division, where she is now and where she gives Union members in Bargaining Unit 777 a voice on CAP.

“When I started with Resource Family Support Division, I noticed

that all of my workers had about 75 cases,” Reyes said. “I was new. I wasn't sure if that was an average caseload among the division. I brought it up to CAP and it turns out it is — and it's too much. RFS caseloads is a standing agenda item at CAP to provide continued support to the division and our resource families.”

Reyes said CAP “focuses on caseloads and we make things happen through the collaboration between management and the Union.”

“We'll focus on areas where there is a greater need,” she said. “We'll have honest discussions. When I first came in, there was an office having a lot of turnover. Cases were high and things weren't going well. Together, we created a list to make sure things got done and it got done. It was on our agenda until each issue was resolved and it's not on our agenda anymore.”

Priscilla Reyes joins SEIU 721 members Krystal Wilson, Lorraine Cavuoti, Monica Vera, and David Green as a union representative on the Caseload Accountability Panel.

Putting a CAP on top-down decision making



“DCFS has a history of high caseloads...now we have our own dialogue with management to address these high caseloads and hopefully bring relief to more workers.”

**Monica Vera
SCSW
SEIU 721**

Top-down decision making just wasn't working out for anyone back in 2013, when Social Workers at the LA County Department of Children and Family Services went on strike. Out of that momentous Union action came the Caseload Accountability Panel, a team of Union members and management that meet each month to pinpoint where caseloads are highest and figure out systemic solutions.

“A very basic goal of CAP is productive dialogue,” said Monica Vera, an SCSW at DCFS and a CAP member who has been with the department for 13 years. “Decisions are made from the top down without a good understanding of what is happening on the ground because they're not being properly discussed with people who know the most about the work, the worker.”

Vera knows a lot about caseloads. She started with the DCFS Wateridge Office in 2009 after graduating from Cal State LA with an MSW II under the agreement that she would apply her social

work training at LA County for at least two years. There, as a Continuing Services Social Worker, Vera saw the first-hand impact of high caseloads on both staff and clients.

“The department had a history of high caseloads,” she said. “It impacted child safety issues, worker morale, recruitment of Social Workers, recidivism, and impeded the county from providing the best welfare services that it could provide because of systemic caseload issues.”

CAP communications help figure out where to move limited resources to the places with the most need.

“A lot of workers in our specialized units felt neglected by management and our department,” Vera noted. “So, this is really going to bring the morale up, that we now have our own dialogue with management to address these high caseloads and hopefully bring relief to more workers.”

PRESIDENT'S REPORT JULY-AUGUST 2022

SEIU 721 Wins Safe Parking for Rancho Park DPSS Workers



OVERFLOW PARKING MOVED AFTER SEIU 721 SOUNDS THE ALARM ON WORKPLACE SAFETY

For too long, SEIU 721 members at the LA County Department of Public Social Services Rancho Park Office have been forced to park at an overflow parking lot half a mile away whenever the district lot was full. To make matters worse, the overflow lot was unguarded and dangerous. Far too many of us had our personal safety seriously threatened — and our property vandalized — by large numbers of people in mental health crisis loitering near the lot.

Complaints went nowhere until our union got involved. SEIU 721 sounded the alarm to management, demanding that employees be allowed access to the district office parking lot.

Our union's persistence paid off. DPSS Rancho Park Office management relented and now all workers will have access to the parking lot directly underneath the worksite.

This is a huge victory for our workplace safety, and it's all thanks to our union power. Together, we win!



Fighting for a Safer Workplace

“Workers can’t focus on delivering the services LA residents need when they don’t feel safe at work. SEIU 721 will always fight to ensure workers feel secure on the job.”

**Adolfo Granados
Treasurer
SEIU 721**

LESSONS FROM WISCONSIN SHOW WHY WE CAN'T TAKE CALIFORNIA'S PRO-WORKER POLITICAL CLIMATE FOR GRANTED

ELECTIONS MATTER:

Lessons for Labor

From Wisconsin



Wisconsin workers protest Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker and Act 10, which stripped public employees of collective bargaining rights and gutted benefits in 2011.

What a difference an election makes. Just ask union workers in Wisconsin.

Battered by the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression and floundering in the polls, Democratic Wisconsin Governor Jim Doyle — the second-longest serving governor in state history — decided not to seek re-election 2010.

Doyle's decision and a sour economy opened the door for Scott Walker — a failed candidate for governor in the previous election — to sweep the Republican gubernatorial primary with huge financial backing by the Koch brothers and win the Governor's Office.

Walker's victory is viewed by many historians as the birth of the modern ultra-right movement to bust public employee unions.

In his first year in office, Walker joined with the newly elected Republican majority in the Wisconsin State Legislature to ram through the infamous Act 10 — the so-called "Wisconsin Budget Repair Bill." Arguably the most anti-worker bill in modern times, Act 10 all but eliminated collective bargaining for public workers, capped their wage increases and gutted their pension and health care benefits.

Outrage over Act 10 touched off massive protests in the state capital and triggered a recall campaign, which Walker won in large part by raising \$37 million from mostly out-of-state contributions from wealthy

conservative donors. The next year, Walker signed a bill making Wisconsin a Right to Work state.

Surely nothing like this could happen in California, right? Don't be so sure. The same groups that propelled Walker to power and helped him become one of just two governors to survive a recall election are pouring millions into California organizations, like the Freedom Foundation, with the sole purpose of breaking public employee unions.

A lot of us despise politics — particularly the power of dark money groups and negative campaigning — but we as public workers ignore politics at our own peril. It's crucial for us to elect candidates who understand and value the work we do and will vote to protect it. SEIU COPE amplifies the voices of everyday workers. It allows us to hear from and question candidates directly and it organizes and focuses our people power into effective campaigns.

Elections matter and that's why COPE matters. It's vitally important to contribute to COPE, educate ourselves about politics, candidates and measures, and remain vigilant. Just ask workers in Wisconsin.

Gilda Valdez, Chief of Staff

Gilda Valdez



Digital
Union
Voices

We need Digital Union Voices. Text VOICES to 721721 today!