

MARCH-APRIL 2023

PRESIDENT'S REPORT TO THE MEMBERS OF SEIU 721



READY TO FIX LA



HOW THE FIX LA ALLIANCE CAN USE "COMMON-GOOD BARGAINING" TO SOLVE LA CITY'S BIGGEST PROBLEMS

It's time to Fix LA. After working tirelessly keep California's largest city running, LA's working families face the multi-pronged crisis of skyrocketing living costs, spiraling homelessness and a declining quality of life that is driving thousands of Angelenos to give up on the state entirely. Underfunding and short-staffing has stretched vital city services to the breaking point in a top-down economy that benefits a privileged few.

The good news is it doesn't have to be this way. LA City workers have strong unions, like ours and the other members of the Coalition of LA City Unions. LA is a Union town. And LA Labor has built a powerful coalition, called FixLA, that has taken on Wall Street banks and other powerful interests and won for workers.

We've got a new, labor-friendly mayor in Karen Bass, who listens to frontline workers, is serious about tackling the homelessness crisis, and understands that she won't be successful unless she fixes the short-staffing epidemic in LA city government.

We've got a strategy to put our coalition power and our new

relationships at City Hall to work to solve our city's biggest problems through what we call "Common-Good Bargaining."

When we go to the bargaining table with the City of LA, we can organize with community partners around a set of demands that benefits not just our bargaining units, but also the communities in which we live. By setting bigger goals – like demanding more affordable housing, major investments in public services and staffing and more union job opportunities for underserved communities – we can attract powerful allies and thousands of foot soldiers. In turn, this coalition will fight side-by-side with us to win a fair contract for city workers.

Why do I believe this will work? Because it's worked before. In 2014, the Fix LA Alliance formed by SEIU 721 brought together more than 30 organizations to win both strong contracts for city workers and major social change, like the creation of the Targeted Local Hire Program, which has won jobs for nearly 5,000 Angelenos. Now it's time to Fix LA again.

David Green



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SERVICE EMPLOYEES
INTERNATIONAL UNION,
CTW, CLC

OFFICERS

David Green
PRESIDENT

Simboa Wright
VICE PRESIDENT

Lillian Cabral
SECRETARY

Adolfo Granados
TREASURER

March 23, 2023

To: Dr. Lisa Wong, Director, Los Angeles County
Department of Mental Health

From: David Green, President, SEIU Local 721

Dr. Wong,

Your continued refusal to meet with SEIU 721 leadership and our members in the Department of Mental Health demonstrates a willful ignorance of the critical issues facing the department and a blatant disregard for the talented professionals on the frontlines of care delivery.

“LA County faces an unprecedented mental health crisis. It’s outrageous that Dr. Wong has refused to meet with the frontline professionals responsible for solving it. We won’t stop until our members have the tools they need to make a difference.”

David Green, President, SEIU 721



SEIU 721 Calls Out LA County DMH

President David Green blasts Dr. Lisa Wong’s refusal to recognize members’ grievances

For months, Department of Mental Health Director Dr. Lisa Wong has refused to meet with our union regarding critical issues facing frontline mental health professionals, including severe short-staffing at DMH, and the need for comprehensive solutions to recruit and retain mental health professionals.

Dr. Wong’s continued refusal to meet demonstrates an utter lack of respect for the dedicated DMH professionals staffing the frontlines of care delivery. On Thursday, March 23, SEIU 721 members in the Department of Mental health marched on DMH headquarters to demand action on staffing issues. Immediately after, President Green called out Dr. Wong in a harshly worded letter, demanding she meet to address members’ concerns.



“LA County Department of Mental Health currently has a 27% vacancy rate for psychologists during a mental health crisis and a declared state of emergency for homelessness,” said SEIU 721 member Chad Brinderson. “This is not the time to be understaffed. This is the time for mental health’s best trained clinicians to be leading the charge to help our residents.”



“Congratulations to USC shuttle drivers for standing up to USC’s big bucks union-busting campaign and voting “Union YES.” The numbers don’t lie – LA’s union bus drivers earn up to twice as much as non-union drivers.”

Lillian Cabral, Secretary, SEIU 721



USC Shuttle Drivers Vote to Join SEIU 721

Driver unity and broad community support overcome university’s union-busting campaign

On March 23, University of Southern California shuttle drivers voted to join SEIU 721, overcoming a well-funded anti-union campaign waged by University leadership.

“USC shuttle drivers are very excited to join SEIU Local 721 and finally have the union representation that we deserve,” said James Sims, a USC shuttle driver.

“This historic win puts us in the driver’s seat, and gives us the ability to win fair pay, better benefits, and a voice on the job,” Sims said. “We are incredibly proud that we stood together and voted to form our union at USC, and we’re confident that this historic election will not only improve the lives of shuttle drivers, but also raise up the quality of services that we provide for our passengers.”

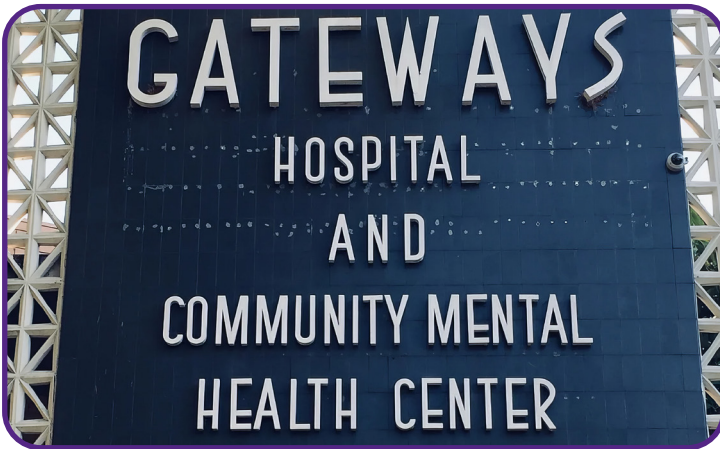


Strategic Actions for A Just Economy rally in support of USC drivers.

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UPDATES FROM AROUND OUR UNION

SEIU 721 RISING



GATEWAYS WORKERS REACH TA

In March, SEIU 721 members at Gateways Hospital and Mental Health Center reached a Tentative Agreement on a new 3-year contract with cost of living wage increases in each year based on job descriptions, and additional increases in bilingual and standby pay. The TA also includes language improvements on job descriptions, disciplinary actions and staffing. Congratulations to Gateways workers! When we fight, we win.



CITY OF SAN FERNANDO MEMBERS RATIFY NEW CONTRACT WITH 18% COLA

On March 23, SEIU 721 City of San Fernando members unanimously ratified a strong new contract that includes an 18% cost of living adjustment, expanded bereavement leave, a new paid Juneteenth holiday, increased uniform allowances, new education incentives and a new Flexible Spending Account for medical-related costs. The bargaining team also defeated management attempts to increase healthcare and LACERS pension contributions.

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VICTORY AT ST. JOHN'S



SEIU 721 ST. JOHN'S MEMBERS WIN \$25/HOUR IN HISTORIC VICTORY FOR CLINIC WORKERS

Members at St. John's Community Health are celebrating a historic win with an industry-leading \$25/hr minimum wage for all employees! The Tentative Agreement, which was reached after just one day of negotiations, also improves language around vacation requests, boosts longevity pay and more. Members ratified these wins with a 94% YES vote. Strong agreements like these are proof of what we can accomplish when employers are committed to partnership with our union. Together We Win!



Clinic Workers Win Historic Victory

“Congratulations to SEIU 721 members at St. John's for their historic victory securing an industry-leading \$25/hour minimum wage for all employees.”

**Simboa Wright
Vice President
SEIU Local 721**

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SEIU 721 TRI-COUNTIES FIRED UP!



SEIU 721 PRESIDENT DAVID GREEN KICKS OFF VENTURA BARGAINING

On Wed., March 22, SEIU 721 President David Green and Tri-Counties Executive Board members joined City of Ventura members at City Hall to kick off their contract campaign. Attendees reviewed the contract, analyzed results of a new member survey and put together proposals. Fired up by strong turnout, Ventura city workers engaged with leaders and suggested bargaining strategies. Member leaders also collected new membership cards and COPE signups.



SEIU 721 CITY OF SIMI VALLEY MEMBERS RATIFY STRONG NEW 2-YEAR CONTRACT

In March, SEIU 721 City of Simi Valley members overwhelmingly ratified a great new 2-year contract with a 10% wage increase.

Members will receive a 6% boost in effective in April, several months before the expiration of the current contract, and another 4% increase next year.

Congratulations to Simi Valley members for standing strong for working families!



SEIU 721 MEMBERS HONOR THE LANDMARK 1903 OXNARD SUGARBEET STRIKE

In March, SEIU 721 Tri-Counties members commemorated the 120th anniversary of the landmark 1903 Oxnard Sugarbeet Strike, the first time in American history that members of different racial heritages allied together to form a cohesive labor union. Japanese and Mexican laborers banded together to form the Japanese-Mexican Labor Association to stand up to abusive treatment by the American Sugar Beet Company, winning higher wages and an end to company stores.

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3-DAY STRIKE BRINGS VICTORY AT LAUSD



In the wake of a strike that shut down area schools for three days, SEIU 99 LAUSD members reached a tentative agreement on March 24 with the Los Angeles Unified School District, winning raises of 30% or more for the lowest-wage workers. More than 35,000 members of United Teachers Los Angeles joined the strike in sympathy, and SEIU 721 members came out in force across LA to support our SEIU colleagues. SEIU 99 represents more than 30,000 bus drivers, teacher aides, special-education assistants, custodians, food service workers and other support personnel at LAUSD.



WOMEN'S HISTORY *month*

SEIU 721'S WOMEN'S CAUCUS SAYS: A WOMAN'S PLACE IS IN HER UNION!



The SEIU 721 Women's Caucus is back! After a 3-year pandemic-related hiatus, the caucus came together in March to honor Women's History Month. Members reconnected over dinner at the SEIU 721 union hall and invited women to "Tell Your Story." The event was led by Caucus President Theresa Velasco and Kelly Dixon-Turner — both of whom serve on SEIU 721's Executive Board. Members enjoyed games and ice breakers as they planned activities for the rest of the year. Special guests LA County Supervisor Kathryn Barger and Assemblywoman Pilar Schiavo joined the party, and Schiavo shared her personal story about growing up in a union family and her work in the labor movement. We are so excited to be back together again to champion women's causes. Women Strong!

SEIU 721 Environmental Justice Action Team: Fighting for a cleaner future



“The SEIU 721 Environmental Justice Action Team is a key component of our union’s commitment to the fight for racial, social and economic justice.”



Adolfo Granados, Treasurer, SEIU 721

The SEIU 721 Environmental Justice Action Team (EJAT) was established in early 2016. Our mission is to build members’ power to address the critical issues of air and water pollution, oil drilling in our neighborhoods, extreme heat, wildfires, a range of environmental justice issues, climate change, and their impact on our members, our families, and neighborhood residents. Our union has fought for safety and health in our worksites – now we must address the social causes of pollution and advance public health.

The SEIU 721 Environmental Action Team was the first environmental justice and sustainability committee within SEIU, and together, we’ve flexed our collective power to win big:

- We joined forces with LA County Department of Public Health officials and SEIU California to sponsor a bill to allocate \$176.6 million in state funding for

the Exide battery plant lead clean-up. We helped to lead a door-to-door community campaign to gather testimony on lead poisoning in the neighborhoods surrounding Exide in Vernon.

- We provided testimony at the LA City Council in support of setbacks between oil drilling sites and the communities where we live and where our children go to school.
- We served as guest lecturers at Cal State LA and the University of Southern California to raise awareness of the crucial role of labor in combating climate change.
- Recently, we joined the local and nationwide campaigns, organized by Third Act, to demand an end to big banks’ investment in fossil fuel corporations.

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SEIU 721 Members are Ready to Win in Riverside County!

Though their current MOU doesn't expire for several months, SEIU 721 Riverside County members have hit the ground running as they prepare to win a strong new contract.

Members took the first step in 2022 with a massive field campaign that helped elect a pro-worker majority to the Riverside County Board of Supervisors, and they haven't slowed down. Riverside County members elected a bargaining team in February, and are organizing Contract Action Team meetings to ensure that every member is informed and ready to fight.

As momentum builds for a successful contract campaign, hundreds of members already have signed a petition demanding that Riverside County respect the bargaining process and bargain in good faith. In 2017, county management's outrageous behavior prompted our union to file more than 40 unfair labor practice charges. We're putting them on notice that this approach to negotiations isn't going to fly.



SEIU 721 Riverside County Contract Action Team members prepare for bargaining

Fighting for the Cause



Darilyn Causey Finds a Cause and Purpose as a Union Steward

Darilyn Causey loves representing members as an SEIU 721 Union Steward. But her journey into union life began during her previous job with telecommunications giant Verizon – an experience that left a lot to be desired.

“I wanted to become a steward because I was a steward for Verizon,” Causey explained. “I had an issue there. They didn’t do a good job and I had to represent myself.”

She became a Steward with 721 soon after joining the LA County Dept. of Children and Family Services as an Intermediate Typist Clerk in 2012.

“I like helping people,” Darilyn said. “I think that everyone has a voice – and we should be heard. Through the union, we can be heard.”

As a steward and, later, as a member of the bargaining team – Darilyn saw The Union Difference up close.

“I was really fascinated by all that went into

bargaining,” she said. We were there until 3 or 4 in the morning negotiating. It gave me a newfound respect for the union – all the work that SEIU advocates put into negotiating for the employees.”

“Everyone that I’ve encountered at the union has been fabulous,” Darilyn said.

“I’m very proud to be a part of SEIU 721 because I knew that they worked hard for us. So, I wanted to ensure that I worked just as hard for them and my co-workers.”

That meant keeping up to date with all the latest tactics via SEIU 721’s stewards workshops.

“Knowing your contract – I’m in that class right now – I don’t care how many times I read my MOU, I learn something new every time I go to the class,” she said. “Just because managers want to make us believe that they are always right about the contract doesn’t mean they are.”

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Michigan Dumps Anti-Union “Right-to-Work”

Great Lakes state becomes the first in 58 years to repeal union-busting law

Sometimes the good guys win. I know I’m always warning about threats to working people on the horizon – the Koch brothers, the Freedom Foundation, bad rulings at the U.S. Supreme Court – so I’m thrilled to be able to report some truly good news.

On March 24, Michigan became the first state in decades to repeal the union-busting law known as “right-to-work” that was passed over a decade ago by a Republican-controlled Legislature.

Right-to-work laws are a key tool used by big corporations and ultra-conservative foundations to cripple labor unions so they can push down wages, eliminate pensions and health benefits and slash government programs in order to increase their profits and reduce their taxes.

“Today, we are coming together to restore workers’ rights, protect Michiganders on the job, and grow Michigan’s middle class,” Democratic Gov. Gretchen Whitmer said in a statement

after signing the legislation.

The same day, Governor Whitmer also restored the state’s prevailing wage law, repealed by the state’s Republican-controlled legislature in 2018. Michigan again will require contractors hired on state projects to pay union-level wages.

Michigan is the first state in 58 years to repeal a “right-to-work” law, since Indiana first repealed right-to-work in 1965, before Republicans restored it in 2012. Missouri’s Republican Legislature approved a “right-to-work” law in 2017, but it was overwhelmingly rejected by voters before it could take effect.

We’ve still got a lot to work to do before we can win Unions For All. In total, 26 states still have “right-to-work” laws in place. But the facts are irrefutable: Workers earn more and live better with unions. It’s time to help workers everywhere win them.



Gilda Valdez, Chief of Staff

Gilda Valdez



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