

SEIU Local 517M E-Former - January 2014 Edition

Lead, Unite, Fight – Win For the 99%!

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State Employee Contracts Extended Until January 15th

The Civil Service Commission voted 2-2 on approval of the Impasse Panel recommendations at their December 18th meeting. They subsequently voted to extend the current contracts until their January 15th meeting. This means that the current healthcare designs of the Legacy and New Hire plans and all contract provisions remain in effect on January 1, 2014.

The delay allows for more dialogue on the issue of healthcare and allows the Coalition to bolster our position that healthcare changes are not necessary based on the utilization data that has been late in coming from Blue Cross. Your leaders will review the data and see if an agreement can be reached with the State. Information will be available on the website and the bargaining app.

Taylor School Members Give Back to Community



It was brought to the attention of Unit President Kathie Fields by a Taylor Principal that a family who had been homeless finally found a place to live. The down side was that they had lost all of their belongings including beds for the children.

Through the Local and the school district administration, the family not only received new beds but all the gifts on the children's wish list as well. Bedding and food were purchased, a Christmas Tree was donated and everything to trim the tree was purchased by one of the Board of Education Members along with a Kroger gift card donated by the Taylor School District Robotics Team.

The family was surprised and very grateful at what the Support Staff and Administrators had pulled together for them. Working together and giving back to our community is what we do, and what a wonderful experience this was for everyone involved.

President's Message



New Year's Greetings! For all those Spartan fans out there... congratulations on all your team's accomplishments this past football season. Just as they were focused on one goal from September, so too are we here at 517M, focusing on 2014.

For our School and Local Government members: I commend you for your tireless efforts in the face of fierce and often demeaning attacks on your public sector employment. 517M Secretary/Treasurer **Andy Johnson** will be spearheading a special emphasis for you and fellow members. This will include a special June 18th Lobby Day on issues that affect you most. Check our website for updates and make it a plan to get involved.

For our State of Michigan members: I would use that "Patriot" movie phrase, "Hold the line... Hold the line". I commend all those members and friends who showed up at our two rallies in December on behalf of our Civil Service contract hearing. We held the line because of YOUR efforts. I assure you we will continue this fight with due diligence and efforts here in January, 2014. We continue to research the best substantiated position and will take this with much gusto and enthusiasm into January's meeting. Do not lose hope, our path and our cause are sure. If we need one more show of support I know you will be there for yourself and your fellow members.

I trust 2014 will be a great year for you, and all our fellow members of 517M. This can only happen because of your support. Choosing to stay committed to our efforts in all areas of labor is the only way to achieve success in the long run. Committed to active participation, to financial support, and to inspirational encouragement to keep our motivation strong and unwavering is the only way. I shall look forward to our many successes as we will grow stronger, together.

Most sincerely,

Bill Ruhf, 517M President

Members Rally in Detroit and Lansing

Santa Claus joined hundreds of state employees and community activists on Monday, December 16th as they demonstrated outside Cadillac Place in Detroit to call for fair contract terms and an end to more health care cost-shifting. The rally also drew candidate for Michigan governor **Mark Schauer**. "You are the people that make Michigan the great state that it is," Schauer said. "It's time we have leadership in the governor's office and in the legislature that value you and know the role that you play for our great state."



On Tuesday in Lansing, there were over 100 members who braved the snow and wind to make their voice heard. Media interviewed several employees to tell our side of the economic story. State Representative **Andy Schor** was on hand to lend his support for the workers.

December 17th rally in Lansing.
Photo by Anita Lloyd, MCO

On Wednesday, December 18 in Lansing the final rally was held during the Civil Service Commission meeting while the Commission heard final arguments from the five unions as well as from the state employer. At issue is an impasse panel's health care recommendation that shifts more costs onto workers even though they have already given hundreds of millions of dollars in health care givebacks in recent years and the state is now projecting a budget surplus north of \$900 million.

Member Interviewed on Contract Rallies

On December 17, 2013, Technical Unit President **George Heath** was interviewed on a Lansing area radio program concerning the contract rallies and the Impasse process. You can listen to the interview at: <http://1320wils.com/assets/files/12-17-13%20George%20Heath.mp3>

HSS Bargaining Update



By Amy Davis-Comstock
HSS Unit President

After our union and the other State Employee Unions submitted legal briefs to the Impasse Panel regarding outstanding contract articles, the Impasse Panel had several weeks to examine the expert documentation and legal arguments before the Impasse Panel hearings held on November 13th through the 15th.

Your HSS bargaining team and the bargaining teams for the other State Employee Unions represented workers at the hearings regarding the unions' positions on wages and benefits. At the hearing the panelists asked questions of both the State Employer and the State Employee Unions.

On the Wednesday before Thanksgiving, the Impasse Panel gave their recommendation to the Civil Service Commission with copies to the State Employer and each of the State Employee Unions.

The recommendation was for a two-year contract with a 2% base pay increase and a .5% lump sum effective October 1, 2014 and a 2% base pay increase effective October 1, 2015. That was a compromise between the position of the State Employer and the State Employee Unions.

The Panel's recommendation regarding health care benefits was to remove the distinction between employees hired before and after April 1, 2010. All current employees hired before April 1, 2010, and retirees, would see their copays, deductibles, prescription costs, and out-of-pocket expenses increase. Employees hired after April 1, 2010 would see their deductibles and out-of-pocket expenses increase. Anyone with HMO coverage would be subject to deductibles and out-of-pocket maximums. The unions opposed these increases since it would hurt a majority of our members.

At their December 18th meeting, the four-person Civil Service Commission voted 2-2 to adopt the Panel's recommendation vs modifying the health care benefits portion to maintain current benefits. This was due to the unions speaking with the Commissioners and fighting for our members' rights. The current contract was extended until the January 15th meeting, meaning

that all the provisions of the current contract are maintained, including union security.

November 27—Impasse panel submitted its recommended decision to the Civil Service Commission.

December 18— The decision was postponed until their January 15, 2014 meeting.

January 15—Civil Service Commission will adopt, reject or modify the Impasse Panel's recommendation.

During this time, we need to show the State that we are standing strong in solidarity with our bargaining team to fight for the economic justice we deserve!

How can you help? Contact your steward or worksite leader to get involved. Look for updates on SEIU Local 517M's website (www.seiu517m.org), call the HSS office at 313-456-2911, or call **Amy Davis-Comstock** at 989-992-6841.

Members Only Benefit - 2014 SEIU Scholarships Now Available

Through five different scholarship programs, SEIU awards 53 scholarships that enable SEIU members and their children to pursue their educational goals at accredited colleges, universities, and technical schools. Scholarship applications are available starting December 2, 2013.

SEIU scholarships are open to SEIU members or their children. To be eligible to apply for any SEIU scholarship, membership must be for three continuous years as of September 1, 2014. All awards must be for the academic year(s) awarded. Scholarships will be awarded without regard to the sex, race, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, age, or disability of any applicant. Scholarship awards are limited to one per household. Applications must be filed online by midnight March 3, 2014 or postmarked March 3, 2014.

Online Applications and information: <http://www.seiu.org/a/members/fulfill-your-college-goals-with-an-seiu-scholarship.php>

2014 SEIU Local 517M Calendars Now Available

Click on the link to download the state employee or school and local government 2014 calendars.

State Employee Calendar: <http://www.seiu517m.org/files/2013/11/2014calendarstate.pdf>

School and Local Government Calendar:
<http://www.seiu517m.org/files/2013/11/2014calendarslg.pdf>



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