

SEIU Local 517M E-Former - October 2014 Edition

Lead, Unite, Fight – Win For the 99%!

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Lawsuit Activity – Oral Arguments Scheduled in School Pension Case



Oral Arguments in the 3% school pension case, AFT Michigan v State of Michigan (148748) will take place on Thursday, October 9, 2014. This case deals with the 3% pension contribution that was forced upon school employees. Information about the briefs that have been filed can be found at:

<http://courts.mi.gov/Courts/MichiganSupremeCourt/oral-arguments/2014-2015/Pages/148748.aspx>. Oral arguments can be viewed live on October 9th at:

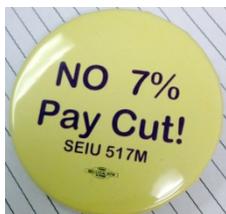
<http://courts.mi.gov/courts/michigansupremecourt/oral-arguments/live-streaming/pages/live-streaming.aspx>.

There still is no date for the start of oral arguments at the Supreme Court in the State Employee Pension lawsuit (4%) or the Right to Work Applicability cases. Activity continues on these cases as briefs continue to be filed by parties both for and against in each case.

Saginaw Event to “Help Save Our Children”

The SEIU 517M AFRAM Saginaw Chapter will be holding a “HELP SAVE OUR CHILDREN” event on Saturday, October 4, 2014 at the SEIU 517M Saginaw Hall located at 1420 S. Michigan Avenue. The event will run from 11:00am-1:30pm. The aim is to highlight how the whole community hurts from school closings and the lack of after school programs. We need to bring back the investment in our kids! It's time to make a change in the city of Saginaw. For more information, contact **Betty Nash** at (989) 482-4091 or the SEIU Union hall at (989) 797-4243.

Saginaw Public School Members Fight for a Fair Contract



Saginaw Public School members have heated up their contract campaign and are taking a strong stand to fight cuts to their wages. The school district is demanding a 7% pay cut to the SEIU members after the teachers and others agreed to take these deep cuts. Union members packed the board meeting on September 17th to let the board know that they cannot afford a

7% cut and refuse to agree to such drastic measures. The SEIU bargaining team had offered an alternative health care plan with the same benefit levels for all of the district staff that could save up to \$1.2 million per year in costs. Members are wearing buttons in the work place that say "NO 7% Pay Cut" and pledging to keep up the fight. Bargaining sessions are scheduled to continue over the next several months.

Saginaw School Board Candidates Interviewed



Our Region 1 MPAC members have teamed up with our Saginaw Public Schools member leaders to interview candidates for the Saginaw School Board races. With so much at stake with the Saginaw Schools demanding deep wage cuts, who wins these races is more important than ever to our Saginaw Schools members. The candidate interviews took place on September 22nd with all six candidates who are looking to fill two seats on the board. Incumbent board member, **Mattie Thompson** (Picture) and newcomer **Tamara McRae** secured the members' endorsement. Both candidates demonstrate a true belief that the board needs to stand with workers with visions and values that best align with our members.

Technical Unit Vice President Election Results



Nominations were accepted for the office of Technical Unit Vice President. The current Technical Unit Vice President **John Eck** was the only candidate to return a nomination form so he has been declared the winner. The term of office begins November 1, 2014 and expires October 31, 2017.

Scientific and Engineering Unit Arbitration on Supplemental Employment

Earlier this year, the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) denied a request for supplemental employment for one of our Foresters. Their reason for denial of the supplemental employment was that it could present a potential conflict of interest. The union filed a grievance based on the DNR's assumption of potential conflict. The idea of a potential conflict was overly broad and therefore violated the contract and the rights of the member. On May 8, 2014 an arbitration hearing was held. Arbitrator **Ben Wolkinson** rendered his decision on August 6th. He ruled that potential conflicts of interest are just too speculative in nature to justify the employer's rejection of the grievant's request for supplemental employment. He also stated that the employer is protected against conflicts of interest by their own requirement to seek and obtain approval for supplemental employment and their capacity to discipline those who would breach ethical norms. The DNR was then ordered to approve the original request for supplemental employment.

Union Testifies at Civil Service Commission Meeting on Contractor Accountability

SEIU Local 517M Executive Board Member and Technical Unit Vice President **John Eck** testified at the September 17, 2014 Civil Service Commission meeting in Lansing. His testimony



centered around the growing amount of state transportation work being contracted for with outside firms at a greater cost than having state workers provide those services. Using a scenario based on the TV show “Shark Tank”, he tried to convey the lack of oversight, and increased costs.

He brought forth a request from the Coalition of State Employee Unions to have the Civil Service Commission form a joint task-force to review the rules, regulations and procedures that Civil

Service staff use to approve these contracts. He also asked the Commission to direct their staff to take the following immediate steps:

- Review all disbursements being made under Standards A and D to confirm that the Standards the requests were approved under, still apply.
- Discontinue the practice of extending existing CS-138s to increase their dollar amount or their length of applicability. Review new applications.
- Discontinue the approval of CS-138s with open dollar amounts, often shown with \$999,999,999 as the dollar value. Limit the dollar value.

Increase the number of Civil Service staff members doing the reviews of applications and limit their reliance on the requesting Department’s staff to justify the need. In other words, do an independent review of every application.

View his complete testimony and the supporting documents at:

<http://www.seiu517m.org/2014/09/17/union-testifies-at-civil-service-commission-meeting-on-contracting-out/>

Local 517M Website Updates

Some new features have been added to seiu517m.org to make the site more useful for members.

There is a “Contracts” section that will house all current unit contracts. This site is currently being populated so if your contract isn’t there yet, it soon will be. Check it out at:

<http://www.seiu517m.org/contracts/>



Also, with the coming election in November, the “Political Resources” page has added content on different election related media stories so that you can be an informed voter on November 4th. There is also a link to request an absentee ballot on this page. You can check this page out at:

<http://www.seiu517m.org/political-action/>

The monthly subscription for the E-Former is included in your membership dues payment and is intended for members in good standing of SEIU Local 517M.



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