

SEIU Local 517M E-Former - February 2014 Edition

Lead, Unite, Fight – Win For the 99%!

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Supreme Court to Finally Hear Cases

On Thursday, January 30th the Michigan Supreme Court released a unanimous order granting the appeals of two important cases, one involving whether the right-to-work law applies to state civil service employees and the other is the constitutionality of major changes to the state employee retirement benefits system that require a 4 percent pension contribution in order to remain in the old Defined Benefit pension system.

The two cases, *UAW v. Green* and *Michigan Coalition of State Employee Unions v. State Of Michigan*, will be heard together since the underlying issue in each case is the constitutional authority of the Civil Service Commission.

There is no time specified as to when oral arguments will be held. We will keep you updated when the schedule is announced.

State Employee Contracts Are Completed

On Wednesday, January 15, 2014 the Civil Service Commission approved all three SEIU Local 517M bargaining unit contracts (Human Services Support, Scientific and Engineering, and Technical) with the Impasse Panel recommendations. All votes were 4-0 on the unit specific provisions and 3-1 on health care changes.

Commissioner **Robert Swanson** had offered an amended 1 year contract with status quo healthcare option but the vote was deadlocked at 2-2 and not adopted. Commissioner Swanson called the decision a "travesty" and "a slap in the face to all dedicated state workers" because it comes at a time when the state is touting a \$1.2 billion surplus and hard data shows flat healthcare costs. Swanson reluctantly voted to provide the third vote needed

to approve outstanding State collective bargaining agreements in order to break a deadlock. Such a deadlock would have left State workers without a pay increase and without contracts. Commissioner **Charles Blockett** maintained his opposition to the unnecessary health care cost shift to State employees.

The vote came after the Commission gave the parties another month to confer after reviewing hard health care data that was not available during bargaining and impasse proceedings despite the unions repeated requests for the data. Those discussions broke down when the Governor's bargaining representative refused to consider other health care options even though the data showed no need for concessions. Union bargaining proposals to save an estimated \$24 million in health care costs through wellness and managed therapy programs were also snubbed.

The contracts are now being proofed and will be available to the membership after they are finalized. Summaries of the contracts can be found on our website at:

Human Services Support Unit: <http://www.seiu517m.org/2014/01/28/hss-unit-contract-summary/>

Scientific and Engineering Unit: <http://www.seiu517m.org/2014/01/23/scientific-and-engineering-unit-2014-15-contract-summary/>

Technical Unit: <http://www.seiu517m.org/files/2014/02/Tech-Summary-Sheet-2013.pdf>

More information can also be found at: <http://www.seiu517m.org/2014/02/03/state-employee-contract-summary-and-information/>

Dues and Taxes Under the DSS Payment System

We have been receiving inquiries from members who in the past have written off their membership dues on their taxes. Now with the DSS direct pay system and the fact that schools no longer have a check stub with a Year-to-Date, the question was asked about figuring out the dues total and separation of COPE when doing taxes.

Members will have to keep track of their payments with their monthly statements from the bank or credit card company. Under DSS if you log-in under DSS (<https://joinmyunion.org/seiu517m>) and go to the Payment Set-Up Summary, you can see what portion has been paid as dues and what portion is for COPE. With this information, along with the information from your credit card or bank, you can figure how much was paid in Dues and COPE for last year.

West Side Story



By Ray Clover,

Region 2 Divisional Vice President

Region 2 in the school and local government division covers pretty much the whole west side of Michigan, causing some huge problems with trying to connect with over 50 separate Units. As the Region 2 President, I find it almost impossible to

be in contact with most of the Region. But we are working on this problem.

On February 22 we are holding our second Stewart training session. It will be held in Wayland and we are hoping for about 25 participants. The training will last approximately 5 hours and lunch will be served.

The topics we will be covering will range from Duties and Responsibilities of Stewards, Legal and Moral obligations; Creating a positive attitude toward the Union; Creating a collaborative and cooperative atmosphere with Management; Contract Bargaining, and we will be dealing with various scenarios in servicing our members.

This training will be conducted by **Ray Clover** (President), **Eric Campbell** (Board Member) and **Jim Kehoe**. Other Region 2 Board members will also be assisting with the presentations as well.

Our Goal is to educate our Stewards to enable them to perform their duties and to establish an atmosphere of trust, understanding and growth within our Region.

Stronger Together...Union Forever

Human Services Support Information

Here are helpful links to information and dates for Human Services Support bargaining unit members:

HSS Steward Jurisdiction Listing - <http://www.seiu517m.org/files/2014/01/2014-Jurisdictional-Area-Chart.pdf>

HSS 2014 General Membership Meeting Schedule - <http://www.seiu517m.org/files/2014/01/2014-SEIU-HSS-GMM-Chart.pdf>

Forestry In-Service

On Wednesday, January 29th members of the Scientific & Engineering Unit bargaining team as well as staff met with our members in the DNR's Forest Resources Division at their in-service training at Shanty Creek Resort. It was a great opportunity for the union leadership to meet with our members, many of whom work in the field and are hard for us to see face-to-face. It was also a great opportunity for those FRD members to ask questions regarding the recent bargaining session. Topics heavily discussed included the upcoming changes in health care, the status of the 4% pension lawsuit and the State Administrative Board process for damaged clothing reimbursement. Thank you to the members who helped organize the meeting and to all those who attended.

If you work in a division or department that has an in-service or all-day training planned let us know and we will try to attend to meet with you and your co-workers. Contact President **Amy Lipset** at lipseta@michigan.gov or the S&E Unit Staff Coordinator **Howard Gordon** at hgordon@seiu517m.org

Update on 3% School Employees Pension Lawsuit

There were two different lawsuits dealing with the 3% pension contribution for school employees. The Michigan Education Association lost their suit at the Court of Appeals level last year and is currently awaiting an appeal to the Supreme Court. The American Federation of Teachers case recently had a decision stating that the law was constitutional. This is the same outcome as the MEA case.

Read the AFT opinions here:

<http://www.seiu517m.org/files/2014/01/school3percentCOAruling.pdf>

Scientific and Engineering Unit Board Vacancy

Are you a Scientific & Engineering bargaining unit member and you work for DTMB, DMVA, MDOC, or DHS? If so, we have a vacant position on our board of directors that represents our 70 members that work in those departments. The S&E Board meets bi-monthly at the union hall in Lansing. This term expires July 2015. If you are interested in filling this position please contact our staff coordinator **Howard Gordon** (hgordon@seiu517m.org) by February 28.

Member Receives Department Award



Roderick Jackson, a Transportation Technician in the Oakland TSC has been awarded the Simply Super Service Award by the Michigan Department of Transportation. The award is given in recognition of exemplary customer service. Roderick is an active leader within the Technical Unit as a Chapter Vice President as well as serving on the SEIU Local 517M COPE Committee. (Pictured L-R: Rep. Coleman Young III with Roderick Jackson)

Loss of a Great Labor Advocate



It's with heavy hearts that we have to reflect on the loss of a valuable, and beloved member of our family. On January 3, 2014 we lost our sister **Cheryl Bollinger** to complications from her battle with cancer. Cheryl was a guiding force in the United Technical Employees Association (later became the Technical Division of SEIU Local 517M) and became one of the mainstays of SEIU 517M until her retirement in 2013. We all wish that she could have had a much longer retirement enjoying rides on her Harley, taking pictures, and traveling with her partner Renee. Cheryl made all feel welcome and included so please take a moment and include her in a prayer, or moment of personal reflection.

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>



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