

SEIU Local 517M E-Former - May 2014 Edition

Lead, Unite, Fight – Win For the 99%!

In this Issue:

State Employee Leaders Participate in New Employee Orientation Training
Region 1 Report
State Employee Health Care Chart
Technician Secondary Negotiation Update
HSS Unit Member Update
Lawsuit Update
NASHTU Conference Report
I Don't Need a Union...
Save the Date!

State Employee Leaders Participate in New Employee Orientation Training



On April 24th and April 29th, chapter leaders and stewards from the Scientific and Engineering and Technical units participated in a training for welcoming new members to the union.

This training provided leaders with materials and tips on talking to prospective members in both a one-on-one setting in the workplace and at a department provided New Employee Orientation session. Scientific and Engineering Unit Steward **Darren Bowling** shared his experiences handling the

New Employee Orientations in DEQ and DNR. His experience will be very useful to the other leaders as they begin conducting their own orientations.

Region 1 Report

By Darliane Green-Blackmon, Labor Representative

After four negotiation sessions, the Thomas Township bargaining unit ratified a four (4) year contract agreement on April 4, 2014.

The members will receive lump sum payments in each of the four (4) years of the contract. In addition, both parties agreed to a Health Savings Account rather than a Health Rollover Savings account. So now the employees own their own insurance money and the Employer agreed to match the Health Savings Account contribution by 1% percent and pay up to 7% percent of the insurance premium rate.

With only one bargaining session on April 23, 2014, SEIU 517M and Birch Run Area Schools Food Service workers reached a tentative agreement with the Employer and ratified a three (3) year contract.

The members will receive a base wage increase with a wage re-opener for 2015-2016. In addition all food service employees will receive a \$100.00 increase to the current Health Care Reimbursement Plan.

State Employee Health Care Chart

An easy to follow chart showing the coverage items and percentages for the State Health Plan and HMOs effective in October is found at: http://www.seiu517m.org/files/2014/04/In-Network_Summary_of_Health_Care_Benefits_Effective_10-12-14_445799_7.pdf

Technician Secondary Negotiation Update



By George Heath, Technical Unit President

Greetings fellow Technicians:

Those of you in MDOT are aware of the second class treatment we have received in regard to expense rates. We have been in secondary negotiations for several weeks trying to get a fair reimbursement rate for our people.

MDOT is only focused on cost savings and not fairness! We repeatedly hear that the employer does NOT want to harm the worker. That in my book is strange when they continue to close offices and send our members to other facilities. Our members are expected to drive sometimes over 100 miles each way with little or no compensation. We also have members in travel status that are expected to secure lodging for \$45.50 per night!!! In their eyes that isn't harm, I guess.

Please know that we understand and are doing our best to get the best possible settlement for our members. As an update we still have our unfair labor practice suit awaiting hearing because the employer cut our mileage rate to about half of other state employees and federal rates. We are doing our best to represent all our members in these trying times.

We are now and always will be stronger together.

HSS Unit Member Update

Amy Davis-Comstock, HSS Division President

President, **Amy Davis-Comstock**, and Grievance Chair, **Denise Edwards**, attend Labor / Management meetings with your management.

If you work in the Unemployment Insurance Agency, we meet monthly with UIA Management.

If you work in the Workforce Development Agency, we meet every other month with WDA Management – during even-numbered months.

We meet as needed with the Department of Human Services Management.

Coming soon to our HSS membership: the minutes from these meetings will be emailed to your state email address. The minutes will also be posted on the SEIU 517M website. Scroll to the bottom of the homepage and the link will be at the bottom for the HSS Labor / Management meeting minutes.

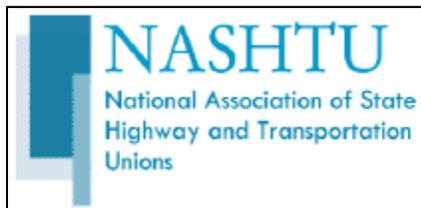
Be sure to read through the minutes and address any questions or concerns that you may have to your local stewards on your own time. If there are member concerns and issues that need to be addressed at the Labor / Management meetings, please let your stewards know. Some issues, such as grievances, are not discussed at these meetings but if your concerns are appropriate for this forum, the issues will be added to the agenda for the next scheduled meeting.

Lawsuit Update

3% School Employees Pension Lawsuit: There were two different lawsuits dealing with the 3% pension contribution for school employees. Those cases are currently awaiting a decision by the Supreme Court to hear the cases.

State Employee 4% Pension and Right To Work Applicability: Those cases were granted leave to appeal by the Supreme Court and we are still awaiting the announcement of the hearing dates. We will notify the membership when those dates are announced.

NASHTU Conference Report



By George Heath, Technical Unit President

This week **Dave Berridge** of the Scientific & Engineering Unit and I had the privilege of attending the NASHTU (National Association of State Highway Transportation Unions) in Washington D.C. NASHTU is an organization with the goal of protecting public safety, and funding by making sure that public works are done by public employees. It has been proven that public employees do the work cheaper, faster, and better. We continue to battle "outsourcing" in Michigan and Nationally.

During our convention we had the opportunity to meet with several of our Michigan Congress people. We had a meeting, and discussion with Senator **Debbie Stabenow**, Representative **Dan Kildee**, Representative **Tim Walberg**, and we were able to meet with an assistant to Representative **Dan Benishek**. Although she is our only Representative on the Transportation Committee **Candice Miller** or her assistants could not find the time to meet with Dave, and I. It is quite telling when a member of congress is too busy or doesn't care enough to meet with 2 MDOT employees on an issue that is as important as the Highway Trust Fund, and the upcoming Surface Transportation Bill.

Please take the time to check out the site OutsourcingAmericaExposed.org. This is a very good site that will open some eyes on the issue of outsourcing public works for profit. Another site that may be of interest is ALECexposed.org. This site will show who really is writing the bills that are becoming our laws. NASHTU also has a very informative site that is worth checking at nashtu.us.

We in SEIU 517M are working to make sure that we as taxpayers get the best bang for our dollar, and have the same opportunity for success that Corporate CEO's have. We can do this by our actions, and by being stronger together in our union.

I Don't Need a Union.....

By Dennis Streeter, Technical Unit Coordinator

Over the past twenty plus years one of the most prevalent complaints I hear from the membership is, "Why do I need a Union". My answer is simple. JUST CAUSE for discipline. Without just cause you are an AT-Will employee. An At-Will employee can be fired "at the will" of the employer. Most would say, that would never happen with me, I am a good employee. The Employer values my knowledge and experience. I have a good work ethic and come to work every day and I have a good relationship with my boss.

Okay, what happens when you get a new boss? What happens when life throws you a curve and you need to take time off work? What happens if you get injured playing softball on the weekend and need time to recuperate? What happens when you are assigned additional duties and you can't do all of them? What happens when the new boss doesn't like you? What happens if you are charged with violation of a rule? What happens if your new boss decides to fire you because he or she doesn't like the way you look, or smell, or work? All of these things can happen in an at will environment.

I have heard members say, I don't need a Union; if any of those things happen I will hire an attorney and sue my employer for wrongful termination. I tell them this is true. But remember, you will be doing this without a paycheck, without health care and most attorneys require a fee up front and can never guarantee how long the process could take.

Something to consider.....

Save the Date!

The 2014 SEIU Local 517M Annual Leadership Conference will be held on Friday, July 25, 2014 at the Kellogg Hotel and Conference Center in East Lansing. Watch for more details in the June edition of the E-Former!

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.



[Join Us on Facebook](#)



[Follow SEIU517M on Twitter](#)