

# SEIU Local 517M E-Former – November 2011

*New Solutions for Michigan!*



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## **New Solutions 2.0**

Great news! Several months ago we were given the opportunity to submit plans to continue our Fight for a Fair Economy along with many other SEIU locals in the country. With the recognition New Solutions for Michigan has received and the promise for true accomplishments with this campaign, SEIU in Michigan has secured funding and resources to continue our Fight for a Fair Economy. We are the only state who received the first round of funding that will be receiving a second round. A great deal of credit needs to go to the staff and member leaders who have been working so diligently to ensure a successful New Solutions for Michigan campaign!

Our New Solutions 2.0 campaign will take the same principles outlined in our [New Solutions for Michigan Report](#). We will move our message and actions into our local communities around the state. We will engage our members and work with local decision makers to find the best ways to secure our revenues and create efficient ways to deliver the best public services our communities deserve. Our Saginaw members are already planning their New Solutions campaign and making sure that endorsed candidates for city council and the school board include our New Solutions concepts in their own campaigns.

With the successful New Solutions for Michigan coalition bargaining our state employees just concluded, we know our front line workers are our best advocates for New Solutions! Look forward to updates right here in our e-former and on our SEIU 517M website of upcoming actions and events with our New Solutions 2.0 campaign.

## **Legislation to Change State Employee Retirement Progressing**

The Michigan House of Representatives has taken the first steps in drastically changing State employee's retirement healthcare by passing in a straight party line vote, HB 4702 introduced by Rep. Chuck Moss (R-Birmingham). The House Appropriation Committee voted to eliminate retiree health coverage for employees hired after January 1, 2012 and allow them to contribute 2% of their earnings into a 401K or 457 matching plan. The state would match up to 2% of the employee's contribution.

The good news is that HB 4702 is not as bad as the original Bill. SEIU and the other Unions representing State employees opposed the Bills and achieved a significant change to the Legislation that originally would have eliminated retiree healthcare coverage for all current employees in the Defined Contribution pension plan. The original Bill would have only provided a lump sum payment into a health reimbursement account for these employees.

HB 4701 introduced by Rep. **Bill Rogers** (R-Brighton), will also require workers currently under the Defined Benefit plan to contribute 4% of their earning toward their pension. Current employees in the Defined Benefit Retirement Plan will have to either freeze their DB retirement and move to

the Defined Contribution Plan or begin paying 4% of their wages into the DB plan. Defined Benefit Plan employees would keep their current retirement health benefit. This legislation would return the 3% contributions of wages currently being collected toward retiree healthcare costs to the employees. *[Editor's Note: SEIU Local 517M and other Unions have also filed a lawsuit against the state seeking an immediate return of the 3% already contributed by members.]*

Another change for DB retirees in the Bill would be the elimination of any overtime when calculating the final average compensation calculation for retirement benefits. House Democrats argued on behalf of the employees who are required to work mandatory overtime by the State, that this work should be included in the calculation. An amendment to address this issue was defeated by straight party line vote (Democrats supported this inclusion while the Republicans did not.) These Bills now go to the House Floor for a vote.

House Appropriations Chair **Chuck Moss** has announced the School Employees retirement benefits will be next for major changes.

## **State Coalition Reaches Tentative Agreement!**

Our three SEIU Local 517M Bargaining Teams, representing members in our Human Services Support, Scientific and Engineering, and Technical bargaining units are pleased to report that we have reached a Tentative Agreement with the Office of the State Employer (OSE) for a new two year contract covering our state employee members.

This new Contract commences January 1, 2012 for most traditional non-economic issues and October 1, 2012 for economic issues such as wages and insurance plans. You may view the summary of the Tentative Agreement at: <http://www.seiu517m.org/2011/10/27/state-employee-tentative-agreement-summary/>

Electronic ballots will be available starting on Wednesday, November 2, 2011. Paper ballots may be requested at that time. An email with the link and instructions will be going out November 2, 2011. Votes must be received by Noon on Thursday, December 1, 2011 at the Lansing office.

A listing of member meetings to discuss the proposed agreement can be found on the SEIU Local 517M website here: <http://www.seiu517m.org/2011/10/28/tentative-agreement-meeting-schedule/> Meeting locations will continue to be updated when they are scheduled so check back often to see when your chapter meets.

## **SEIU Local 517M Calendars Available**

The 2012 SEIU Local 517M state and school and local government calendars are now available. Follow the links to print them off. We note that the Lake Trust Credit Union (formerly State Employees Credit Union) no longer highlights state employee pay dates on their calendars. Our SEIU calendars list pay dates as well as many other important union activity dates.

[State Employee Calendar](#)

[School and Local Government Calendar](#)

## Taylor Coat Drive

October 22, 2011, the Local 26M Division of 517M in conjunction with Sax Pharmacy and Gift Shop hosted a hugely successful "SPOOKTACULAR" coat drive in the parking lot of Sax. Hundreds of new and gently used coats and other outer wear were collected along with \$700.00 in donations to purchase coats in the sizes needed to fill any shortage we see.



The Taylor School District's Robotics team volunteered their time to help and everyone had a great time.

We have a very generous community despite the economy. Now students in need in our district will be given the opportunity to come to the 26M Union Hall the week of November 14, be fitted with a winter coat and leave knowing that 26M truly does "Care for Your Kids."

(The team pictured with Board Member Mrs. Debra Stellinni, Driver Matt Mead, President Kathie Fields, and Debbie Church manager of Sax Pharmacy)

We want to send a big "THANK YOU" to everyone involved and particularly to Sax, without them this would not have been possible.

## Taylor School Notes

The Citizens of the City of Taylor in conjunction with the Taylor School District has started a "Reading Corp" similar to the program that Detroit has implemented. It consists of volunteers being trained to aid kindergarten students in early literacy skills. As of this update, we have sixty-eight Taylor Schools support staff volunteers for this program.



On October 13, 2011 a fundraiser was hosted for two candidates seeking two open seats on the Taylor School District Board of Education **James Lakatos** and **Ron Miller**. Our SEIU Taylor employees voted to endorse both gentlemen for these seats.



(Upper Picture L-R: James Lakatos receives a 517M PAC donation check from Vice President Jeff Michalik)

(Lower Picture L-R: Candidate Ron Miller is presented with a PAC donation from Vice President Jeff Michalik)

## Region 2 Member Leader Bargains First Contract – "Member Engagement" in Action



**Autumn Millis**, an Early Head Start Family Service Worker at the Orchard View Schools had never even thought of bargaining a contract until she took over as the elected leader of her bargaining unit. Now she's completed the bargaining of a new

three year contract as the chief spokesperson, ably assisted by her fellow bargaining team members. Autumn, who works with high risk pregnant teens and children up to age 3, initially went into bargaining with a great deal of trepidation and nervousness, but now describes the process as, "Interesting, not totally what I expected, as I really thought it to be more confrontational. It turned out to be a respectful 2-way exchange of ideas and positions." Would she do it again — "Absolutely!" Congratulations to Autumn!

## SEIU Retiree Group Kickoff Meeting

SEIU Local 517M is excited to announce the addition of a retirees group. There will be a kick-off meeting for the Lansing area SEIU 517M state retirees on December 6, 2011. This first meeting will provide information and updates on legislative action and benefits affecting retirees. Those attending will have the opportunity to provide input as to the future direction of this group. Invitations will be mailed to Lansing area retirees with details. Details will also be provided on the website. School and Local Government meetings will also be planned in the near future. Contact **Mary Charley**, Retiree Liaison, at [mcharley@seiu517m.org](mailto:mcharley@seiu517m.org) if you have any questions or comments.

## Local 517M Featured in National Workforce Network Broadcast

A recent Local 517M Region 1 training was featured on the National Workforce Network. The National Workforce Network or NWN is a weekly Internet news program started by SEIU. View the program here: <http://www.seiu517m.org/2011/10/13/national-workforce-network/>

## Long Time Region 2 Leader Honored



The Region 2 Board presented a plaque of appreciation at their recent meeting to **Dwayne Betcher**, long-time member leader from the Herrick Library in Holland. Dwayne, who has been actively involved in the Union for over 25 years, was a leader at both his unit and the Local, including a term as the 517M Secretary/Treasurer, has accepted a position in management at the Library.

(Left to right in the pic: Renee Wines/Bangor Schools, Dave Levett/Allegan County Road Commission, Dwayne Betcher, Ray Clover/Grand Haven Schools, Jan Goodwin/Wayland Schools, and Eric Campbell/City of Battle Creek)

## Changes to the Local 517M Executive Board

There were many changes in board members at the SEIU Local 517M Executive Board meeting on October 19, 2011.

**Andy Johnson**, Divisional Vice President for Region 1 was appointed to fill the vacancy at Local 517M Secretary/Treasurer. He will be filling the remainder of the term of the retiring Secretary/Treasurer **Lynda Roberts**. At the meeting, Lynda was presented with a plaque in appreciation for her work with Local 517M and the Taylor Schools bargaining unit.

There were also two vacancies in the Scientific and Engineering unit. **Bryan Grochowski** was appointed to fill out the remainder of the term of Bill Land who left state employment. **Steve Weis** was recently appointed to replace **Amy Lipset** as Unit Secretary. Amy left the position of Unit Secretary to succeed **Karl Hausler** as Divisional Vice President when he retired earlier this year.

**John Eck** won election to the position of Technical Unit Vice President and takes office November 1, 2011. He beat out incumbent Vice President **Kim Grezeszak**. By nature of the position, John will be installed on the Local 517M Executive Board.

### **Scientific and Engineering PDF Funding Unavailable for Current Fiscal Year**

Unfortunately, the last extension of the SEIU Scientific and Engineering Agreement did not include funding for the Professional Development Fund for Fiscal Year 2012. No training funds were funded for any Unions or non-exclusively represented employees. We are still working with the Office of the State Employer to obtain funding for at least a portion of the year but have not yet been successful. Future funding is included in the Tentative Agreement that is now before the membership for ratification. That funding would begin on October 1, 2012.