

SEIU Local 517M E-Former – December 2011

New Solutions for Michigan!



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State Contracts Ratified in All Three SEIU State Bargaining Units

The results are in and all three state employee unit contracts have been ratified by the voting membership. The results were counted and certified by the Election/Tally Committee on December 1, 2011. Votes were received from 46 percent of the combined voting membership. The results are as follows:

Human Services Support Unit – 84 % Yes 16 % No (Voting return rate of 51%)

Scientific and Engineering Unit – 80 % Yes 20% No (Voting return rate of 52%)

Technical Unit – 74 % Yes 26 % No (Voting return rate of 35%)

SEIU Local 517M President Bill Ruhf stated “Fellow members, thank you for your affirmative vote. You are to be commended for your continued sacrifice on behalf of the people of Michigan.”

“We, as part of Michigan’s union labor workforce, are ready and willing to continue the savings by working with the Governor’s administration through better management practices to create a lean, efficient, forward thinking Michigan. We will bring New Solutions to the Health Care table, the Worker/Management table, and the Privatization table.”

The agreements now go before the Civil Service Commission at their December 6th meeting for formal approval.

Bridge Action Press Coverage



On November 17th, SEIU members and community activists across the country joined together for a National Bridge Action Day. The events were meant to highlight the need for investment in our infrastructure and the jobs that these investments would provide. Instead of giving handouts to big corporations, we need our leaders to stop the power struggles and focus on creating good jobs that pay a fair wage. By investing in our crumbling local bridges, we can put people back to work and get our economy

moving again. The actions in Michigan were held at bridges in Saginaw, Kalamazoo and Detroit. We covered these events via Twitter feeds and Facebook posts in real time from the bridges. View the press coverage of these events below:

Coverage From Detroit including video:

<http://www.wxyz.com/dpp/news/region/detroit/protesters-shut-down-2nd-avenue-bridge-in-detroit>

Coverage from Saginaw including video: <http://www.wnem.com/story/16068390/occupy-protest-hits-midland-saginaw>

Coverage from Kalamazoo: <http://www.wvmt.com/news/detroit-1398500-michigan-street.html>

99% Campaign Show of Support



On November 18 – 19th there was a nation-wide show of support for the 99% and the Occupy Campaigns. The 99% Agenda includes: Good Jobs! No More Cuts! End the Tax Cuts for the Richest 1%; and Wall Street and Corporations must pay their Share of Taxes. The 99% symbol is rapidly becoming the symbol for the 2012 Election Cycle on behalf of working people across this country.

We felt that with so many millions of people unemployed and hurting, and Congress not doing anything about it, we had to do something dramatic to call attention to this crisis.

Members are encouraged to display the 99% signs in their homes, cars, workplaces, Facebook profile pictures, and computer desktop wallpaper to show their support for the campaign.

Signs for printing and distribution to the membership and the community and the Facebook graphic to use on Facebook and as desktop wallpaper are provided at:

<http://www.seiu517m.org/2011/11/15/99-campaign-visibility-days/>

State Employee Retirement Plan Changes Move to the Senate

House Bills 4701 and 4702 which make changes to both the Defined Benefit and Defined Contribution Retirement plans. The retirement bills recently passed the House and are now before the Senate Appropriations Committee. The Senate Fiscal Agency performed a legislative analysis and summary of the bills. These can be found at:

<http://www.legislature.mi.gov/documents/2011-2012/billanalysis/Senate/pdf/2011-SFA-4701-S.pdf>

An Attorney General opinion has been requested by Republican lawmakers as to whether these changes amounts to a diminishment of benefits which is prohibited by the Michigan Constitution.

Court Rules Pensions Are Taxable

In a straight 4-3 party-line vote the Michigan Supreme Court has ruled that applying the state income tax on public pensions does not violate the Michigan Constitution. This new tax on pensions, which is currently 4.25%, will go into effect on January 1, 2012. The provision that uses your birthday to determine eligibility for the tax was also deemed constitutional. This means that if you are over 67 years old on January 1, 2012, you will be exempt from this new tax. The only provision that was deemed unconstitutional was the provision dealing with total household

income in determining the tax threshold. In that same issue, the Court determined that provision violated the Michigan Constitution which prohibits a graduated Michigan income tax.

Election Results SEIU Local 517M Was Watching

Taylor School Board - SEIU endorsed candidate **Ronald Miller** was among the top two vote getters to win election to the Taylor School Board. Ron Miller is a recently retired SEIU member from the school district. SEIU endorsed candidate and current Board member **James Lakatos** lost his re-election bid.

Saginaw City Council - Three SEIU endorsed candidates win election to the Saginaw City Council. **Annie Boensch, Norman Braddock,** and **Amos O'Neal**, received the three highest vote totals in this election and were declared the winners. Endorsed candidate and SEIU member, **Ernie Ahmad**, employed by Saginaw Mental Health, lost his election bid to the Council. All endorsed candidates had adopted the New Solutions for Michigan principles.

Saginaw School Board - Two SEIU endorsed candidates win election to the Saginaw School Board. **Ruth Ann Knapp** and **Rudy Patterson** were the top vote getters.

Dearborn Heights Schools - The retired SEIU 517M Dearborn Heights Schools Unit President **Vickie Bracken** was among the top two vote getters and won election to the Dearborn Heights School Board.

Lansing City Council - SEIU Healthcare Michigan member, **Jody Washington**, wins her election to Lansing City Council 1st Ward. She defeated former State legislator **Lynn Martinez**.

Privatized School Members Ratify New Contract

The Saginaw Public Schools/Sodexo Group (maintenance, grounds, custodians) approximately 67 members who were recently outsourced to Sodexo, have ratified a 3 year contract. Members were able to retain several things from the school, however they did see changes in other area's such as health care. However they did get all the same holidays, raises each of the 3 years, a signing bonus and also started accruing vacation and sick time back to the take over date. The group ratified the contract by 84% that were eligible to vote (47 yes 9 no).

Thanks to the bargaining team: **Kim Jesse, Sam McGee** and **Bob Campbell** who all did a lot of hard work.

Taylor Members Care

Community involvement runs deep with the Local 517M members working in the Taylor School District. The Taylor School District's IT Department support staff purchased seven turkeys that were needed to fill Thanksgiving baskets designated for the Meyers Elementary families adopted for the holiday.

Members Only Benefit - 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.

SEIU scholarships are open to **SEIU members** or their children. The Bonnie Ladin Scholarship is also open to local union staff. To be eligible to apply for any SEIU scholarship, membership must be for three continuous years as of September 1, 2012. 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 1, 2012 or postmarked March 1, 2012.

Brochure: http://www.seiu.org/members/2012_scholarships/14326.SchlrsHPBroEngFinal.pdf

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