

SEIU Local 517M E-Former – July 2012

New Solutions for Michigan!

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A Letter From Outgoing Executive Vice President Phillip Thompson

Since this is my last official week as Executive Vice President for the Michigan Public Employees/SEIU Local 517M, I wanted to take this opportunity to thank all of you for the wonderful privilege that I have been given to work for you for this past 31 years—the first four as a Staff Representative, and the last twenty-seven as the Executive Director (later changed to Executive Vice President). I have been honored to work with the best member leadership in the state of Michigan. I leave here with the deepest respect for the work that each of you—as dedicated public employees—bring to your respective jobs each and every day. (Pictured L-R: Phil Patrick (incoming Executive Director) and Phil Thompson (outgoing Executive Vice President)).



I am proud of the fact that our Union has grown from its original group of approximately 1,300 scientists and engineers in state service into a strong Union of almost 9,000 members working in state government, schools, cities, counties, townships, as well as non-profits throughout the state of Michigan. I am equally proud of our strong relationship with our wonderfully diverse and progressive International Union - the Service Employees—SEIU. I absolutely believe that by working together, we will fight, and ultimately prevail in our challenge to re-build America's middle class. I also believe that it is indisputable that economists can trace the rapid decline of the middle class directly to the loss of collective bargaining rights in America. IT'S TIME TO REVERSE THIS TREND!

I believe each of us have talents to bring to this fight. Your Union is the most effective way to channel those talents.

Finally, I cannot say “good bye” without recognizing our highly-dedicated SEIU Local 517M Staff. Simply put—they are the best—bar none! I have worked with all of them for several years—to a person, each of them is a true professional in every way. They work extremely hard every day to protect, encourage, promote, engage and support programs and issues that benefit our SEIU membership here in our great state. They are true friends and I will miss seeing, and working with them on a daily basis.

Thanks for all 31 great years, and all of the wonderful opportunities. Feel free to contact me at pthompson@seiu517m.org.

Respectfully, Phil

SEIU Local 517M Golf Outing is August 2nd!



The annual SEIU Local 517M golf outing will be held on Thursday, August 2, 2012 at the Wheatfield Valley Golf Course in Williamston. The 4-person scramble will start with registration at 8:00 a.m. and shotgun start at 9:00 a.m. Cost is \$280 per foursome. More information and the registration form can be found at: <http://www.seiu517m.org/2012/05/29/sign-up-for-the-seiu-local-517m-golf-outing/>

Annual Conference Rescheduled

Due to a scheduling conflict – the Local 517M 2012 Annual Conference has been rescheduled from Friday, July 20th to **Friday, July 27, 2012**. The Executive Board Meeting that was to be held during the day of Thursday, July 26th, along with the AFRAM Reception that evening, has been cancelled. Please RSVP your attendance to Cindy Wilson at cwilson@seiu517m.org by July 17, 2012.

Unemployment Agency Reforms Called For Using New Solutions

SEIU New Solutions hosted a speak-out event in Detroit on Wednesday, June 27th, to allow unemployed workers and their advocates to voice their concerns over the pitfalls and inefficiencies of Michigan’s unemployment system. Changes to the current system were provided by the SEIU Local 517M represented employees that would make the agency more efficient and provide an increased level of service.

The Unemployment Insurance Agency is responsible for assisting unemployed workers get through the tough times until they are back on their feet. The system has been plagued with numerous problems such as: delays in payment, problems with the call-in times, the call-in system is unforgiving and has a limited time of accessibility (one hour every two weeks) for the unemployed worker to check their eligibility for benefits, and the under-staffing of the agency to handle client issues.

"I've seen firsthand the frustrations that UIA clients experience, especially when making their initial contact with the agency," said Janice Cosey, a UIA employee and SEIU 517M member. "People aren't able to get through on the phone to talk with someone about setting up their benefits or to find out why they may not be receiving payments. In addition, a lot of the information they receive is not easy to understand. There are many ways the UIA could improve communications between the agency and the clients it serves that would make the entire experience more positive and beneficial."

Employee suggested changes include:

- Reducing the high fees charged to UIA debit card users, which are among the highest of the 40 states that offer debit cards as a UI option.
- Reforming the call-in system to make it more streamlined and user friendly.
- Increasing users' accessibility to the MARVIN system, which has limited hours.
- Increase customer service and communications with an eye toward making the entire process easier to navigate.

The Unemployment Agency New Solutions Report goes in-depth into the suggested changes to the system.

Judge Grants Injunction: Dues Can Continue to Be Collected By School Districts

On June 11, 2012, Federal District Court Judge **Denise Hood** issued her order enjoining enforcement of Michigan's PA 53, which sought to end deduction of dues and fees from public school employee paychecks. It is a very complete win for the union plaintiffs; the Judge finds a likelihood of success on both equal protection and first amendment claims. Read more of the story and the injunction itself at: <http://www.seiu517m.org/2012/06/19/school-employees-retain-their-voice-on-the-job/>

"Home Grown" Candidates Run for State House

SEIU Local 517M and the SEIU Michigan State Council have recommended several candidates for state house races that have SEIU ties. In the 67th House District, we are supporting retired SEIU Local 517M Technical Unit President **Jerry Ketchum**. He is running in a three person primary. In the 68th House District, we are supporting retired SEIU Local 517M Scientific and Engineering Unit member **Dale Copedge**. In the 65th House District, SEIU is supporting retired Michigan Corrections Organization (SEIU Local 526M) member **Bonnie Johnson**. SEIU has encouraged members to get involved and run for office. Who better would know the issues of working families than those workers themselves? Please consider these candidates when you go to the polls on the August 7th primary.

Technical Unit Overtime Balancing Update

There has been much confusion regarding the overtime balancing units within MDOT for our Transportation Technicians. After discussion within the Technical Unit Leadership and MDOT the following agreement was reached;

For the remainder of this calendar year (2012) overtime will be balanced with all 11 level technicians and below at a work site. Commencing January 1, 2013 overtime will be balanced with all 11 and 12 level technicians, and 8 thru 10 level technicians at a work site (as in previous years).

HSS Unit Steward Election Results

The Human Services Support unit held elections for Stewards and Alternate Stewards in the month of June. On June 29th the ballots were tallied. See the results at: <http://www.seiu517m.org/2012/06/29/hss-steward-election-results/>

Beacon Harbor Members Ratify New Three-Year Contract

On Friday, June 15, 2012, Beacon Harbor Members ratified a new Three-Year agreement. The unit consists of 46 members working in Type A Group Homes in the private sector across the state. The membership voted 22 Yes, 1 No, in favor of the agreement. There was also 1 spoiled ballot. Highlights of the Agreement include a pay increase in 2013, Independence Day as a paid holiday, and a Letter of Understanding addressing any wage pass-throughs the employer may receive.

City of Charlotte Members Ratify New Contract

On June 18, 2012, the SEIU517M members working for the City of Charlotte ratified a new three-year agreement with the Employer. The vote was 11 Yes to 2 No votes. The Agreement now goes before the Charlotte City Council for approval. Highlights of the Agreement included a lump sum payment in the first year with percentage wage increases in the remaining two years; minor increase in On-Call pay; and, because the Insurance costs were under the legislated hard cap we maintained 100% employer paid healthcare.

SEIU International Convention Resolutions and Constitution Changes

The 2012 SEIU International Convention was held May 26-28th in Denver. Several notable actions and the complete set of Resolutions and Constitution changes that were approved at the convention are posted on the SEIU Local 517M website at: <http://www.seiu517m.org/2012/05/30/2012-seiu-convention-updates/>

Bargaining Completed For Four Region 1 Contracts



On May 12, 2012, the SPSD Sodexo Magic Food Service unit ratified a three year contract. The Employer agreed to an 80/20 health insurance plan and the employee will receive a .20 cent per hour wage increase each year of the contract term.

(Pictured left: Saginaw ISD Associate Teacher Connie Gray casts her vote in the ratification election.)

The Saginaw ISD Headstart unit ratified a two year contract agreement on June 8, 2012. This unit received a .72 cent cost of living increase and reached a package deal to recall the six most senior laid-off employees back to work at the beginning of the school year 2012-2013.

The Sodexo Flint Beecher Schools Food Service unit tentatively agreed to a three year contract on June 18, 2012 with a percentage across the board wage increase for each year of the contract. A ratification vote for this tentative agreement is scheduled for June 28, 2012.

The Bay City Schools Monitors chapter unit ratified a one year contract agreement on June 18, 2012. Due to budget deficits, the chapter unit members received two more personal sick leave days instead of receiving a percentage wage increase.



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