

SEIU Local 517M

Michigan Public Employees



SEIU Local 517M E-Former

October 2012 Edition

Lead, Unite, Fight – Win For the 99%!

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A Run Down of the November 6th Ballot Proposals

There is a description of the November 6th ballot proposals available on our website at:
<http://www.seiu517m.org/files/2012/10/Ballot-voting-guide.pdf>

PA 300 Temporary Restraining Order Granted

On September 4, 2012, Governor Snyder signed SB 1040 into law to become PA 300. The law changes, among other things, the pension plan healthcare provisions for school employees. Within hours of the signing, Judge **Rosemarie Acquilina** granted a temporary restraining order removing the October 26 deadline for employees to make decisions, stating that it was unreasonable. Thus, as of now, there is no legal "end date". She also ruled that if the law is struck down at a future date, then employees should have their contributions restored. The state is appealing these rulings and the Court of Appeals asked for briefs by September 18. Updates will follow when available on our website.

Labor in Action

by Phillip Patrick, Executive Director



To all SEIU members:

The time is drawing near for all of us to involve ourselves in the upcoming election process taking place on Tuesday, November 6, 2012. In particular, this year each one of us has to consider this an enormous opportunity to make essential decisions that will affect every one of us for years to come. SEIU Local 517M leadership has

been working diligently to inform, engage, and activate members in the election process in a number of ways. Our goals include providing as much information to our members as possible so we all can enter our respective polling places as knowledgeable voters. The outcome of this election is critically important to the future direction our organization must take as we move into calendar year 2013 and beyond.

Working families have taken a literal lambasting by right-wing extremists at both the national and local levels. The core functions of the labor movement are being challenged on an ongoing basis. Our strategic plans and actions as labor advocates must demonstrate steadfast resolve in how we protect our vision of what a just society looks like. The nature of our victories only allows us to take minimal time for appreciating those moments because another battle is looming ahead. We can define our own future as working families by the decisions we make in this election. The choice of casting a vote to protect the interests of working families is crystal clear between what the country's current economic policies have brought to financially challenged citizens and the promise of the GOP's unconcern for "middle-class" Americans.

As many of you already know, our local has taken a significant loss with the recent layoffs in the Unemployment Insurance Agency and Michigan Rehabilitation Services Unit of more than 300 members. SEIU is fighting back by drawing significant media and legislative attention to the misguided decisions public sector administrators have made to deny Michigan citizens of the vital services our members provide to these most vulnerable residents. As our Michigan economy continues to recover from the Great Recession, now is not the time to place additional burdens on working families by adding to the slowly diminishing unemployed and increasing underemployed population in our state. Further, the services provided by MRS are directed toward persons with disabilities who will be left to fend for themselves in a job market that is still on the mend.

I am pleased to report the **actions** Local 517M are currently involved in leading up to the November 6th election. We have dedicated many of our staff and elected representatives to work directly with business, community, and faith leader partners in voter registration, voter suppression, and Get-Out-The-Vote (GOTV) campaigns. We are continuing to engage Local 517M members through our Member Leadership in Action program with respect to leadership development training and improving union growth opportunities for our membership through targeted organizing strategies. Our representatives will also be coordinating with SEIU International staff and others on "Labor 2012" and "Protect Working Families" ballot initiatives. We will continue to post vital information on our Local 517M website; www.seiu517m.org regarding relevant actions leading up to the election. Check out the web page regularly to get the latest information of union endeavors. Additionally, our local is pressing forward on the legal front with lawsuits filed on behalf of public division members as well as school and local government members. Regular updates of information will be made available to everyone as these legal processes move through the courts. It is important to keep in mind that legal procedures can be long and arduous undertakings.

It is imperative that every member of this local take a stand in this year's election process. Exercise your voice and send a message to legislators by letting them know what your vision is for your family and your community. Waiting for someone else to do it for you is not the best strategy. We will need volunteers in the weeks leading up to the November election. Your representatives will be contacting you soon. **Get involved now! This is YOUR Union!**

Court Rules State 4% Retirement Contribution Unconstitutional

On Tuesday, September 25, 2012, Court of Claims Judge **Joyce Draganchuk** ruled that the 4% pension contribution imposed by the Michigan Legislature on state employees is

unconstitutional. The State violated the Michigan Constitution by passing changes to the State Employee Retirement System that required a 4% employee contribution in order to stay in the defined benefit retirement plan. These changes were made outside of the authority of the Legislature. The Michigan Civil Service Commission is vested in the Michigan Constitution to have authority over compensation matters for all state employees. Read more specifics from the decision at: <http://www.seiu517m.org/2012/09/28/4-state-employee-retirement-contribution-is-unconstitutional/>

Information on October Wage Increase for State Employees and 401k Option

SEIU members will receive a 1% base wage increase in their November 8th paycheck. In addition they will receive a 1% lump sum payment based upon their wages earned during fiscal year 2012.

Your Human Resources office may have sent you the attached information on how to adjust your 401k or 457 contribution amount in order to deposit your 1% lump sum payment into your 401k or 457 account. You must make the change AFTER October 11, 2012 BUT PRIOR TO October 25, 2012 at 4:00 p.m. in order to deposit the lump sum payment. To adjust the contribution amount back to your original contribution amount you must change back AFTER October 25, 2012 BUT PRIOR TO November 8, 2012. There is also a spreadsheet available with examples and a calculator to use in order to estimate the necessary adjustment. If you have any questions, please contact the SEIU Office at 517-482-1737. View calculation spreadsheet here: <https://dl.dropbox.com/u/76667689/401k%20lump%20sum%20spread%20sheet.xlsx>

Voter Registration Period Ends October 9th

The NAACP has created a voter registration project called This Is My Vote. It is open to anyone to register them to vote and discusses what a person would need to take with them to the polls in Michigan. In order to vote in the November 6th election, you need to be registered by Tuesday, October 9th! To view the Michigan specific information and to register to vote, click on: <http://www.thisismyvote.org/state/protect-your-voting-rights-Michigan>

Technical Division Elections

Requests for nominations for the SEIU 517 M Technical Division Board of Directors, as well as the Technical Division Secretary/Treasurer were published to the total Technical Division membership on August 14, 2012. The deadline for candidates to submit petition forms in to the Local to run for office was September 4, 2012.

We received timely candidate petition forms from the following:

Secretary/Treasurer - **Mike Mandrick**
Chapter 1 President - **Paul Dumonthier**
Chapter 1 Vice President - **James Waara**
Chapter 3 President - **Steve Ludwick**
Chapter 8 President - **Robert Smrek**
Chapter 13 President - **Arnold Beller**

Since these candidates were unopposed they are considered automatically elected. The terms of office are for three years beginning November 1, 2012.

No timely candidate petition forms submitted for the following Chapters:

Chapter 2; Chapter 4; Chapter 5; Chapter 6, Chapter 7; Chapter 9; Chapter 10; Chapter 11; Chapter 12; and Chapter 14.

President **George Heath** will appoint Presidents for each of those chapters, subject to approval by the Board of Directors at the Technical Division Board meeting on October 18, 2012.

If you are interested in being considered for one of the Chapter appointments, please contact President George Heath at heathg5459@yahoo.com or **Cheryl Bollinger** at cbollinger@seiu517m.org. YOUR REQUEST TO BE APPOINTED MUST BE RECEIVED BY OCTOBER 9, 2012.

State Rep. Offers Funding Assistance to Retain HSS Members

State Representative **Richard LeBlanc** (D-Westland) recently wrote a letter to the Director of the Michigan Department of Human Services offering assistance in securing additional funding for the Michigan Rehabilitation Services Program. This program experienced layoffs of SEIU Local 517M members due to lack of funding on September 28th. The program receives federal matching funds at a rate of \$4 federal to every \$1 of state funds. View the letter at: <http://www.seiu517m.org/files/2012/10/LeBlancltr.pdf>

Retiree Education and Excursion Programs

By Mary Charley, Retiree Liaison

The SEIU 517M Retiree Group will be welcoming Mr. **Raymond Kamalay** from Lansing Community College (LCC) to our next meeting to discuss the community education courses/excursions for retirees and friends. The next scheduled excursion is a fall color tour on October 5th-7th, 2012. More information is available at: <http://www.seiu517m.org/2012/09/19/retiree-excursions-and-education-courses/>

The Decline of Collective Bargaining and Michigan's Middle Class

Yet another report verifies that the erosion of collective bargaining contributes to the decline of the middle class. The [Economic Policy Institute](http://www.epi.org) on Tuesday released a report showing that in Michigan, like in the rest of the country, the key dynamic driving income disparity between the richest 1% and the 99% has been that median worker income has not kept pace with growth in worker productivity.

In other words, workers are more productive, but the benefits of that productivity have concentrated at the top. The redistribution of income to the wealthiest households has correlated with decreased union density and erosion of collective bargaining, according to the report. Download the report at: <http://www.epi.org/files/2012/bp347-collective-bargaining.pdf>

School Retirement Study Commissioned

On September 4, 2012, Governor Snyder signed SB 1040 into law which became Public Act 300

(also see earlier story above "PA 300 Temporary Restraining Order Granted".) A component of the legislation was the commissioning of a study to research the advantages and disadvantages of closing the hybrid MPERS system and replacing it with a 401(k)-style defined contribution system for all school employees.

The winner of the bid was the Segal Company based in Chicago. They are a private consulting firm that specializes in benefit consulting.

The report is due to the Legislature by November 15, 2012.

Detroit AFRAM Report

The Detroit Area AFRAM group has several events scheduled this fall. There will be a Hat and Glove Drive starting October 15th and running until October 31st. A Thanksgiving Canned Food Drive will be held between November 1st and November 15th. A skating party will be held on November 11th at the Northland Skating Rink from 4:30pm-6:30pm at a cost of \$5.00 with skate rental available for additional fee. Adopt-a-Family donations will be accepted between November 26th and December 14th.

The Detroit AFRAM meetings will be held from 5:30 - 6:30 p.m. on the following dates: October 11th and 25th, November 8th and 21st, December 6th and 20th.

Please look for flyers on the Union Boards. If you need any additional information please contact the Detroit Union office at 313-456-2911, **Joey Combs** at 313-443-7846, or **Antonia Currington** at 313-522-3973 or email at detroitafram@seiu517m.org.



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