

## SEIU Local 517M E-Former – February 2016 Edition

*Lead, Unite, Fight – Win For the 99%!*

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### **The Fight for \$15 Goes to Washington**



The January 11, 2016 action at the US Supreme Court surrounding the Friedrichs vs California Teachers Association case was a very high energy affair. Voices across SEIU and the Fight for \$15 came together to prepare for the potential fall-out from the decision. Members, activists, and staff studied the details of the case and the forces that are behind this most recent attempt to turn the whole country "right to work." Interestingly, the organizations backing the plaintiffs were not just big moneyed interests like the Koch brothers, but groups like the Pioneer Fund that is a known hate group and white nationalist organization. Due to

517M's unique situation of being in a "right to work" state, our members provided valuable insight to our brothers and sisters in SEIU on how to survive in the "right to work" environment if it should come to their states.

The rally itself outside of the U.S. Supreme Court was galvanizing and it felt as if you were part of history in the making. We outnumbered our opposition by a wide margin and the opposition's message was scattered and incoherent. The truth of the matter is that once you cut through the rhetoric and lies, it becomes clear that tis case is a deliberate attack on working people and our very way of life. We carried this message to the steps of the Supreme Court and are awaiting a final decision by the justices.

For some background on the Friedrichs case, the suit is a challenge to agency fees paid by those who are not members of the union but are still covered by the collective bargaining agreement that is negotiated and administered by the union.

### **Mackinac Center Protested for Union Stance**



The Mackinac Center, an anti-worker front group, recently argued before the U.S. Supreme Court that workers should be limited when it comes to having a voice in the workplace. In response, members of 517M joined with allies to protest outside the Mackinac Center's headquarters in Midland.

Despite the cold, our members stood strong to call attention to the latest

attack on our rights to organize. Congratulations to our member **Amy Davis-Comstock** who spoke to the media about the issue. Her quote is below:

"Once again our corporations are trying to take over our Legislature and our elected and appointed officials by pushing personal agendas disseminated by the Mackinac Center. These think tanks come up with ideas about how the rich get richer while the rest of us get the crumbs. These types of cases could take away more of our voices in the workplace."

### **Lobby Day 2016 Save the Date!**



The SEIU Local 517M COPE Committee would like you to save April 13, 2016 as the day set aside to speak with our legislators in Lansing. Be sure to request that date off so you can attend this vital and interesting event. The Union will schedule appointments for you to meet with senators and representatives. Lunch is also provided for you, the legislators, and their staff. If there are hearings or legislation that is being voted on, you will get a chance to watch the proceedings. It is a great way to be a part of the process that

affects all of us – both at home and on the job. April 13<sup>th</sup> is closer than you think, so request the time off today! *(Pictured: HSS Grievance Coordinator Denise Edwards speaks with Senator Morris Hood at Lobby Day)*

### **Convention Volunteers Needed to be Part of the Quadrennial SEIU International Convention at Cobo Hall**

The 2016 SEIU International Convention is coming to Michigan. It will take place May 17-24 in downtown Detroit at Cobo Center. Thousands of SEIU members from the United States, Canada and Puerto Rico will come and shape the direction of SEIU for the next four years.

With that many members coming into the Detroit area, there is a need for local area members to help guide the influx of members at the airport and hotels and at Cobo Hall during the convention. If you are interested in being a volunteer to work the week prior to the convention and help with arriving members, please contact the SEIU Local 517M office at: [seiu517m@hotmail.com](mailto:seiu517m@hotmail.com). We will get in contact with you about the opportunities and expectations of the positions.

## State Privatizes Migrant Workers Program

On October 26, 2015, the union and the migrant service workers (MSW) were notified they would be laid off effective December 4, 2015. The Agricultural Employment Services Program was a part of the Workforce Development Agency for the State of Michigan. Union leadership held several conference calls with the staff to address their concerns and push the State to provide resume and job search services. The MSW worked out of various Michigan Works offices throughout Michigan. The job functions were moved from the State of Michigan to local Michigan Works Agencies. There was a luncheon held on December 4, 2015 for all of these members and the next steps the Union would take were discussed.

The Union currently has a Freedom of Information Act request regarding the decision to privatize this work in violation of the 1973 Judge Richey court order and the 1992 Judge Robert Holmes Bell decision preventing privatization. The Union has also lodged a formal complaint with USDOL – Employment Training Agency that oversees this federal program.

## Update on Hat and Glove Drive in Saginaw

Some of the Head Start sites in Saginaw had children who didn't have winter hats and gloves. Members from the City of Saginaw agreed they could do something about it and filled two boxes with hats, mittens, gloves, and scarves. On a bitter cold January day, the donated items were delivered to one of the Head Start sites. The donations were dropped off and distributed with the assistance of the Region 1 President, **Betty Smith (Nash)**. Children in several classrooms sang songs to show their appreciation for their new hats, mittens, glove, and scarves. A teacher in one of the classrooms explained how the children played outside in the snow with pails and shovels, making castles in the snow. The new gloves, mittens and hats will be put to good use by the boys and girls.

The children were so grateful they made a card for the members from the City of Saginaw. The card was presented by Betty Smith to the President of the City of Saginaw chapter, **Leticia Trevino**. While handing out the items at Brunkow Head Start school, it was brought to the attention of Human Services Support unit member, **Amy Davis-Comstock**, that one of the children didn't have a winter coat that zipped up. Amy and fellow member, **Ronda Brandimore**, bought a coat for him the very next day. The new coat is warm, matched his new hat and gloves, and best of all – there's room for him to grow!



## SEIU 517M Text Message Contest Winner Announced

Over the course of 2015, SEIU Local 517M held a contest to gather member text message permissions so that we can communicate more effectively with the membership. A winner was drawn at random from those members who participated in the contest every month to win the \$100 gift card. The grand prize winner is **Thomas Simpson**. Thomas works for the State of Michigan in Lansing. Congratulations to Thomas and thanks to all those who participated this past year!

## State Fails Implementing Veteran's Preference Rights



On December 16, 2015, during the Civil Service Commission meeting public comments period, Human Services Support Unit President **Joey Combs** read into the record a letter regarding the lack of state departments using veterans preference in hiring. Civil Service Regulation 3.8 establishes Veterans Preference in hiring but the State does not currently enforce this regulation in departmental hiring. We called for a meeting with the State

Personnel Director to which she acquiesced and a meeting will occur this month. [Pictured: HSS President Joey Combs and SEIU 517M President George Heath address the Civil Service Commission]

## New Executive Board Members Sworn in



New SEIU Local 517M Executive Board Members **Renee Wines** and **Jack Giraud** were sworn into their elected offices by SEIU Local 517M President **George Heath** (pictured left) at the January 22, 2016 SEIU Local 517M Executive Board meeting in Lansing. Renee represents the School and Local Government Region 2 from the Bangor School District and Jack represents the School and Local Government Region 3 from the Taylor School

District.

## From The Archives: A Lesson in Labor History from the Reuther Library As We Prepare to Host the SEIU International Convention



*Gavin Strassel is the SEIU Archivist at the Walter P. Reuther Library of Labor and Urban Affairs at Wayne State University, the official repository for SEIU and the largest labor archives in North America. If you are interested in performing research with the SEIU collections, please contact Gavin at [strassel@wayne.edu](mailto:strassel@wayne.edu).*

To learn more about SEIU and Michigan labor history click here: <http://reuther.wayne.edu/index.php>

## William F. Quesse, SEIU's First President



89 year ago this month, SEIU's founding father **William Quesse** (1878-1927) pictured left, passed away unexpectedly while serving as the union's first president. Quesse led Building Service Employees International Union (BSEIU) for decades, overcoming competing interests and police sabotage to create a functioning national union for building workers. Perhaps his greatest contribution was challenging the public's preconceived notions of janitorial work, emphasizing professionalism and janitors' vital contributions to public health and safety. Following in Quesse's tradition, SEIU continues to bring greater dignity and satisfaction to service workers in a wide range of industries. Quesse came from a modest background and even suffered mental health issues before becoming president, but he would not let

anything stop him from serving the labor movement. His work to create a stable union that would organize and represent building workers stands as a testament to the extraordinary things individuals can accomplish when they stand up for the cause of labor.

## Members Adopt a Family for Holidays

SEIU 517M members in the Grand Haven Area Public Schools participated in the 'Adopt-a-Family' program over the holiday season. Because of the generosity of our members, a total of eight families and twenty-one children had their season brightened. Each family received a box with food, clothes, coloring books and a gift card so that the children could pick out a gift.

This was the first year the Local 517M union members from Grand Haven Schools participated in the program but after the generous outpouring and the response by those helped, it most likely won't be the last.

Read more about your sisters and brothers here: <http://www.grandhaventribune.com/Charities-Fundraisers/2015/12/30/Brightening-the-holiday-season.html?ci=stream&lp=8&p=1>

## SEIU Scholarship Deadline is Looming!

The SEIU Scholarship Program is now active for 2016. This Members Only benefit is open to SEIU members or their children. To be eligible to apply for any SEIU scholarship, membership must be for three continuous years as of September 1, 2015. All scholarships must be for the academic year(s) awarded. Scholarships will be granted without regard to the sex, race, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, age, or disability of any applicant. Scholarships are limited to one per household. Last year, Local 517M had 1 winner.

Officers and employees of the International Union and their children are not eligible. Graduate students are not eligible.

### Key Points

- Applications are available starting December 1, 2015.
- Applications should be filed online. See the individual scholarship information below for instructions. Applications can also be mailed to SEIU (name of scholarship), ISTS, 1321 Murfreesboro Road, Suite 800, Nashville, TN 37217.
- Applications must be postmarked or filed online by midnight March 3, 2016.

- Winners will be notified in late spring and announced on [www.seiu.org/scholarships](http://www.seiu.org/scholarships) in the fall of 2016.

Scholarships that are available:

**SEIU Lottery Scholarships** - \$1,000 scholarships renewable for up to four years as well as \$1,500 scholarships for one year of study. Apply at: <http://aim.applyists/seiu>

**SEIU JJ Johnson Scholarship** – One \$5,000 scholarship renewable for up to four years is given to a student whose work and aspirations for economic and social justice reflect the values and accomplishments of **JJ Johnson**, former president of SEIU Local 617 in New Jersey and one of the founding members of SEIU's African American Caucus (AFRAM). Apply at: <http://aim.applyists/jj>

**SEIU Moe Foner Scholarship** – **Moe Foner** founded Bread and Roses, a cultural program for union members. One \$5,000 nonrenewable scholarship is available to students who are pursuing a degree or training in the visual or performing arts, and who, like Moe, believe the arts are a vehicle to advance social change. Apply at: <http://aim.applyists.net/mf>

**SEIU Nora Piore Scholarship** – **Nora Piore** worked as a union organizer, labor educator, college professor, healthcare economist and healthcare activist who changed the face of public health in the United States. The scholarship is made possible by an endowment by her family. It is for \$4,000 and is renewable for up to two years. Apply at: <http://aim.applyists.net/np>

## Got a Healthcare Tax Document? What You Need to Know

The Office of Financial Management recently sent out a tax related communication to state employees regarding IRS form 1095-C. If you received one, or if you get one, here is what you should know:

*Form 1095-C is for taxpayers who have Employer-Provided Health Insurance Offer and Coverage. Certain employers send this form to certain employees, with information about what coverage the employer offered. Employers that offer health coverage referred to as "self-insured coverage" send this form to individuals they cover, with information about who was covered and when.*

You **DO NOT** need this form to file your taxes. For more information click here:

<https://www.irs.gov/Affordable-Care-Act/Questions-and-Answers-about-Health-Care-Information-Forms-for-Individuals>

## Calendar of Upcoming Union Events for February, 2016

February 3: Mott Community College PSO Meeting  
February 8: Scientific and Engineering Unit Board Meeting  
February 9: HSS Member Meeting at Lansing RICC  
February 11: Technical Unit Board Meeting  
February 18: HSS Unit Meeting at Lansing PRO  
February 21-22: Steward Training  
February 25: HSS Unit Meeting at Cadillac Place

For more information on the above events, consult our on-line calendar at:

<http://www.seiu517m.org/events/month/>

*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.*

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