

# SEIU Local 517M

Michigan Public Employees

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



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### SEIU International Convention Recap – Unstoppable in Detroit!



Detroit's Cobo Center was the site of the 2016 SEIU International Convention held on May 22-24, 2016. Around 3,000 delegates and guests from across the United States, Canada, and Puerto Rico came to elect our Union's leadership and decide the direction of the International for the next four years. There were

also representatives from unions in other countries that came to speak on behalf of various campaigns that SEIU has partnered with.

You can watch President Henry's opening remarks here:

<https://www.facebook.com/SEIU/videos/10153444599332680/>

**Mary Kay Henry** was re-elected as International President while **Gerry Hudson** was elected Secretary/Treasurer replacing the retiring **Michael Fishman**. International Executive Vice President **Eileen Kirlin** who headed the Public Services Division of SEIU for many years is also retiring. **Heather Conroy** from Local 503 in Oregon was elected to replace her as Executive Vice President.





On Saturday before the convention began attendees attended breakout sessions based on their Division. Local 517M's own **Brenda Greene** President of the Flint Community Schools Paraprofessional Unit (pictured left) spoke at the Public Division breakout, welcomed the delegates to Michigan and spoke about the social and political environment in Michigan.

Democratic Presidential Candidate **Hillary Clinton** (pictured right) came and spoke to the convention on Monday afternoon. Huge ovations

came during her speech when she stated "America needs a raise" in reference to our Fight for \$15 campaign and "Right to Work is wrong for workers and America" understanding the fact Michigan is now a Right to Work state.

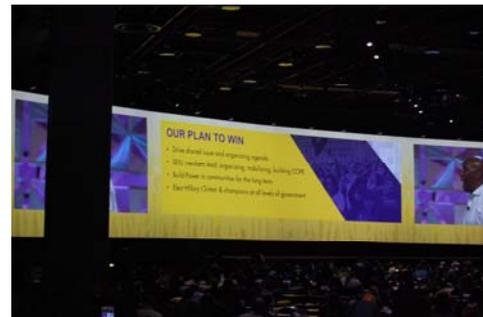


Many resolutions were passed on a wide variety of topics and will help shape the direction of the International for the next four years. Summaries of these resolutions are:

- **Innovate to Strengthen and Transform Our Union to Win** (Resolution 103A): We will develop strategies to innovate in our work, advance in our use of technology and establish an Innovation Center to support these efforts at all levels.

- **Leadership to Build New Power for Working People** (Resolution 105A): SEIU locals will create leadership development plans for all levels of leaders with goals to include organizational equity and inclusion, track data in conjunction with the International Union, and identify and develop leaders under 35.

- **To Win Economic Justice for Working People, We Must Win Racial Justice** (Resolution 106A): SEIU will "establish an anchor and leadership oversight to prioritize, support, and drive the continued education and engagement process and implementation of ending anti-Black and structural racism" and expand our work such that we engage not only on income inequality, but wealth inequality as well, and on criminal justice reform. We will develop partnerships to build power in Black communities.



- **Environmental Justice for Working People** (Resolution 108A): We will "join the fight to make clean air and water a human right, for environmental justice in all communities, and to combat climate change" while demanding a "just transition for all workers and communities whose lives and livelihoods will be impacted" by reduced dependence on fossil fuels. We will support infrastructure investment to prevent the next Flint.

- **National Strategy to Win: Building Power in States and Provinces** (Resolution 109A): We will focus on building power in the states and provinces which, when combined with our industry power, will enable SEIU to win on scale. Every state and province will operate from a comprehensive, long-term plan.

- **Transforming Government for Working Families** (Resolution 110A): We will move to shape the political debate and hold elected officials accountable, pushing back on the "assault on the proper role of government" and demanding a well-funded, effective public sector.

- **Transforming Capital to Win for Working People** (Resolution 111A): We will challenge corporations and markets to "adopt democratic reforms, address structural racism and commit to long-term value creation," expand our diverse group of member-leaders to lead our pension funds, and create a "council of economic advisors" who are equipped to evaluate and critique the current system and envision alternatives.

- **Retirement Security for All Working People** (Resolution 112A): We will work with allies to develop a national program to strengthen Social Security and the Canada Pension Plan. We will fight for the inclusion in Social Security of working people who have historically been excluded.

- **Winning Economic and Social Justice for Puerto Rico** (Resolution 114A): SEIU Puerto Rico will "create the necessary power needed to reclaim the economy," calling on the U.S. government to "accept moral responsibility for restructuring Puerto Rico's debt in a way that is fair to Puerto Ricans." We call for the release from prison of Oscar Lopez Rivera.

- **Healthcare is a Human Right** (Resolution 205A): SEIU will support, defend and promote the Affordable Care Act while joining with allies to advocate for a national single-payer healthcare system in the United States that recognizes healthcare as a human right with comprehensive benefits and a single standard of care.



- **Healthcare Justice for All** (Resolution 224): We will fight to improve quality, access and affordability within the Affordable Care Act, engage healthcare members to be "active leaders on quality improvement," fight for a more just long term care system, and develop union-wide health and safety member leaders in action.

- **Building a Wider Movement to Create a Just Society** (Resolution 102A): We will build a wider movement for justice by—among other strategies—aligning resources and linking the fights for "economic, racial, immigrant and climate justice, women's reproductive rights and equality for women, Native Americans and First Nations people, people with disabilities and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people," while continuing the fight on each issue.

- **Organizing to Build Power: Growing Our Membership and Creating New Forms of Organization** (Resolution 101): We will start campaigns and organizations that build power; create a Fight for \$15 Organizing Campaign Center; align global organizing with the union-wide organizing plan; and "align Unity Funds and Local Union 20 percent to the union-wide organizing plan."

- **Immigrant Justice** (Resolution 107): In the fight for commonsense immigration reform, SEIU will build momentum for federal legislation, drive policy victories at the state and local level, mobilize the Latino, Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI), African and Caribbean electorate, and build public support for reform.

- **National Retiree Program** (Resolution 113): We will recommit ourselves to building a powerful SEIU Retiree program, providing an opportunity for retirees to remain active in the union "by developing a program that meets their needs and interests." We will empower retirees to become a formidable electoral force.

- **Building a Better Future for Working Families: 2016 to 2018 Plan to Win** (Resolution 104A): We will inject our agenda into the 2016 campaign, elect Hillary Clinton and champions for working families at all levels of government, grow SEIU-COPE and build infrastructure for accountability in 2017 and beyond.

- **AFSCME and SEIU: Unstoppable Unions that Never Quit** (Resolution 115): AFSCME and SEIU will establish the common goals of innovating within labor, including innovating in collective bargaining; exploring new forms of worker organization; expanding organizing; and leading in the wider movement for social and economic justice. We will "deepen our collaboration and work more closely together at every level" by establishing "unity partnerships" and creating a joint committee to foster collaboration.
- **Equality For All Working People** (Resolution 116): We will support efforts to ensure LGBTIQ individuals and families cannot be fired, denied governmental services or access to education, or be turned away from public accommodations in the United States or Canada, and we will develop a strategic plan to combat discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.
- **We Are Unstoppable: Our Program to Win for Working People** (Resolution 117): SEIU will commit to three core strategies: creating the next forms of worker organization, building a wider movement around our common struggle for economic, racial, immigrant and environmental justice, and innovating in our union so we can use our collective strength to win for our families and communities.



At the convention, Local 517M Executive Director **Liza Estlund Olson** (center of picture) was also elected to serve on the SEIU Board of Auditors.

A special thank you goes out to the Local 517M members and staff who volunteered to work the convention.

## Flint Was a Focal Point of the SEIU Convention



As delegates gathered in Detroit for the 2016 SEIU International Convention, activities were being carried out in Flint. Three buses of delegates drove to Flint on the Friday before the convention and another bus from Healthcare Illinois and Indiana (HCII) came Saturday, to put together food packages and donate food for SEIU members in Flint.



Volunteers put together 297 food packages that SEIU members picked up later that day. The foods contained in these packages were selected based on recommendations from the health department for their usefulness in combating the effects of lead and for general hygiene use.

The AFRAM Caucus of SEIU was the organizer of this community action. **Andy Johnson** who is on staff with Local 517M from Region 2 and is the AFRAM Central Region President was the main organizer of the event.

Several elected officials were on hand including State Representative **Sheldon Neeley**, State Senator **Jim Ananich**, and Congressman **Dan Kildee**.

A big thank you goes out to our member **Brenda Greene** of the Flint Community Schools Para-Professional Unit who arranged for the activity to be held at the Saints of God Church in Flint.



## Human Services Support Unit Steward Election Coming in June

Interested in becoming a Steward or an Alternate Steward or know someone who would be The nomination and election process for HSS Stewards and Alternate Stewards will begin on June 6th and ends with the tallying of the votes on June 30<sup>th</sup>. Results will be in the July 1<sup>st</sup> E-Former. In order to make a nomination or vote you must be in dues-paying status as of pay period ending May 21, 2016. In order to run for Steward or Alternate Steward you must be in dues-paying status for one year.

A separate email will be sent when voting for the Stewards and Alternate Stewards has been made available online.

Position information, duties, election time frames and nomination forms are available at: <http://www.seiu517m.org/?p=3856>

Since our Stewards and Alternate Stewards fulfill such an important role it is equally important that all of us make our voices heard by voting for those who will represent us. Thank you in advance for your participation!

## Leader Recognized for Community Work



Technical Unit President **Arnie Beller** was recognized at the Friday, May 21<sup>st</sup> Detroit Tiger baseball game on Polish American Day for his community work. Arnie has been the Executive Secretary of American Polish Century Club for 10 years and Festival Chairman of the American Polish Festival for 11 years. The 2016 festival will take place July 8-10, 2016 in Sterling Heights.

## SEIU Local 517M Golf Outing Slated for August 12th



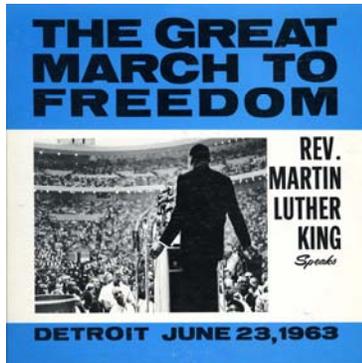
The annual SEIU Local 517M golf outing will be held on Friday, August 12, 2016 at the Wheatfield Valley Golf Course in Williamston. The 4-person scramble will start with registration at 8:00 a.m. and shotgun start at 9:00 a.m. Registration cost is \$240 per foursome. The registration form and information is available at: <http://www.seiu517m.org/wp-content/blogs.dir/40/files/2016/03/Golf-outing-flyer.pdf>

## From The Archives: A Lesson in Labor History from the Reuther Library

### History Repeating Itself: Civil Rights and the Labor Movement

By Gavin Strassel, SEIU Archivist

The delegates at SEIU's international convention in Detroit last month reaffirmed the necessary commitment to civil rights in the labor movement, adopting Resolution 106A, (*To Win Economic Justice for Working People, We Must Win Racial Justice*). What many may not have realized was



how closely these events paralleled another historic moment for civil rights decades earlier. On June 23, 1963, **Martin Luther King, Jr.** traveled to Detroit, advocating for his civil rights agenda and debuting his "I Have a Dream" speech, made iconic at the *March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom*. The event took place almost 53 years to the day before SEIU's own measure on racial justice. King's speech at Cobo Hall (now Cobo Center), was delivered in the same location as the SEIU convention. Most strikingly, both events inextricably linked racial and economic justice. (Pictured Left: Album cover of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s speech at Cobo Hall, released by Motown Records in 1963.

<http://reuther.wayne.edu/node/7856>)

In 2016, SEIU formally embraced the Black Lives Matter movement, while King made a point to walk the streets of Detroit arm-in-arm with labor leaders like UAW president **Walter Reuther**. When SEIU's resolution 106A states that "we simply cannot achieve economic justice without racial justice", it reflects King's solidarity with Memphis sanitation workers. Though many differences exist between the events and culture of the two eras, it is difficult to ignore the meaningful ways history repeats itself. Visit the website of the Walter P. Reuther Library (<http://reuther.wayne.edu>) to learn more about the SEIU archives and Martin Luther King's actions in Detroit. (Pictured Right: Martin Luther King, Jr. meeting with members of BSEIU Local 399, Los Angeles. Circa 1960s.)



*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>

## Unions Matter

By Tom Perez, Secretary of Labor

We've entered the final year of the Obama presidency, a time when we're taking a look at all we've accomplished and what we want to do before the clock runs out. There's no denying that we've made a lot of progress.

In the three months before President Obama took office, our economy shed 2 million jobs—today we're in the midst of the longest streak of private sector job growth in history, with 14 million jobs created. The unemployment rate was skyrocketing and eventually hit 10 percent—now it's down to 5 percent. When the president took office, more than 600,000 laid-off workers were applying for unemployment insurance benefits each week—today that number has been 300,000 or less for the longest stretch since 1973.

But this president is not running a victory lap in the final year. We still have some unfinished business to address. This recovery won't be complete until every American can share in the prosperity being created. Perhaps one of the most pressing domestic issues we face today is the growing gap between the very rich and everyone else, and the resulting erosion of the American middle class.

A lot of very intelligent people have a lot of disparate ideas about how we can address this challenge—but there's one fact that shouldn't be up for debate: union membership boosts the incomes of workers and their families, provides workers with critical benefits—like health care, retirement security and job training opportunities—and helps people punch their tickets to the middle class.

We were reminded of this fact when the Bureau of Labor Statistics released its annual Union Members report on Jan. 28. It found, once again, that union workers earned about \$200 more per week than non-union workers in 2015. Let's think about that for a minute: \$200 more per week that a family could put toward quality daycare for their new baby; \$200 more per week to ensure parents can give their families three solid meals a day; \$200 more per week to give a family peace of mind that a sudden illness or accident won't push them over a financial cliff; \$200 more per week to pay for the college tuition that a kid was promised if she worked hard and aimed high; \$200 more per week to save for the secure retirement a couple deserves after decades of hard work.

But the benefits extend beyond union workers and their families—the solid, family-sustaining wages that unions secure through collective bargaining also put upward pressure on wages throughout the economy. And the protections and high standards demanded by unions influence non-union shops to lift their standards as well.

Unions reinforce the very best of American values. They restore balance to our economy. They help build stronger communities and a more robust democracy. Unions help close the gender pay gap and enhance retirement security. They make a huge difference in the income of African-American and Latino workers—in fact, African-American workers are more likely to be union members than workers from any other racial and ethnic group. In short, unions deliver better overall quality of life.

But the flip side is also true. When folks try to make it harder for workers to organize, when union density shrinks, when people aren't able to band together and negotiate with their employer, it weakens the middle class. According to the BLS report, about 12 percent of workers were represented by unions in 2015. That's a steep decline from 23 percent in 1983, the first year for which BLS has comparable data.

If you're not a union worker, you might wonder why you should care. Here's why: a recent report from the Center for American Progress found that declining union coverage accounts for more than one-third (35.1 percent) of the decline in the middle class since 1984.

As President Obama said in his State of the Union address and again during his recent trip to Detroit, we can't let attacks on collective bargaining go unanswered. Make no mistake about it: those attacks are coordinated and well-funded. They're also dishonest and relentless. They come from special interests who don't speak for a majority of Americans, but they do wield tremendous influence in the corridors of power.

At the White House, throughout the administration, in state capitals and city halls and in corporate board rooms across America, there are innovative leaders standing up to the notion that you must choose between financial success and respect for workers. That's why state and local officials are raising minimum wages for workers and expanding access to paid sick and family leave. It's why forward-looking employers are introducing workplace policies that support families and help them succeed. It's why President Obama has made retirement security a priority, worked to expand access to job training and moved the ball on equal pay for women. It's why he has called on Congress to raise the federal minimum wage and pass other measures that will improve the lives of working people. And it's why he's taken executive action where Congress has failed to act.

There are a lot of smart, well-intentioned people with great ideas about how to create an economy that works for everyone. But let's be very clear: attacking labor unions isn't one of them.

Our nation's middle class was built by the labor movement. If we want this recovery to be complete, we'll need to once again reinforce a strong American middle class, and we know of one surefire way to do it: support labor unions.

*This article was published on February 4, 2016 on medium.com.*

## **Calendar of Upcoming Union Events for June, 2016**

June 2: Chapter 16 Meeting, Con Hall, Lansing

June 9: Technical Unit Board Meeting

June 13: Scientific and Engineering Unit Board Meeting

June 23: HSS Unit Meeting at Kalamazoo DHHS

June 30: HSS Unit Meeting at Traverse City DHHS

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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