

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



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### **Hope Network New Passages Members Rally for Raises**



On November 17<sup>th</sup>, Adult Foster Care workers of SEIU Local 517M joined forces with UFCW Local 951 and OPEIU Local 459 to rally outside Hope Network's \$250/plate fundraiser honoring **Dan DeVos** and other donors to their organization. Members and their allies stood side by side to protest the company's decision to continue withholding bonuses from our members that were stolen over a year ago, despite an administrative law judge's order to pay back those bonuses with interest compounded daily. The median wage of our workers at Hope Network New Passages is \$8.90/hour and many of our members have to work multiple jobs to support their families. The low wages force many to live paycheck to paycheck and this bonus could have made the difference between making rent this month or eviction from their homes. Our members work hard for their money providing an essential social service and we rallied to demand from those who run the organization that our efforts be

treated with dignity and respect. To withhold bonuses from workers without warning and then refuse to give the bonuses back represents conduct that is unsuitable for any business, never mind a Christian non-profit. The picket was an outstanding success and it was truly inspiring to see Union brothers and sisters from across locals standing together in solidarity to lift each other up in the fight for economic justice. Our very own Local 517M President, **George Heath**, gave a rousing speech calling for an end to this unjust treatment – “They care for our community’s most vulnerable, and they should be paid enough to take care of themselves and their families, too.”



While much of the attention of the rally was focused on the stolen bonuses, members were also hoping that the rally will help end a 15-month long contract campaign. At the table, the company has largely refused to pay above the minimum wage for starting employees and has even insisted that management be able to retain the power to cut wages at will. They have even denied proposals requesting paid sick leave for all employees, despite the fact that a majority of our workers do not have paid sick leave which could put patients at risk. At the rally, we called upon Hope Network’s donors to contact CEO **Jamie Bragg-Lovejoy** if they are outraged by poverty wages, wage theft, understaffing, a lack of benefits, dangerous working conditions, and bedbug infestations, and we are asking you to do the same. Demand that Hope Network New Passages pay back the stolen bonuses and settle a fair contract with our members. Your Union brothers and sisters – and the patients they care for – deserve better.

Contact Jamie Bragg-Lovejoy, CEO of Hope Network New Passages, at 810-516-0359 or [jbragg@hopenetwork.org](mailto:jbragg@hopenetwork.org) to further discuss these issues.

### **State Employee Contracts Overwhelmingly Ratified - Heading to Civil Service Commission for Approval**

The contract ratification ballots were opened, tallied and counted by the SEIU Local 517M Election Tally Committee on Friday, November 4, 2016. The final results showed overwhelming support for the wage and healthcare benefits that were negotiated for the remaining two years of the current three-year agreements. All three bargaining units (Human Services Support, Scientific & Engineering, and Technical) passed the new agreement by over 94% in each unit. 52% of the state employee membership returned ballots.

The economic provisions of the wage and healthcare benefit reopener will commence beginning October 1, 2017, pending approval by the Civil Service Commission at their December 14<sup>th</sup> meeting.

SEIU Local 517M Executive Director **Liza Estlund Olson** stated *“Over 30 informational sessions were held across the state including the U.P. giving members the opportunity to have their questions answered. By this vote, our members overwhelmingly recognize the value and importance of having a collective bargaining agreement that gives them a say in their wages, benefits and working conditions. Their overwhelming support shows the Civil Service Commission that state employees are mindful of their responsibilities as union members, and voted their support in recognition of what was achieved by their Union.”*

Members of the Election/Tally Committee participating in the vote count were: **Joe Gabelsberger** (HSS); **Daryl Gotham** (S&E); **Tonya Heyer** (S&E); **Donna Huntzinger** (Tech); **Sonya Robinson** (HSS); **Bob Smrek** (Tech).

### **Volunteers Still Needed for New Scholarship and Golf Outing Committee**

SEIU Local 517M is establishing a scholarship program. The parameters for the new scholarship haven’t been decided. Volunteers are needed to serve on a new committee to set up the structure, criteria and awarding of this new scholarship program.

The Local 517M annual golf outing will become a fundraiser for this new scholarship fund. The committee members would also assist in the planning, fundraising and running of the golf outing which is scheduled for August 11, 2017.

We are in need of committee members to represent School and Local Government Regions 1 and 3, and also the Scientific and Engineering and Technical bargaining units. If you are interested in serving on this new committee, please contact **Dave Corrie** at [corried@seiu517m.org](mailto:corried@seiu517m.org). The committee will begin meeting sometime in January, 2017.

### **Buy American-made Toys This Holiday Season**

We have assembled a listing of toys and toy companies here in the USA! Support the companies that are based right here in America and employ American Workers. Click the link to view these lists:

<http://www.seiu517m.org/2016/11/14/buy-american-made-toys/>

### **Calling All COPE Contributors**

COPE is an acronym for the “Committee on Political Education.” This committee is responsible for creating relationships with legislators, local elected officials, and assisting with campaigns for our national elections. Around election-time, you may receive literature about candidates – that is paid for through contributions to COPE, SEIU International’s Political Action Committee. **No union dues are used to pay for these political flyers or to create relationships with our elected officials.**

Now that the election is over, our focus on politics is shifting to keep our elected officials accountable for their actions. Individuals on the committee track legislation at the state and federal levels. If legislation affects our members, such as eliminating pensions, we contact the membership in order for them to contact their legislators. This is important work and the more we continue to talk to our legislators the more responsive they are to our phone calls and emails.

As a special thank you to our COPE Contributors, we have sweatshirts, t-shirts, gym bags, water bottles, and coffee cups. If you contribute to COPE and haven’t received a thank you gift, please contact your steward or unit president. If you are interested in learning more about COPE or would like information on monthly donations, please contact the union office at (517) 482-1737. Be the envy of your family and friends and get your ‘bling’ before the holidays!

### **7 Facts About the Minimum Wage**

By Tiffany Koebel on July 22, 2016

US Department of Labor Blog

Sunday, July 24, 2016 marked seven years since the last time the federal minimum wage was raised. Here are seven things you might not know about it:

1. It doesn’t go nearly as far today. Since the last time it was raised – to \$7.25 in 2009 – the cost of living has increased by nearly 12 percent. And its value has declined over the past few decades: since Ronald Reagan took office in 1981, the value of the minimum wage has fallen by nearly 20 percent, and since 1968 – when the purchasing power of the minimum wage was at its highest – its value has fallen by nearly 25 percent.
2. Historically, there has been bipartisan support for regular increases. Since the federal minimum wage was established under President Franklin Roosevelt, 10 presidents – of both parties – have approved raises.
3. 18 states and the District of Columbia have taken action to raise their minimum wages since President Obama first called for an increase in January 2013. Numerous cities and localities have done the same.

4. The majority of Americans supports raising the minimum wage above \$7.25. A majority of business executives do, too, according to a leaked survey.
5. Companies large and small have raised wages for their lowest-paid employees. A few of biggest include Ikea, Gap, Walmart, Target and T.J. Maxx.
6. Most workers who would benefit from a minimum wage increase are adults. About 9 out of 10 are age 20 or over. More than half are women.
7. The federal minimum wage for tipped workers is even lower. It's only \$2.13 – and it hasn't been raised since 1991.

Bonus fact: Seven recipients of the Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences say it's the smart thing and the right thing to do.

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

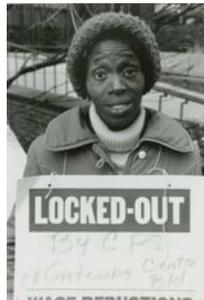
### **SEIU and Wintertime Picket Lines**

By Gavin Strassel, SEIU Archivist

The quest for economic and social justice never takes a break, even when the forecast calls for freezing temperatures. SEIU has a long history of passionate and creative demonstrations for low-wage workers, with the wintertime bringing out the best in their enthusiasm. Here are a handful of historical images from the SEIU archives of members braving the cold and snow.



Local 200 university library clerks making the most of the snowy weather in Syracuse, New York.



Local 29 members participating in a lockout in Pittsburgh, staying warm in the middle of December. 1985.



A bundled-up janitor from BSEIU Local 150B and his son walk the picket line. Milwaukee, 1947.



Coalition of SEIU locals such as 925 and 32 BJ rally in New York City during a contract dispute with the Equitable Life Assurance Society in the winter of 1985.



While not as chilly as other locales, Justice for Janitors teaming up with Santa Claus in Washington DC. December 1987.



SEIU members protest Apartheid policies outside of the South African embassy in Washington DC. December, 1985.



*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>

### **Know Your Weingarten Rights**

NLRB v Weingarten, Inc. 420 U.S. 251 (1975)

As a member of the union when you are called into a meeting with management and you have a reasonable belief that discipline could or may result, you have Weingarten Rights. This includes the right to be informed of the subject of the meeting in advance, the right to union representation and the right to consult with your union representative or steward prior to the meeting.

Management does not have to inform you of these rights. You must invoke your rights yourself. Not knowing about them or forgetting about these rights does not matter...you must invoke your Weingarten Rights or they are deemed waived for that meeting.

**“If this discussion could in any reasonable way lead to my discipline, I am invoking my right to have my union representative present”**

Once you invoke your Weingarten Rights, the Employer must allow your request for union representation or delay the meeting until you have representation. If the Employer denies your reasonable request for representation, they have committed an Unfair Labor Practice.

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

December 6: Technical Unit Board Meeting

December 8: Human Services Support Unit Member Meeting in Detroit

December 12: Scientific and Engineering Unit Board Meeting

December 12: Human Services Support Member Meeting in Lansing PRO

December 15: Human Services Support Member Conference Call for Kalamazoo Members

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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