

SEIU Local 517M E-Former – January 2011

Union Wins Round One In Pension Battle!

Judge William Collette heard arguments December 8, 2010 on the requests for preliminary injunctive relief filed by SEIU Locals 517M and 526M, and by UAW Local 6000, AFSCME and MSEA. He granted the injunction requested by the unions and ordered that the 3% being deducted from state employees' pay be held in an escrow account pending a final decision in the cases. The unions argued that the Michigan constitution gives the Civil Service Commission exclusive jurisdiction over the compensation and other conditions of employment of state employees and that the legislature has no authority to change our compensation. Judge Collette agreed and held that we are likely to prevail on this argument. He also stated that he thought that the employees could be irreparably injured if the injunction was not issued because he doubted that the legislature would appropriate the money to pay them back if the unions won.

This is just the first round in this case but we are very pleased and encouraged that the court held that the state cannot solve its financial problems by violating the constitution and taking money from state employees to pay its bills. We expect that motions for summary disposition will be filed in early January and decided in February.

Rebuttal on Detroit News Editorial

The Coalition of State Employee Unions submitted a rebuttal to the November 22, 2010 editorial in the Detroit News claiming that state employees are fighting reform. This couldn't be further from the truth. The Detroit News printed our rebuttal on December 10, 2010. Here is a link to our rebuttal:

<http://www.detnews.com/article/20101210/OPINION01/12100329/1008/opinion01/Letter--State-workers-have-sacrificed--too>

State Employee Benefit Changes Tabled

You may already be aware, the Civil Service Commission at their December 8th meeting tabled the Letter of Understanding that would have provided healthcare coverage for "other eligible individuals" who reside with a state employee and meet certain criteria. The General Counsel for the Department of Civil Service raised several questions to the Commission that needed clarification before they would vote on the issue. These questions were not brought to the Office of the State Employer's or the Union's attention prior to the meeting. If this would have been done, the issues could have been addressed prior to the meeting. Keep in mind that several large universities in the state including Michigan State University, University of Michigan, Northern Michigan University, Central, Eastern, Western, Wayne State and more offer this benefit; along with many counties, cities and community colleges across the State. This isn't a new idea. The experience rate is approximately 1% participation. The issue will be addressed at the next Commission meeting that should be scheduled in January.

Saginaw AFRAM is Holding a Dinner-Dance Fundraiser

Saginaw Regional AFRAM Caucus is holding a Dinner-Dance Scholarship Fundraiser on January 15, 2011, from 7:00 p.m.-12:00 a.m. at the SEIU Local 517M Saginaw Union Hall at 1420 S. Michigan Ave., Saginaw. Activities will include a Domino and Spades Tournament - \$5.00 entry

fee, a Karaoke Contest with a Cash Prize to the winner and a 50/50 raffle. This event is B.Y.O.B.

Tickets are \$10 each and can be purchased at the SEIU Local 517M Saginaw office at 1420 S. Michigan Ave. Call 989.797.4243 to purchase tickets or if you have questions.

Skating Fundraiser Helps Detroit Children!

By Phillip Patrick, President, and Denise Edwards, Vice President, SEIU Local 517M-HSS Division

We would like to thank each and every one of you for your assistance in making the November 28th Skating Fundraiser a great success! Please know that the time and energy you gave to this project was truly appreciated. The overall goal for this fundraiser was to raise funds to assist our local community by providing school supplies for metropolitan Detroit area public school children, food and clothing donations for needy families, and academic scholarships for labor studies programs. We raised nearly \$500.00 for this kick-off fundraiser event. We are currently in the planning stages of developing our next fundraiser during our membership drive campaign for January 1 through March 31, 2011.

To all of the members and leadership of SEIU Local 517M Region 3, particularly, City of Detroit Unit President **Yolanda Langston**, and Vice President **Cephus Porchia**, who assisted in "getting-those-skating-tickets-sold", we thank you very much for helping the Detroit AFRAM Chapter get those "skaters" rolling. We could not have done it without YOU! Please know that the SEIU Local 517M HSS Division leadership and its members are here for you whenever you need us as well!

Thanks for all the great work that you do!

Scientific and Engineering Board and Committee Vacancies

The Scientific and Engineering Bargaining Unit Board has three vacancies that need to be filled after the beginning of the year. One vacancy is from the Department of Environmental Quality, one from the Department of Labor, Energy and Economic Growth, and one from the "combination of departments with less than 60 members." Additionally, there will be three vacancies on the Negotiating Team that need to be filled with members from any Department. Finally, there are two vacancies on the Grievance Committee. This Committee meets monthly and reviews grievances that are appealed to arbitration and determines whether they will go forward to arbitration. The Board of Director vacancies are voted on by the Board; the Negotiating Team and the Grievance Committee are appointed by the President of the Scientific and Engineering Unit. If you have any interest in serving on the Board, the Negotiating Team, or the Grievance Committee, please respond to Cindy Mason at cmason@seiu517m.org with which vacancy you are interested in filling and why you believe you would be a good candidate for this vacancy.

A Member's Perspective on Michigan's Budget Imbalance



By Bryan Grochowski, Scientific and Engineering Unit Board Member

On December 3, 2010, The Michigan League for Human Services held their annual meeting at the Lansing Center featuring non-partisan, Senate Fiscal Agency Director, **Gary Olson**. Two Legislators, including Representative **Joan Bauer** (D-Lansing) participated in the discussion. Several legislators and stakeholders from across the state were also in attendance. The focus of the meeting was a briefing on the expectations of State Funding futures. View more of the story at:
http://www.seiu517m.org/Member_Perspective_on_Budget_Imbalance.aspx