

# SEIU Local 517M E-Former – March 2011

## Local 517M Members Show Support for Collective Bargaining Rights



Supporters of public employee collective bargaining rights converged on Lansing for a rally on Saturday, February 26th. The rally was sponsored by MoveOn.org who organized similar rallies in all 50 states. An estimated crowd of 2,000 workers and retirees showed their support for collective bargaining rights in front of the Michigan State Capitol. SEIU members from Detroit, Port Huron, Muskegon, and Kalamazoo joined members from Lansing in solidarity with the Wisconsin public employees. Although Gov. Snyder has said that "Michigan is not Wisconsin", several pieces of anti-union/worker legislation has been introduced in the Michigan Legislature.

## 3% Retirement Litigation Update

The following is a statement by **Phil Thompson**, SEIU 517M Executive Vice President, on the February 24, 2011 ruling in Ingham County Circuit Court that ruled unconstitutional a legislative plan diverting 3 percent of state employees' wages to pay for a state employee retirement health care fund.

*"We applaud the court today for upholding Michigan's Constitution and putting the law ahead of politics. Today, our system of justice correctly affirms that the Civil Service Commission, not the Legislature, is the only body with the authority to make decisions on state employees' pay and benefits."*

*"Michigan's hardworking state employees have led by example and made difficult sacrifices time and time again to reform government and save tax dollars in these tough economic times. We look forward to working with the Legislature and the Snyder Administration to reform government, so everyone - including CEOs and powerful special interests - shares in the sacrifice, and not just state employees."*

More information and updates on this suit can be found at:

[http://www.seiu517m.org/Update\\_on\\_3\\_Healthcare\\_Contribution.aspx](http://www.seiu517m.org/Update_on_3_Healthcare_Contribution.aspx)

## State Budget

The Snyder Budget has now been made public. Bottom line is that there are a whole lot of cuts and a smattering of new revenue pots. This budget hits Revenue Sharing to

local communities pretty hard as a “wedge” to get local governments to reduce public pay and benefit levels. In addition, it projects a \$1.8 billion savings from state employee “concessions” through the upcoming bargaining process. The biggest “hot button” issue so far has been the proposed taxation of both private and public pensions! Please remember—in spite of all the hoopla and overly dramatic press coverage, we are in the very early stages of Budget discussions. Many Legislators—from both sides—are already expressing great displeasure at Governor Snyder’s first-ever state budget. SEIU Local 517M will be watching, and where necessary be directly involved in representing our membership’s interest at each stage of this process. An analysis of the budget from **Gary Olson** of the non-partisan Public Sector Consultants, provides real figures and percentages. Gary was the Senate Fiscal Director for twenty years. The analysis can be found at:

<http://www.pscinc.com/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=K8E55xf2psk%3d&tabid=65>

## **My Time As A SEIU Member Lobbyist**

By Joey Combs, Human Services Support State Bargaining Unit

Hello, My brothers and sisters in solidarity. I am writing to give you an update on my experiences in Washington DC at the Member Lobbying Program. By the time you read this I will be in the middle of my fourth week of the program. The Member Lobbying Program allows members to be truly represented on Capitol Hill. It allows me (+7 other members from various SEIU locals/professions) to be the face of our union and play a direct role in the passage of legislation that will directly benefit working families.

Week 1 was just really a learning week. I was learning about the Metro DC area. The group setting was taught in a transformational learning method. This method involved asking all the group members a question about lobbying, leadership, team player, etc. and thinking critically about what you already know to develop the answer. This method taught me that most of us know more than we think we know about subjects. I



can’t wait to return to teach those who aspire to be in leadership roles this method. During my first week I also took a brief tour of the Capitol, Senate, and House of Representatives buildings. The highlight of my week was going to lobby the members of congress with the Blue Green Alliance about the importance of green jobs. I met with the staff of **John Conyers, Carl Levin, Sander Levin, Debbie Stabenow, Candace Miller, and Hansen Clark**. This was my first experience in lobbying at Capitol Hill. (Pictured with Blue Green Alliance lobbyists are Joey Combs (second from left) and Rep. Hansen Clark second from right)

## **NAACP Opposes Draconian Measures Aimed at Eviscerating Public Sector Employment Unions**

The following Action Item was adopted by the NAACP Board of Directors at its meeting on February 19, 2011, in New York City by a unanimous vote. This Action Item now represents the official policy of the NAACP, and as such directs the actions of the National staff, as well as NAACP State Conferences of Branches and all other units.

Read the Action Item at: [http://www.seiu517m.org/assets/assetcontent/87657323-d468-4ff7-a068-4d93028fed5f/546bfa9e-94e2-495f-9d30-54cc81f55e47/43718573-d365-46cf-92b3-f9efdf1334e3/1/NAACP\\_support\\_unions.pdf](http://www.seiu517m.org/assets/assetcontent/87657323-d468-4ff7-a068-4d93028fed5f/546bfa9e-94e2-495f-9d30-54cc81f55e47/43718573-d365-46cf-92b3-f9efdf1334e3/1/NAACP_support_unions.pdf)