



**SEIU 517M**  
PUBLIC EMPLOYEES

*The* **E-Former**

The Official Electronic Newsletter of  
SEIU Local 517M

## August 2023

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Click on the map to find out which Region your unit is in.



### Loutit Library Workers Ratify First Contracts!

On July 28, 2023 the workers at the Loutit District Library in Grand Haven voted on their first-ever contracts. There are two bargaining units each with their own contract. The Non-supervisory unit will represent 26 employees and the Supervisory unit will represent 5 employees.

In the Fall of 2022, the employees of Loutit District Library reached out to SEIU Local 517M with the interest in being represented by a union. By January 2023, we began the process of negotiating their very first contract. With commitment, determination, and teamwork the Supervisory and Non-Supervisory bargaining teams each negotiated a 3-year agreement that will improve their working conditions, wages, and benefits. Their collective strength at the bargaining table ensured that every one of their co-workers were represented.



Next steps for each unit will be to determine how they want their units structured and to hold officer elections. This will take place in the coming months.

Congratulations Loutit District Library Supervisors and Non-Supervisors on the ratifications of your first union Collective Bargaining Agreements!!!



Non-Supervisory bargaining team:  
Elizabeth Griffin, Kate Tobin, Kevin Hawley



Supervisor bargaining team: Kim Rice, Allison Boyer, Katie Alphenaar

**STAND TOGETHER — STAND STRONG**

[www.seiu517m.org](http://www.seiu517m.org) [Facebook at: SEIULocal517M](#)

## State Units Have Initial Bargaining Meeting with State

On Monday, July 31 members of the three SEIU Local 517M bargaining teams, representing the Human Services Support, Scientific and Engineering, and Technical bargaining units met with the Office of the State Employer.

These initial meetings were the opening sessions for the 2023 wage reopener negotiations for the October 1, 2024 wage increase.

Future sessions will be scheduled later this month after the State’s economic presentation in mid-August.

## SEIU Member Benefits Upcoming Student Debt Webinar

The Biden Administration has announced that interest accrual will begin September 1, 2023, and payments will start in October 2023.

As an SEIU member, you have exclusive access to the student loan experts at Savi, a company founded by long-time student loan policy advocates and borrowers who want to help solve the student debt crisis.

Join Savi and the SEIU Member Benefits team for a webinar on August 9th at 8 p.m. ET. to learn about how you can prepare yourself before repayments resume in October. Registration is open to members, members' family and friends, and nonmembers.

This free educational (and interactive!) webinar can help you:

- Learn the steps to take before payments resume
- Understand student loan policy updates and what they mean for you
- Get started with the SEIU<sup>SM</sup> Student Debt Navigator tool
- Review repayment and forgiveness options like Income Driven Repayment Plans and Public Service Loan Forgiveness
- Get answers to all of your student debt questions - no matter how big or small!

[Register now](#)



Want to learn more about the SEIU Student Debt Navigator in advance? [Click here](#) to get started with the free assessment and see if you can save money on your loans or determine your eligibility for forgiveness programs.

## Kalamazoo Picnic in the Park



SEIU Local 517M is holding a “Picnic in the Park” on Saturday, August 19 at Flesher Field Park (3664 S. 9th Street, Kalamazoo) from Noon—2:30 pm.

All dues-paying members of SEIU Local 517M are encouraged to attend! Join us for food and fun!

Back to school supplies will also be available for students 11 years of age and under.

RSVP to [Andy Johnson](#) or [Olivia Jelinek](#) by August 16th.

## Kalamazoo Schools Custodians Reclaim Lost Positions

Submitted by Andy Johnson, Labor Relations Specialist

It was a long hard-fought battle for our Kalamazoo Schools Custodians. Over the last ten years the Kalamazoo Public School District has made it a point to outsource SEIU custodial jobs to the private company D & L Industries. The Kalamazoo School District approached the theory of outsourcing in a different manner. The decision to outsource custodial work in the Kalamazoo School District is solely left up to the discretion of the building principals, and not the school board. The sad thing is that the principals are members of the United Auto Workers Union (UAW) and yet they advocate for outsourcing of jobs.

For years SEIU 517M has made it clear to the Kalamazoo Public School District that we do not believe in outsourcing good union jobs and that we desire to bring the twenty jobs back to SEIU. In April of 2016, the Kalamazoo Schools SEIU custodial unit decided that it was time to stand up and voice our opinion on all of the outsourcing of SEIU positions. We decided to start a campaign to bring attention to the amount of money being paid to D & L Industries by spent by the Kalamazoo Public School District and put a spotlight on the subpar work being done by their employees. With the assistance of the Kalamazoo Schools Teachers union and KEA union President Amanda Miller, they provided to us a lengthy list of short comings with photos of shotty work, and teachers complaints of sexual harassment by D & L employees. We met with the KEA leadership, and they gave us their full support in our request to return these jobs back to SEIU.

After research we discovered the Kalamazoo Public School District pays D & L Industries 3.4 million dollars every school year to provide cleaning of the interior of the school buildings. What we also found out is D & L has the ability to charge the Kalamazoo School District for what's called "extra work." There is a system called "pink slipping" which allows D & L to charge the district for any work done outside of a building. After the review, it was discovered that D & L charged Kalamazoo Schools over 1.0 million dollars per year in pink slip charges.

We also met with the UAW attempting to get their members to change their stance on outsourcing of SEIU positions. The UAW representative indicated that one of the main reasons for the outsourcing was that the principals felt like they could not get the SEIU custodians to perform their duties at the necessary level. The fortunate thing for us was that not all of the Kalamazoo Schools principals believed that outsourcing is the answer to the problem. We were able to maintain twenty-one positions after all of the outsourcing was done.

Over the years, unit leaders constantly lobbied management officials to develop ways to create a better relationship with the principals so that SEIU could recover some of our positions by having a better understanding of the needs of each building. At a contentious UAW meeting of principals, the SEIU outsourcing agenda item came up. The room was divided, but main reason for the division once again was because the principals claim they cannot get the SEIU custodians to perform their duties as expected. The SEIU Unit President at the time Michael Watson made it his mission to change the attitudes of our custodians before we all get outsourced. President Watson went as far as to have members sign a commitment form that said all SEIU custodians will go beyond in performing the duties requested by the building principals.



After this, the discussion of cost versus quality of work begin to take place with administration, facilities management and school personnel. The quality of work in the SEIU custodian buildings is much higher than the D & L buildings. The difference in the quality of work performed by the SEIU custodians is primarily due to the work of current leaders, (pictured L-R: Secretary/Treasurer Rachel Reynolds, President Mason Guritz, Vice-President Keith Jackson) and the signed commitment from the current SEIU custodians to go above and beyond while performing their duties. Former President Watson was responsible for the campaign actions that brought to light, exactly what was going on.

Fast forward to May 2021. The Kalamazoo School Assistant Superintendent Gary Start and Facilities Management Director Karen Jackson invited SEIU leadership and staff to meet and discuss the current outsourcing situation. They acknowledged issues with D & L and were in the process of writing a new bid for the outsourcing of custodial work. We promptly asked for a copy of the bid once written. No such bid was written. Again, in May 2023 we were summoned to meet with Kalamazoo Schools leadership where they proposed the elimination of all daytime D & L employees. This resulted in twenty-four SEIU bargaining unit positions along with an additional 4 Floating Custodians positions.

We are now in the process of organizing the twenty-eight people. Our mission these past seven years has been to take back what was originally ours. President Guritz did an excellent job of keeping this issue alive. The first meeting with the prospective members was June 19 at the Cheney Auditorium in Kalamazoo. SEIU 517M Member Strength Director Olivia Jelinek and I went to an open house meeting with the new custodians. A back-to-school cookout and a celebration is scheduled for August 19 at Flesher Park in Kalamazoo (see previous story for details). There you will be able to sign up and become a member of SEIU 517M. Please come out and join us in fun.