



December 2025

Hello, SEIU Local 517M Members,

As we close out the year, I want to extend my heartfelt appreciation to each of you. Thank you for everything you do, every conversation, every act of service, every effort you make on behalf of your coworkers and communities. Your work matters, and it does not go unnoticed.

The holiday season can be a joyful time of connection with family and friends, but it can also be a difficult season for many. I hope you find moments of rest, support, and peace wherever you need it most.

From all of us at SEIU Local 517M, we wish you a warm and safe holiday season. Thank you for standing with us, and for all that you do every day to strengthen our union.

In solidarity,
Claire Corr, Executive Director
SEIU Local

Heroes Among Us: A Night of Compassion in Battle Creek

By: Natalie Koopman, Local Executive Board Member from the City of Battle Creek

Last night, a disabled veteran faced a scary moment when his electric wheelchair toppled over near the Masonic Temple in Battle Creek. What happened next shows the heart of our community.

City team member Emily Arntz, Lead Grant Coordinator and Dell, a city of Battle Creek security guard, didn't hesitate—they stayed with him, comforted him, and worked alongside LifeCare and Fire Station #1 to ensure he was safe and treated with dignity. Emily even checked his chair for damage and later called the hospital to make sure he was okay.

This is what community looks like—going above and beyond for someone in need. Let's give a big THANK YOU to Emily and Dell for their compassion and care.

Staff Directory

Labor Relations: State Units

Scientific & Engineering: [Howard Gordon](#) - 517.267.2070
Human Services Support: [Kevin Karpinski](#) - 517.267.2088
Technical: [Kevin Karpinski](#) - 517.267.2088

Labor Relations: School and Local Government Units

Clint Bryant - 989.797.4258
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Executive Director: [Claire Corr](#) - 517.267.2065

Information Services:
[Dave Corrie](#) / [Jacob Tkaczyk](#) - 517.267.2090

Office Manager: [Ashley Konyha](#) - 517.267.2095

Dues & COPE Deductions: [Andrea Valerio](#) - 989.797.4241

Member Strength Director/
Member Only Benefits: [Marian Wilcox](#) - 517.744.5393

STAND TOGETHER — STAND STRONG

Michigan Water and Wastewater Professionals Week (12/8-12/14)

This December, SEIU Local 517M would like to highlight our wastewater treatment operators around our state!

Gov. Gretchen Whitmer issued a proclamation declaring Dec. 8-14, 2025, as Water and Wastewater Professionals Workforce Week honoring the dedication of the state's highly trained operators, technicians, administrative professionals, and all other specialists who work to ensure Michigan communities have safe and reliable drinking water and that rivers and lakes are both fishable and swimmable.

You can check out the proclamation [here](#).



State Unit Seniority Lists Now Available

By: David Corrie, Information Services Specialist

Twice a year the State prepares a seniority list that shows the continuous service hours of our members. The list is used for many purposes, such as employment preference, overtime, and retirement.

The most recent list was run as of October 25, 2025. Please review it for accuracy. Members have found errors in the report in the past. You must notify your Human Resources Division if you believe any of the hour counters are inaccurate.

[Human Services Support Unit](#)

[Scientific and Engineering Unit](#)

[Technical Unit](#)



SEIU Proud, SEIU Loud

By: Brandell Tomanica

The Teacher Aides serving the community of St. Clair and the surrounding area are proud members of SEIU 517M, and they wear that pride to work each day as a show of solidarity. These dedicated professionals provide essential care to the special-needs students they serve and vital support to the families who rely on them to ensure their children are safe, well cared for, and receive a quality education.



SEIU 517M is proud to stand in statewide solidarity with them as they continue showing up every day to make a meaningful difference.

Members at Flint Public Schools have had a Busy November!



(Left Photo) Local 517M Member and Region 3 Divisional Vice President, Carmella Johnson packing boxes with full Thanksgiving meals to pass out to her community.

(Right Photo) Local 517M Member and Region 3 Secretary, Jan Martin with some of her students. Her and students wrote an essay and won \$300 for the cheerleaders that she works with.

Social Media Update Article

By Jacob Tkaczyk, Information Services Specialist

This is an announcement that SEIU Local 517M is back on social media! In this ever-changing online age, we want to stay at the forefront of sharing information that our members need to know. Below are our social media accounts, where we will be sharing updates regarding member benefits, highlight events for members, as well as other relevant information.



[X \(formerly Twitter\)](#): Please follow us [@SEIU517M](#) on X/Twitter!



[Instagram](#): Please follow us [@officialseiulocal517m](#) on Instagram!



[Tik Tok](#): SEIU Local 517M has joined Tik Tok! Please follow us at [@seiulocal517m](#)!



[Bluesky](#): SEIU Local 517M has joined Bluesky! Please follow us at [@seiulocal517m.bsky.social](#)!

New Labor Rep Hired at Local 517M!

SEIU Local 517M would like to welcome our newest staff member, Joseph Bellgowan. Joe is joining us as our new Labor Relations Specialist working with the Science & Engineering and Technology Units.

Before joining SEIU Local 517M, Joe has spent the past two decades organizing communities around environmental, labor, and social justice issues. He has worked with Clean Water Action, Food & Water Watch, For Our Future, Michigan AFL-CIO, and many other 501(c)(3) & (c)(4) nonprofits across the United States. He has secured victories at the local, state, and federal level, helping win protection for our communities and our unions.



As someone who has long-standing personal and professional ties to social justice and labor movements, he is looking forward to sharing his skills with SEIU Local 517M. Joe is excited to ensure Local 517M members continue to be boldly represented and respected both on the job and in the community. He is looking forward to working with our current Senior Labor Relations team of Howard Gordon (Science and Engineering) and Kevin Karpinski (Tech) gaining valuable knowledge from their expertise in supporting SEIU Local 517M members in the public sector.

When Joe is *not* organizing- you can find him on excursions with family across his beloved state of Michigan, at a concert, playing piano and drums, or tossing a ball with his golden retriever Marjorie. He has served on the Board of Directors for the Old Newsboys Association of Greater Lansing since 2014 and many other community boards throughout his years of living in Lansing. We proudly welcome Joe to the SEIU Local 517M team!

Tech Notes - News for Technical Unit Members

By: Kevin Karpinski, Senior Labor Relations Specialist

This section of the newsletter is dedicated to the issues being faced by our State of Michigan Technical

Technical Unit Establishes Subcontracting Work Group

After challenging MDOT regarding the department's expanded use of subcontractors, the Union formed a work group to review Chapter 7 of the Michigan Civil Service Rules and the "7" series of Regulations. The committee met once and is meeting again on December 10, 2025.

The purpose of this work group, which has now expanded to include 2 members of the Scientific and Engineering union, is to propose revisions to the rules and regs to make contracting services a fairer process. Subcontracting to for-profit companies who are guaranteed profits (11%+) and paying wages to inspectors over the industry standard, should be subject to detailed scrutiny. These contractors cost 50% to 100% more than what internal civil service inspectors cost.

Our Technical Unit Inspectors (Transportation Technicians) are employed by MDOT and can retain oversight of quality control and quality assurance. This oversight is being eroded by the expansion of subcontractor inspectors. The work group intends to work with Civil Service to be able to get copies of contracts and bid submissions as soon as they are sent/received.

Apprenticeship Program

The Technical Unit participated in a work group with MDOT management just before Covid hit and established an Apprenticeship Program for hiring Transportation Technicians. After the program was planned and completed, ready for USDOL accreditation, MDOT leadership did not move forward. Your Union is proposing this program be submitted in time for the budget discussion in February.

Labor Relations - Union Defends Workers

We are currently working on 3 investigations, 1 ADA arbitration on January 16, 2025, 1 discharge grievance, and an interim rating in the Technical Unit.

Workers Compensation and LTD Claim Denials

We have had some cases dealing with Sedwick as the third-party administrator for Workers Compensation and LTD claims. If you have had difficulty in getting your benefits covered, please reach out to the Union so we can discuss these problems with OSE.

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Labor-Management Meetings

Your Union is able to set up virtual meetings to discuss your unit's needs. Some examples are safety items, equipment needs, training, and any other items you wish to put on the agenda. We develop proposals to submit to the department and work to collaboratively to get a positive result. Please check with your unit leader in the attached membership guide. It contains a list of representation units, stewards, chief stewards, and board members.

On-Site Union Visits

Labor rep Kevin Karpinski (me) was able to meet with a couple of membership groups. On September 15, 2025, I met with the MSP Forensic Technicians and Scientists at their symposium. On October 21, 2025, I met with the DTMB/MPSCS Radio Technicians at their

