A MESSAGE FROM THE OUTGOING CHIEF ELECTED OFFICER

September 2012

Dear Member,

Every three years you have the right and the responsibility to vote for the SEIU Local 521 Executive Board - the people who run our union. These member leaders set policies, oversee member dues money, determine staffing levels, establish endorsement practices, and make other decisions that affect 57,000 members. (In addition, you vote for the people in your own chapter who negotiate your contracts and maintain labor-relations.) I urge you to take great care in making these decisions, now and always. Your future depends on it.

GOODBYE

This year is the first time since the 1970s that I have not run for one of these positions in 521 or the legacy 715. After 26 years as the head of this union, I am retiring at the end of this term. Of course I am looking forward to relaxing and having much more family time, but I will miss you and the talented staff who have worked with me and the member leaders who came before me to build this union.

WHAT A UNION!

We are known throughout the SEIU International as one of the cleanest run, most democratic, hardest-working unions ever. We set goals for ourselves, and our staff and members work really, really hard to meet them. Over the years we have won millions and millions of dollars in wage and benefit improvements, and we have built strong contracts with worker rights that are unequaled.

But now things are very hard... even harder than in 1970 when I started at Santa Clara County. Not one contract has been opened in the last few years without massive take-away proposals; often we have had to make compromises, or worse yet, hard bargaining has ended in no contract at all, just employer-imposition of cuts. We are working hard to turn this around. Our organizing and political activities have never stopped even in these rough times.

FIRST NOVEMBER, THEN JANUARY

Although you will decide who will take the reins of our union next January, this November you will set the stage for your future: Your pension, your wages, your right to a union itself are at stake.

TWO PROPOSITIONS

Proposition 32 would take away our voice. We would not be able to have any money to tell our side of the story to the voters of California. Over the years, we have spent members’ voluntary donations, and part of members’ dues, fighting off pension take-aways, workers’ rights rollbacks, and budget catastrophes. We have stopped a lot of really bad things. If Proposition 32 passes, we will not have the means to do that anymore. Please join me in voting NO ON PROP. 32

We also get to vote to put about $8 billion into the state’s budget to avoid further cuts in all kinds of public work; counties, cities, and schools are in jeopardy of slashes, and non-profits which get state funds are in no better shape. Most of the money in Prop. 30 will come from the wealthiest Californians; we will see just a little more in the continuation of a temporary sales tax. But we must vote YES ON 30 to keep California from falling further into the hole that has been made by the greedy decisions of corporations and the very wealthy and their anti-tax political friends.

So... first in November, please vote NO on 32 to keep our voice, and Yes on 30 to keep our public services. Then in January vote for the best candidates to lead our union toward a better day... and when I say, “Our Union,” I mean it. On March 1, 2013, I will be joining the Retiree Chapter of SEIU 521. I hope to see you at rallies, meetings, and events for years to come.

Thank you.

In solidarity,

Kristy Sermersheim
Chief Elected Officer, SEIU 521
The Schools and Safety Protection Act of 2012

California has cut tens of billions of dollars from its schools, healthcare, and seniors in the last four years.

Finally, we have the chance to stop this cycle of damaging cuts. Prop. 30:

- Prevents $6 billion in immediate cuts to schools, colleges, and local public safety.
- Raises income taxes on the wealthy and increases the sales tax by ¼ cent – less than we paid last year.
- Helps balance California’s budget to prevent deeper cuts not just to schools, but to all the vital public services that we provide our communities.

"It’s time for California to make a comeback. We need to pass the Governor’s tax plan so that we can make California strong again. The protection of education, public safety, and services for our most vulnerable residents depend on it.”

– Veronica Rodriguez
Vice President, Santa Cruz County Chapter

Prop. 32 is not what it seems.
And people are starting to notice.

Prop. 32 ... pretends to restrict corporate and labor political influence equally. It is NOT what it seems.”
- Peter Schrag, Sacramento Bee, Sept. 14, 2012

Billionaires and corporations have spent millions of dollars qualifying Proposition 32 on the November ballot so they can take working Californians like us completely out of the picture. They claim it’s about "stopping special interests”— but it's really about silencing the voice for good jobs, wages and retirement for workers like us.

Look what we’ve won together this past year by speaking up:

- When cuts in the state budget threatened one of our most successful programs that puts Californians back to work, SEIU 521 eligibility workers spoke up to save CalWORKS.
- Librarians and SEIU members successfully lobbied to keep public libraries public and won the support of Gov. Brown. Now, before our public libraries are outsourced to a private company, common-sense protections must be in place.
- At a time when courts around the state laid off workers and closed courtrooms, bureaucrats were funding a multi-billion-dollar computer system without clear benefits to the public. Through lobby visits and testimonies at legislative hearings, SEIU 521 court workers helped lead a statewide campaign – joined by judges! – and together we successfully shut down the wasteful spending.

"This initiative doesn’t do a thing to stop corporate money from corrupting our politics. All it does is make it harder for working families to have a voice. We need to fight this fake reform and push for real changes.”

– Blanca Anderson, administrative coordinator
Kern County Department of Human Services

Join the next telephone town hall in October*!

Topics: Props. 30 and 32

More than 14,000 SEIU Local 521 members participated in a live telephone town hall September 12 to hear the latest and ask questions about the pension reform bill that Gov. Brown just signed.

Who has to pay more? At what age can you retire? What if you are not part of CalPERS? These and other questions were answered during the call.

If you missed the call, you can listen to the audio recording at: www.seiu521.org [click on CAMPAIGNS, then RETIREMENT SECURITY, then on “Will you have to pay more on pension?”].

*Two more tele-town halls are scheduled for October. Look for upcoming announcements.*

Contact your SEIU 521 office to make sure the union has your current phone numbers. You will automatically receive a phone call to join the tele-town hall when it happens.