Over 300 fast-food, childcare, public sector, security and health care workers met with US Representatives Zoe Lofgren and Ro Khanna, California Assembly member Ash Kalra, and local elected officials and candidates at the America Needs Unions Town Hall on Saturday, July 21st at SEIU 521 in San Jose. The town hall, held just three weeks after the Supreme Court’s Janus decision, showed our power while highlighting the need to make it easier for working people to join together in unions in California in order to raise wages and create thriving communities.

Through personal testimonies, working people discussed why putting more people in unions is the best way to confront inequality and lift the 64 million Americans paid less than $15/hour out of poverty. The town hall brought together unions, community partners, elected officials, and families who are fighting back against the wealthy special interests who want to divide us against each other and rig the rules of our economy.

“We are here today because we know that America needs unions. We know that workers’ rights are human rights. The only way to truly honor the people that came before us is to foster our connections, to organize our fellow workers, and to stand together for a better future,” said Anna Griffin, a public-sector worker from Santa Clara County and SEIU 521 member for the past 23 years.

This was one of two dozen America Needs Unions town halls that have occurred or will take place around the country.

JOIN US: America Needs Unions Town Hall Unites Us

U.S. Reps Lofgren, Khanna and Assembly member Kalra join Connie Chew, 521 Executive Board Member and Chief Elected Officer, Riko Mendez.

Anna Griffin, SEIU 521 member for the past 23 years, shares why we must stick together.

Family child care providers and SEIU 521 members posted their #Union challenge photos online during the town hall.

JOIN SEIU 521 MEMBERS THIS LABOR DAY BY PARTICIPATING IN PRO UNION ACTIONS IN OUR COMMUNITIES HONORING THE LABOR MOVEMENT

Kern County
Labor Day BBQ & March
Monday, September 3rd
Jastro Park, Bakersfield
9 A.M. – 1 P.M.

Fresno County
Labor Day Festival
Monday, September 3rd
Fresno Fair Grounds, Fresno
8 A.M. – 12 P.M.

Labor in the Community Events TBA
Santa Clara County—San Jose
Monterey County—Salinas
Visit: members.seiu521.org for updates.
In 2011, the County of Fresno was facing a steep budget crisis that led to drastic cuts in salaries and differentials for workers; a nearly 9% salary deduction was imposed on employees. Most workers would not see a restoration or increase for another 7 years. Through these difficult times, the most vulnerable and underserved communities in Fresno County felt the effects of these cuts—through lack of access to service, staffing shortages, and inadequate case support.

In the face of all of these challenges, Fresno County members focused on supporting each other and the communities we serve. Organizing efforts were a major part of the 2018 contract campaign—members built relationships with new members, rallies were planned through numerous membership meetings, and our power was continuously on display in worksites across the County. After the Fresno County bargaining team and chapter membership took on months of intensive negotiations and unity actions, we finally came to an agreement that was voted on and ratified two days after the Janus decision. The agreement ensures an investment in quality public services, an increase to salaries that begins to restore lost wages, and increases in employer healthcare contributions.

As corporations and wealthy special interests try to divide us against each other and take away our collective bargaining rights across the country, let’s take inspiration from the working people of Fresno County who stood together and showed that when we fight, we win.