

Member Voice, Member Vision, Member Victory

Holding Politicians Accountable Paid Off

Members of SEIU Local 503 work hard to hold candidates accountable for their actions. In 2004, we refused to support legislators who voted to attack our pensions. In 2006, we held the Governor accountable by backing his opponent in the primary. We also challenged then Speaker of the House Karen Minnis and a number of other incumbent legislators who worked against working families.

In many of these fights, we stood alone, with few allies. But all that time phoning and door-knocking paid off. The money contributed to CAPE and all the activity in the worksites brought success. We changed the composition of the legislature, and we changed our relationship with the Governor. We won the opportunity to make a difference for our members and all working Oregonians in the 2007 legislative session.

When 600 members came to the Capitol to make their voice heard during lobby days, we took advantage of that opportunity. Their work, along with the work of thousands of members who flooded the Capitol with post-cards, phone calls, and letters made possible a long list of legislative victories.

What did Local 503 members win?

- Funding for our contracts for state, higher ed, homecare and child care workers.
- Collective bargaining rights for child care workers and adult foster care providers.
- Mandatory workers' compensation coverage for homecare workers.
- Significant improvements in funding for higher education.
- First steps in setting up a universal health care system in Oregon.
- The right to bargain over safety and staffing for State Hospital and Oregon Youth Authority workers.
- Huge improvements in child care access for low-wage working families.
- Improved staffing requirements for nursing home workers and clients.
- Cross-the-board interest rate caps on payday loans.
- Expansion of the Oregon Prescription Purchasing Pool to cover every Oregonian.
- Restoration of cuts in funding for child support enforcement.
- Suspension of the corporate kicker (\$309 million) to pay for needed services.

Behind each of these victories are SEIU members who spoke up and moved the legislature. Here are just a few examples:

Child care providers Virginia Santillan and Portia Moye testified about how difficult it is

to provide quality child care on a sub-minimum wage. They testified about how hard it is for working parents to get access to affordable day care. Based in part on their testimony, legislators voted to improve funding for the Employment Related Day Care program and to reduce the co-payments charged to low-income parents who participate in this program. As a result, Oregon will move from being ranked 49th in the nation on child care affordability to being well above average compared to the rest of the country.

Bill Morris and dozens of other front-line workers at the Eastern Oregon Training Center traveled across the mountains to tell legislators about the service they provide for their developmentally disabled clients. Their testimony played a key role in stopping an effort to close their facility in Pendleton.

Mary Wood, a homecare provider from Lincoln County, testified about being treated as a second-class worker because she does not have mandatory workers' compensation coverage to protect her from on-the-job injury. The legislature passed legislation to provide homecare workers that protection.

These are just a few of the examples of SEIU members fighting for ourselves, for our clients, and for quality public services.

What are the next steps?

Contribute to CAPE. If you value victories like the ones described above, please contribute to CAPE. If you already give, please consider increasing your contribution. CAPE forms can be obtained from your local officers or SEIU Field Office. Elected officials stood up to some powerful special interests. They stood up to the drug companies and the hospitals, the insurance companies and the bankers, the privatizers, the lobbyists who seek tax loopholes and who try to avoid paying their fair share for the services Oregonians rely on. Your contribution goes to elect men and women who share our values. We cannot compete dollar for dollar with the big corporations, but we give our allies a fighting chance. We put them over the top when we help out knocking on doors, making phone calls, and educating our co-workers about pro-worker candidates.

Raise Your Voice. You have a story to tell and you have a role to play. Members speaking up have led to a number of legislative campaigns. Members led the fights around homecare workers' compensation. ODOT workers led the fight for highway safety. DHS workers are the ones fighting for better protection for abused and neglected kids. What do you see on the job that needs to be changed? Are the privatizers ripping off the system? Are budget cuts being proposed that are penny-wise and pound foolish? No one knows better than front-line workers how to improve public services. We can make a difference when members speak up.

We Continue the Fight for Children's Healthcare

SEIU has been on the front lines of the fight for children's health insurance.

State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) is a national program in the United States that provides health insurance for families who earn too much money to qualify for Medicaid yet cannot afford to buy private insurance.

In the last year Congress has been trying to reauthorize funding to keep and expand SCHIP, but President Bush has opposed this plan.

Last summer, at a convention in Baltimore attended by 19 Local 503 members, SEIU launched "SEIU Healthcare," a union-within-the-union aimed at focusing our nationwide efforts to organize healthcare workers and win comprehensive healthcare reform. As the largest healthcare union in the country, SEIU Healthcare lead the fight to pass SCHIP.

SEIU members in Oregon collected over 9,000 of the one million petition signatures gathered in support of the State Children's Health Insurance Program. Bruce "Bubba" Jones, a homecare worker in Portland, made this effort a priority and collected almost 1,200 signatures.

With encouragement from SEIU members across the country, Congress passed a strong bill to provide health insurance for kids. Unfortunately, President Bush vetoed the SCHIP bill, which would provide health coverage to 10 million uninsured children, and Congress failed to override the veto. In Oregon, 50,000 more children would have received coverage under this plan.

"It was a great victory for our kids and for America when Congress passed SCHIP," said Bruce "Bubba" Jones. "The President's veto of this legislation is appalling. We must continue to fight for healthcare coverage for everyone in this country, but first and foremost, for our children. I encourage everyone to get involved in the things you truly believe in."



With the news that Congress would hold another vote, SEIU decided to hold legislators who were against overriding the President's veto accountable. On October 11, SEIU joined other community allies at Representative Walden's office in Medford for a candlelight vigil - to shed light on the need for SCHIP and to ask Rep. Walden to reconsider his position and help override the veto. We also ran radio ads in his district to educate voters about his anti-healthcare vote.

"We had at least 50 people turn out on a rainy, cold night with only a few days prior notice. We also got a lot of support from passing traffic. It's clear that this issue is important to Walden's constituents and to our members. It's also clear that our union was able to play a

key role in holding him accountable for his deplorable decision to side with big tobacco over the health care needs of America's children," reported Kurt Kessler, an SEIU 503 member and human services worker in Medford who helped coordinate the vigil.

Walden again voted against SCHIP but the vote became closer, and the fight isn't over. SEIU members and leaders hope that we will help pass a compromise bill soon, so that fewer kids in Oregon go without necessary health care.

Please contact Rep. Walden today and let him know that SCHIP is a priority for you. He can be reached at 800-533-3303.

"We must continue to fight for healthcare coverage for everyone in this country, but first and foremost, for our children."



Bruce "Bubba" Jones is a Homecare provider from Portland who collected 1,200 petition signatures for children's healthcare.

Women's Conference examines the past and plans the future

Forty members of SEIU came together in Portland on October 6 to explore women's role in labor history generally and to honor women who have helped shape Local 503 specifically.

"Women have always been an integral part of the labor movement," stated Kathleen Lamar, Chair of SEIU's Women's Council. "I'm proud of the Women's Council for highlighting the plight of low-wage workers. Members throughout SEIU worked hard to win a living wage in this year's contract campaign."

Guest speaker Barbara Byrd, a union member and labor educator for more than 25 years, led the attendees in an exercise that explored the strides that women have made over the past century by exploring members' own family histories and looking at the work our mothers and grandmothers have done. Barbara currently serves as Secretary-Treasurer of the Oregon AFL-CIO.

Participants later split into groups and discussed what they would include in a time capsule to

be opened by their grandchildren 30 years from now. A popular response was to include the quilt that hangs in our union hall, made from SEIU 503 T-shirts over the years, each representing an important campaign that our union has taken on and won.

Participants also honored specific women leaders, including members past and present, who have contributed to the success of our union. Remembering and learning from our past gives us a solid foundation from which to build our future.



"Women have always been an integral part of the labor movement."

Kathleen Lamar is the Chair of SEIU Women's Council. She is a child support worker in Portland.

Portland Public School Offers Workers a Double Whammy

A year after winning their jobs back through a court order overturning an illegal privatization decision, Portland Schools custodians are once again under attack. **The Portland School District is now proposing to cut custodians' pay by up to 30 percent, citing "market comparators." And if that weren't bad enough, the Board also wants both custodians and nutrition service workers to shoulder 100% of the increased cost of health insurance!**

Mark Freimark, the head custodian at Llewellyn Elementary in Sellwood and 23 year employee with the District takes pride in the service he and his co-workers provide. "We have ownership of our building," states Mark. "That's what 'custodian' means - custody. I'm responsible for the safety and security of this building and all its inhabitants. But I can't afford to do that if the District cuts my pay by nearly one third!"

Ellen Hagen, a food service worker at Arleta Elementary states, "We're the lowest paid workers in the district. Paying increased health care costs out of our pockets would mean a cut in pay, which is anything but fair."

Our members know that we can't provide safe and secure buildings or nutritious meals for Portland school kids if the District can't recruit and retain qualified staff. And if our members' pay is cut by one-third, or if health insurance becomes completely unaffordable, holding on to experienced staff will be next to impossible.



Check www.seiu503.org for further updates on PPS bargaining and how you can help these workers win a fair contract.

The 503 Voice is published by SEIU Local 503, OPEU.

Contact: Kathie Best bestk@opeuseiu.org

Salem Headquarters
1730 Commercial St. SE
PO Box 12159, Salem, OR 97309-0159
503-581-1505 / 800-452-2146 (Fax) 503-581-1664

Portland Field Office: 503-408-4090 / 800-527-9374
Bend Field Office: 541-385-8471 / 800-832-0593
Corvallis Field Office: 541-752-0183
Eugene Field Office: 541-342-1055 / 800-521-3446
Medford Field Office: 541-779-4324 / 800-452-7965
Pendleton Field Office: 541-276-4983 / 800-452-8146

www.seiu503.org



SEIU members at the MPAC conference in Washington, DC.