



OUS Bargaining Team at Salem Headquarters.

OUS Workers, Care Providers Continue to Pursue Contracts

While tentative agreement has been reached on a new contract for DAS state workers, SEIU Local 503 bargaining teams continue to negotiate four other statewide contracts on behalf of classified workers on seven campuses in the Oregon University System, homecare workers, family child care workers, and adult foster home providers.

Heading into mediation in August, homecare workers were able to rebuff state efforts to eat into prior gains on issues such as paid time off, but state negotiators continued to push an unacceptable proposal that would make health insurance unaffordable for many members. According to projections, in a couple of years some members could pay up to \$200 per month to retain health care coverage under the state proposal.

"Ever since we formed our union, we have fought hard for health care so we can keep ourselves healthy to provide consistent, quality, safe, and healthy care for our clients," Homecare Bargaining Chair Beverly Mackey and members of the team declared. "We can't afford to backtrack now."

Adult foster home providers—the newest care provider group—are bargaining for fairer standards and consistent rules, but meeting resistance from State negotiators who do not want to discuss those topics.

OUS members are covered by two aspects of the DAS agreement that they will vote on, and if it is ratified, they will continue to receive fully paid health coverage and go without a cost-of-living increase in the next two years. But all other aspects of their contract are negotiated separately with the office of the Chancellor, which has sought some draconian measures in bargaining, including the right to assign an unlimited number of unpaid furlough days at will.

Members who are not part of the SEIU 503 bargaining team have made presentations on various union proposals at negotiations, which are conducted on a rotating basis at campuses throughout the system. Workers at negotiation sites have rallied in support of the team and, following the DAS agreement, they and DAS members have intensified actions, reaching out to the Chancellor and university presidents to demand equitable treatment for workers. In mid-August, the union filed an unfair labor practice charge with the Employment Relations Board against OUS for refusing to bargain over the unit's 14 newest members, Portland State University student recycling workers who voted 9-0 to join SEIU 503 in an election conducted by ERB.

"They are the first undergraduate student employees to gain union recognition and we are proud they chose to align themselves with us," Bargaining Team members said. "We now need to show the university system that being part of a union means solidarity – if you take one of us on, you take all of us on."

Latest updates on all ongoing negotiations are available on the web at www.seiu503.org on the *State/University* page for OUS, and *Care Providers* page for homecare, child care and adult foster homes.



Why I'm Voting Yes on the Contract

By Linda Burgin, SEIU 503 President

In my 25 years as a state employee, we have had contracts with a wage freeze and without cost-of-living increases, but this is the first contract we have ever negotiated that includes furlough days, or mandatory unpaid time off. AAARGH!

Most of us had never heard of furlough days before, but given the economy and the budget gap, we sensed that they would have to be part of any negotiated settlement. That was apparent when managers in all agencies started taking them several months ago. Sure enough, we quickly concluded that we could not bargain furlough days away entirely; the best we could do was to reduce the number of them we would have to take.

That said, considering that we were negotiating during the worst economic crisis we have seen since the Great Depression, this contract is little short of miraculous. In fact, it ranks with the best state worker contracts in the whole country. Why? We protected fully paid health care for our families. (North Dakota is the only other state that has fully paid health care, but the coverage there is far inferior to ours.)

Why was this tentative agreement a victory for state workers? Consider...

	Initial Management Proposal	Tentative Agreement 7/28/09
Fully paid health insurance	Unclear	Covered
Furlough days over 2 years	26	10-14
Step Increases	Complete step freeze & 10th step eliminated	1 Step for all workers, including new 10th Step
COLA	None	None
Classification Study	Few positions	Widely expanded

Plus, under the old contract, the old first step disappeared from all state classifications June 30, giving new hires a more competitive starting rate. The new 10th step was also added.

In addition, this tentative agreement follows a legislative session in which we successfully fought off very real threats to slash state services and lay off thousands of state-paid employees. Only our support of CAPE, campaigns for progressive legislators, and lobbying on behalf of ourselves and our clients prevented most of those cuts and layoffs.

Tough times worry and challenge us but also remind us why having a union is so important. Where would we have been without this union in the past year? Can you guess? Thank God for this union, and for those of you, our members, who step up to volunteer to do what needs to be done to inform the public and the legislature. You work hard at providing services to Oregonians and then to devote some of your well-earned time off to ensure that those services are not taken away.

We reached this agreement after eight long months of difficult negotiations. As our elected bargaining team has pointed out, we knew this would not be the year we would win the raises our members truly deserve. Instead, our goal was to make sure state employees were not required to shoulder a disproportionate share of the burden of balancing the budget. Looking around at other segments of the work force and workers in other states, it is safe to say that this agreement meets that goal.

That is why I am voting YES on ratification and I hope you do, too.

503 Civil and Human Rights Committee Plans Conference in Portland, October 24

The SEIU Local 503 Civil and Human Rights Committee will hold a day-long conference, Saturday, October 24 at the union's Portland headquarters. Keynote speaker is Dan HoSang, University of Oregon Assistant Professor of Ethnic Studies and Political Science.

The SEIU Portland Field office is located at 6401 SE Foster Road. Because space is limited, members are encouraged to pre-register. For registration details and an agenda, call the Salem SEIU HQ at 800-452-2146 / 503-581-1505, or see the SEIU Calendar on line at www.seiu503.org.

The conference was developed by SEIU 503 Civil and Human Rights Committee members and members of the AFRAM, Lavender, and Latino/Latina Caucuses. Topics and format will be varied. Future events will focus in more depth

on specific issues that have sparked a high level of member interest. For example, the committee will sponsor a workshop on immigration at the SEIU headquarters in Salem on Thursday evening September 10. See the SEIU Calendar at www.seiu503.org for details.

"By hearing people's stories and learning about issues," said Rose Kachadoorian, chair of the Civil and Human Rights Committee, "we can strengthen the union by being more informed and inclusive."

"Unions are about fairness and equality," added Johnny Earl of the AFRAM Caucus, "so this is an ideal conference for union members to develop."