

2015: A Year of Building Strength

2015 has been a year of strength and growth for SEIU 503. Between organizing previously unorganized workers and signing up represented workers who weren't yet members, over 2000 workers joined SEIU 503 last year, and over 5000 of us recommitted to stand with our fellow members to build a just and vibrant society.

Our union's growth in 2015 was due in large part to coordinated member-to-member conversations and engaging new and existing membership on a scale unparalleled in previous years. Uniting around the strength of our recent contract wins has reinforced the strength of our union.

By strengthening our union and growing our membership, CAPE (Citizen Action For Political Education) contributions have increased over 50 percent since 2013. CAPE has helped elect political leaders who stand with working Oregonians. 2016 will see a strengthened Local 503 that is ready and able to hold elected officials accountable in our mission to create an Oregon where all workers have a fair shot to get ahead.

SEIU 503 VOICE

Fair Shot Launches 2016 Legislative Agenda



The status quo is not working for many of us—women, people of color, people who identify as LGBTQ, immigrants and working families—and the gap between the wealthy and the rest of us continues to grow.

Many of us are struggling with workplace policies that simply don't work for families and are faced with zero retirement savings. On top of that, staggering opportunity gaps and long-standing inequalities faced by communities of color leave us even further behind.

We need policies that fix our broken economy and give us all a fair shot. We need change. We need elected officials to make us a priority.

That's why a group of economic and social justice organizations—including SEIU 503, Family Forward Oregon, the Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon, Basic Rights Oregon, the Center for Intercultural Organizing, the Oregon AFL-CIO, PCUN, Portland Jobs with Justice, the Urban League of Portland, the YWCA, and many others—have joined together as Fair Shot Oregon.

The Fair Shot Oregon coalition is now building momentum on the heels of a victorious 2015 legislative session. Together, we achieved significant progress for working Oregonians and their families—passing paid sick days, expanding employment opportunity by prohibiting employers from including questions about applicants' criminal history on job applications, providing a secure way for all Oregonians to save for retirement, and taking important steps to end profiling.

But our work is far from over.

With long-standing inequalities holding many of us back, and a growing gap between the wealthy and working families, it is clear that the economy is only working for a few. We need policies that fix our broken economy and give us all a fair shot to get ahead.

To that end, the coalition has adopted three priority issues for the next legislative session:

1. **Raise the wage for all Oregonians.** Oregon's current minimum wage is not enough to live on. An Oregonian working full time for \$9.25 an hour earns just \$19,240 a year. No matter where you live, that's not nearly enough to afford the basics like housing, food and childcare.

It's simple: If you work full time, you and your family should be able to get by.

2. **Ending profiling, the systemic process of law enforcement targeting certain communities.** People in low-income neighborhoods and communities of color

are targeted by profiling the most, leading to higher arrest and conviction rates among people of color generally—and African-Americans specifically. Many are already struggling to make ends meet and risk harsher penalties and extra fees when they can't afford to pay the fines—putting their jobs on the line and their families at risk.

We made progress on this issue with the passage of HB 2002, a bill that prohibits profiling by law enforcement and created a work group that will continue to build transparency and accountability into our laws. That's a huge step.



Rebecca Sandoval

Members of our union, like Secretary-Treasurer Rebecca Sandoval, are weighing in with Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum, who leads the profiling work group.

"Profiling based on race, gender, sexual orientation or other identities is wrong," Rebecca said to the Attorney General at a listening session on November 5 in Medford. "It does not fit with Oregon's values and our state will be held back from benefiting from the full participation and contributions of every Oregonian so long as the practice continues."

3. **Ending wage theft, the widespread illegal practice of not paying workers the wages they've earned.** Wage theft occurs when employers pay less than the minimum wage, don't pay overtime, force employees to work "off the clock" or "under the table," issue paychecks that bounce, steal tips, deny legally required meal and rest breaks, or don't pay workers at all. Shockingly, it happens all the time.

Addressing wage theft is an exciting new focus for the coalition. The first step is creating stronger laws that protect workers. The coalition is also working with government agencies and community advocates to ensure that enforcement mechanisms are effective at holding employers accountable when they break the law.

Raising the minimum wage, ending profiling and stopping wage theft are policies that will help give every Oregonian an opportunity to succeed. Thanks to the support of SEIU 503 members and our community partners, Fair Shot Oregon is sending lawmakers a message loud and clear: It's time Oregonians have a fair shot to get ahead, not just get by.