

The Spark

April 2018

Local 888
SEIU
Stronger Together



Congressional candidates grilled

Members put their issues front and center at forum

SEIU members packed the auditorium at the Lawrence Public Library for an April 3rd Congressional District forum. Candidates kicked off the event with short statements, and then were grilled individually by union members sitting at cafeteria-size tables.

“I thought it was a fantastic event, and the candidates seemed to think so, too,” said **Tom McKeever**, Local 888’s new political director and secretary-treasurer-elect. “With the round robin setup, they got to talk for a time to one group of SEIU members and then move on to next.”

“The forum was a good way to try to find out what candidate the union should support,” said **Antonio Bueno**, of Local 888’s city of Lawrence unit.

The SEIU State Council sponsored the forum in partnership with Local 888 and other Massachusetts SEIU locals along with the SEIU community action program. Numerous Local 888 members from the Lawrence City Hall unit attended the event. Spanish translators were on hand.

Banners in the auditorium featured campaigns such as “Lawrence: Lucha for \$15.” And raising the minimum wage to \$15 was a top issue for SEIU members there. Attendees asked the seven candidates about issues ranging from



LAWRENCE FORUM: Susana Veras and Antonio Bueno of Local 888 were glad to hear from the congressional candidates.



THERE TO LISTEN: Pablo Garcia, left, and Pedro Ayala hear from the candidates.

climate change, to the opioid crisis, gun control and immigration reform.

See page 2 for more on candidates.

Interview with political director Tom McKeever

Q: Local 888 President Brenda Rodrigues has appointed you political director. And you were recently elected secretary-treasurer on her Leadership for Changing Times slate. How will that inform your new roles?

Brenda's philosophy is getting the membership more involved with their co-workers and the union. There wasn't a focus on that in the past. So that's a major goal. We'd like to see the membership come out and get more involved and take more leadership roles.



McKEEVER:
Newly elected secretary-treasurer.

In addition, we want to be very visible; we want to have more transparency, and to be accountable. And we certainly want to make sure that if a phonecall is placed to the office, that someone returns that call to the member. That

was one of the biggest complaints from members that we heard during the campaign.

Q: What attracted you to the position of political director?

I'm a graduate of UMass Boston. My focus was political science. I've always had an interest in political debates, the political climate and elections. So, when the post was offered to me, I gladly accepted. I'm sure there'll be a learning curve for me, but I look forward to doing the job.

Q: What changes would you like to make to improve Local 888's effectiveness?

Our main concern is to boost our COPA (Committee on Political Action) funds. Our union dues do not cover our needs for political action. If our members are willing to give additional money, then we could support the campaigns of candidates who share our ideology. We have a lot of work to do in that regard.

COPA funds allow us to endorse candidates who will really work with us to support our agenda and help us overcome roadblocks. Looking ahead, the Janus case, specifically, is a major concern.



BARGAINING TEAM: From left, **Kate Trombley**, **Michelle Dumas**, **Beth Woodward** and Chapter Chair **Jen Fiddler** (not pictured, **Bryan McMaster**).

Wachusett shows way

The 60 Wachusett paraprofessionals represented by Local 888 have a new contract. Members won their key goal of addressing the school board's moves to cut workers' pay by both trimming the number of hours and the number of days worked over the course of the year.

The agreement means the committee will make the cuts in hours more gradually, even as members' hourly pay rises somewhat. The contract includes 2 percent cost-of-living raises, an increase in pay for longevity and a first-time commitment to covering some costs of professional training.

The Wachusett Regional School District Committee has approved the new contract.

Members grill candidates

Continued from page 1

"Some of the candidates had some really impressive backgrounds, and it was great to meet them," said McKeever.

The 3rd congressional seat is open because U.S. Rep. Niki Tsongas (D-Lowell) is retiring. Seven Democrats attended the SEIU forum:

- Alexandra Chandler, a former U.S. national security analyst
- Abhijit "Beej" Das, a small business owner
- Rufus Gifford, a former U.S. ambassador to Denmark
- Dan Koh, ex-chief of staff for Boston Mayor Marty Walsh
- Barbara L'Italien, state senator from the 2nd Essex and Middlesex District
- Juana Matias, state rep from Lawrence
- Lori Trahan, small business owner.



SUNNY SOLIDARITY: Members of SEIU Local 721 in Los Angeles stand with Emerson College workers in their fight for a fair contract.

Emerson Staff Union files charges against college

The staff union at Emerson College has filed unfair labor practice charges against the school for changing SEIU Local 888 members' jobs and working conditions without negotiating first with their union.

The Emerson College staff has been bargaining for 18 months for a first contract.

John-Albert Mosley, program coordinator in the Visual & Media Arts department and member of the Emerson Staff Union said, "I love working at Emerson, but we refuse to accept the administration's consistent attempts to undermine union support. We come to the bargaining table in good faith and we expect the administration to do the same."

The charges filed with the National Labor Relations Board included complaints that the college's representatives have failed to bargain in good faith by making unilateral changes. Also, workers charged that Emerson has violated their federally protected rights to engage in concerted collective activity to improve wages and working conditions.

Management insists that Emerson cannot raise union members' pay because it is a nonprofit. In the meantime, the college continues with expansion plans, including the purchase of a \$24 million building. And its own wage-comparison studies show staff is paid well below market rate.

"Although negotiations have been lengthy, this first contract will lay the foundation for the future," said Hersch Rothmel, Local 888 organizer. With charges filed and an active membership ready to fight, he said, "the Emerson Staff Union is confident about the outcome."

The 140 members of SEIU Local 888's Emerson Staff Union provide critical administrative services and support to students and faculty in the information technology, registration, television, radio, film, library, clinical and academic departments.

Wins in Somerville, Belmont

The **Somerville Dispatchers Unit** has a new three-year contract that has a total value of slightly over 10 percent in monetary benefits, including an increase in pay for longevity on the job. Because the contract is retroactive to last July 1, members will get retro checks.

Among other things, every employee gets a \$500 pay increase, a hike in shift differential pay, an additional holiday, a 2 percent cost-of-living increase and a guarantee of four hours pay for court time.

The **Belmont Clerical Unit** ratified a new contract. The 44-member union covers clerical and librarian workers and building inspectors. The contract includes a bump in longevity pay, additional step raises, improved eyeglass benefit and 2 percent cost-of-living increases.

"Both of these were very dedicated negotiation teams, very focused on getting what they wanted," said field representative **David Nagle**. "They dug in their heels and were very resilient."



NEGOTIATING PARTNERS: David Nagle and Terry Medeiros, in front, and Christine Cornelio, left rear, and Susan DeSousa

Healthy effort nets legislative victory for public worker safety

The hard work of Massachusetts labor unions has paid off with a new law ensuring that all public workers are covered under the same safety standards as the state's private sector ones.

The new law will make federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration regulations the minimum safety standard for all municipal, public authority, higher education and state employees. It was signed into law by Gov. Charlie Baker last month after passage by the Legislature.

"I was excited when I heard the news about OSHA protection for public employees," said **Brenda Rodrigues**, president-elect of Local 888. "Working as a public employee, there were times I saw violations in the work site, but there was no reporting or protections for the employees."

The new law is "a historic victory for workers in the state," said Jodi Sugerman-Brozan, executive director of the Massachusetts Coalition for Occupational Safety and Health. "Over the coming years, untold number of lives will be saved because OSHA protections will now cover thousands more workers."

The law will apply the enhanced safety standards for 428,510 public sector workers. Between 2005 and 2016, 52 municipal workers were fatally injured at work in Massachusetts, according to MassCOSH.

MassCOSH, a union-backed worker safety advocacy group, is a sponsor of the Workers' Memorial Day planned for the Massachusetts State House in Boston on Friday, April 27, from noon to 1:15 p.m.

Coming Attractions

Boston Labor Conference: Labor Organizing, Political Power & the Trump Effect

Saturday, April 14, 8:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m.

UMass Boston Labor Resource Center

Register here:

<http://conta.cc/2FOrsO>

For more information, see:

<http://umasslep.prometheuslabor.com/event/boston-labor-conference-labor-organizing-political-power-and-trump-effect>

Labor Guild classes

Monday, April 16, 6:30– 9:00 p.m.

<http://laborguild.com/product/spring-2018-school-labor-management-relations/>

Workers' Memorial Day

Friday, Apr 27, 12:00-1:15 p.m.

Massachusetts State House
24 Beacon St., Boston

<https://www.massflcio.org/calendar/worker-s-memorial-day-state-house>

Swearing-in ceremony for Officers and Executive Board members

Tuesday, May 1, 6-8 p.m.

SEIU Local 888, 25 Braintree Hill Park, No. 306, conference room, Braintree

For more information, visit:

<http://www.seiu888.org/888members/elections/>

Raise Up Congress for Paid Family and Medical Leave and a \$15 Minimum Wage

Tuesday, May 8, 1-3 p.m.

Massachusetts State House, 24 Beacon St, Boston,

www.raiseupma.org/congress

Gubernatorial Candidates Forum

Saturday, June 16, Location TBA

