

The Spark

February 2018

Local 888
SEIU
Stronger Together



Look for your election ballot from Local 888 and return it before the March 3 vote count (mail it in by Feb. 28). Need a replacement ballot? Call (617) 241-3325 or email MyUnion@seiu888.org.

***Exercise your right to VOTE to elect the future
Local 888 leaders who will best represent you!***

The GIC Debacle:

How it happened and how we can stop it from happening again

Without consulting labor unions, Governor Baker pushed through massive healthcare changes for state employees in mid-January. On January 18, the Group Insurance Commission (GIC), made a rushed decision to limit the health insurance options for 450,000 state employees and retirees who receive benefits. The decision cut plan offerings from Harvard Pilgrim Health Care, Fallon Community Health, and Tufts Health Plan. The changes would have taken place on July 1, 2018.



Union members from many different unions gathered at the Boston Teachers Union hall to protest the GIC decision.

The final proposal was only released to the GIC board members only hours before consideration of the vote. The Attorney General's office is now conducting an investigation into whether this violated the open meeting law. The publicly available agenda for the meeting listed the item under "Procurement" as "Medical/Behavioral Health Decision – VOTE."

In the ensuing backlash that unfolded, the GIC announced a reconsideration at its February 1 meeting. At that meeting, members voted to overturn

the decision made on January 18. Local 888 President Mark DelloRusso said, "Workers should have a stronger voice in GIC decision making. It looks like the Governor heard the voices of hundreds of thousands of those affected by their bad plan. We need to stay vigilant in the next few weeks to make sure costs to employees don't increase."

In the coming weeks, the GIC will make decisions about rates and plan designs, so the fight is far from over. All SEIU Local 888 members are urged to keep the pressure on at the GIC's upcoming meetings and to work towards increasing public input and labor's influence on the Commission.

Were you outraged by the GIC decision? Concerned about rising health insurance premiums? Email rwilson@seiu888 to get more information and a one-page flyer about reforms at the GIC.

America needs union jobs: Feb 26 Day of Action

On February 26th, thousands of working people across Massachusetts will join a national day of action as we speak out for the good, union jobs our communities need.



The Working People's Day of Action coincides with the Supreme Court hearings on the Janus vs. AFSCME case. That case is part of a well-funded campaign by the wealthy special interests to divide us from our co-workers – and to limit the power in numbers we have together in a union.

Fifty years ago, in February 1968, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. joined striking sanitation workers in

Tennessee as they fought for the freedom to join together in a union for dignity and respect on the job.

Sign up to participate in actions on Feb. 26 to defend the very freedoms for which Dr. King fought and died, including the freedom to join a strong union for a better life. Use the online form here:

<https://goo.gl/forms/OmD8SiUnhYrZ5a5y2>

"In our glorious fight for civil rights, we must guard against being fooled by false slogans, such as 'right-to-work.' It provides no 'rights' and no 'works.' Its purpose is to destroy labor unions and the freedom of collective bargaining... We demand this fraud be stopped." – Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., 1961

A member's reaction to the GIC changes

Kitty Mahoney

- Framingham Professionals Union
- 6 years as Secretary-Treasurer

When **Kitty Mahoney** heard about the GIC changes, she immediately wrote a letter to her representatives. Here is an excerpt from her letter:



Local 888 member at the Framingham Professionals Union **Kitty Mahoney**

"This is a violation of the trust that I placed in the hands of those who by design must consider my best interests, the need for health care and has dramatically reduced my health care options.

"Public sector employees have had to make compromising health care option agreements over the years. The impacts of these changes are deep

and profound! From reducing the capacity to attract public employees, to reduced care options and even suggests a complete monopoly on pharmacy choice... excluding all others except (in my community) a single mail-order pharmacy!

"Many need to change doctors AGAIN having just done so recently! The committee deciding to slash the options made available to those who have dedicated themselves to public service compromises health care relationships we have with our providers and reduces the inclination for people to seek routine care which only serves to further increase poor health outcomes when AGAIN we are forced to change doctors!

"GIC was sold to us as an alternative to costly carriers as a group. I understand the need for cost containment, but eliminating choices does little to that end when there are few at the table to negotiate group rates and we are left with mail order care all around. Consider the voices representing the proposal and the unfair advantages. Anyone would be outraged. I am."

GIC Needs reform

The recent decision by the GIC highlights the larger problem that the GIC regularly makes decisions that negatively impact workers with a lack of public input or transparency.

Currently there are a number of bills that would reform the GIC:

- A greater voice for employees by adding labor representation to the GIC (H.2525 & S. 1406)
- Require the GIC to hold public hearings before they vote (S.2202)
- Control out-of-pocket costs (H.2569)
- Greater transparency. (SD.2500)

Do you want to distribute the Spark to your coworkers?

To receive multiple copies of the Spark, indicate how many copies you would like on an online subscription form at: <http://tinyurl.com/z713jdm>

Local 888 featured on labor panel at Brandeis

On February 7, the Brandeis Labor Coalition hosted a panel on unions and work at Brandeis. The unions represented were SEIU Local 509 Graduate Students, SEIU 509 Part-Time Faculty, and SEIU Local 888.



Panelist and Local 888 member **Aimee Slater** (Librarians Union - SEIU Local 888) is second from right. Other panelists include: Drew Flanagan (Part-Time Faculty - SEIU 509) and Kalee Hall (Graduate Students - SEIU 509).

Local 888 member and steward **Aimee Slater** represented the Librarians Union at Brandeis. Aimee spoke about coming from a union family with both of her parents in unions and her family not crossing picket lines.

Aimee emphasized the importance of her union being at the forefront of initiatives that benefit both union and community members. She gave examples of Local 888 members fighting for a lactation room and gender neutral restrooms in the library.

Aimee also outlined her role as a steward. At the Brandeis Libraries there are five stewards across both of the units. The stewards meet together every two weeks to compare notes and discuss their contract and workplace issues. Stewards also meet monthly with management to informally discuss the contract. Most of the time her job is about listening to members' concerns, helping to mitigate them, and to set people's expectations around what is a union issue and what is not.

Aimee closed the panel by explaining the importance of member education. "We have to educate our members on the value of having a union," said Slater. "There is value in being part of a bigger whole."

"Moment of Silence" in memory of Local 888 members



If a Local 888 member (or family) passes away, and you would like to have a notice included in the Spark, please send information to Brenda Rodrigues at brodrigues@seiu888.org

KATHERINE "KATIE" Y. DURAND

Local 888 officers extend our deepest sympathies to Ms. Durand's family, friends and co-workers. Katherine Durand courageously fought a rare form of sarcoma. She worked for the Town of Billerica as a conservation land use assistant. Katie's mom, Michelle Durand, is a former Local 888 Executive Board member and works at the Lowell Schools.

SEIU stands with Poor People's Campaign

Poor people, clergy and activists held a news conference at the State House on Feb. 5 to serve notice on state legislative leaders that their failure to address the enmeshed evils of systemic racism, poverty, the war economy, ecological devastation and America's distorted national morality will be met this spring with 6 weeks of direct action - including one of the largest waves of nonviolent civil disobedience in U.S. history.



Community, labor, and faith leaders gathered at the state house in early February to announce the Poor People's Campaign.

The event was one of over 30 held at state capitols and the U.S. Capitol, marking the first nationwide action by the campaign since it launched on Dec. 4 -- 50 years to the day after Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. called for the original Poor People's Campaign. **SEIU is supporting the campaign.** Learn more here: <https://poorpeoplescampaign.org/>

Soldiers' Home member saves life of veteran



Local 888 member **Lenny DiBartolomeo** saved a veteran's life this past summer when he took quick action during a health crisis. When workers have good working conditions, they do their jobs best. Thank you, Lenny and all Local 888 members who "go above and beyond."

Coming Attractions

Young Worker Workshop Series: Labor Organizing as Community Organizing

Monday, February 12, 5pm

Teamsters Local 25

Join the Labor Guild for a FREE four-night workshop series for young workers.



Day of Action regarding Supreme court decision Janus v AFSCME

Monday, February 26

SEIU is planning a national day of action on Feb. 26, the first day of oral arguments regarding the Janus case at the Supreme Court. Chapter leaders interested in participating will be provided with a toolkit, talking points, social media graphics, stickers, placards, a press advisory template, and a press release template.



Deadline for Local 888 Officer Ballots is Saturday, March 3

Mail ballots before Feb. 28 to ensure delivery by **March 3**, 9:00 am deadline 10:00 am ballot count



Conference on Labor in the Age of Trump

March 2 – 3, 2018

UMass Amherst, Campus Center

Free Two-Day Conference

Friday March 2, 9-4: research presentations

Saturday March 3, 10-3: workshops with scholars and activists.

BUILD YOUR SKILLS, KNOWLEDGE, CAPACITY, LEADERSHIP.

Register now for the Labor Guild's Spring term classes on Monday nights. Choose from 9 course selections. The Spring term begins March 12 and runs through May 14. Classes begin at 6:30 pm and 7:50 pm.

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

Sat, April 14, 8:30am – 1:30pm

UMass Boston Labor Resource Center

Workers' Memorial Day

Friday, April 27, 12-1pm

State House, 24 Beacon Street

Honor workers who were killed, injured or suffered from illness on the job!

Swearing-in ceremony for Officers

Tuesday, May 1

#WeRise

2.26.2018