

Dues Equality: More Money for Chapters

Chapters are the heart and soul of Local 888. Each chapter is an integral part of our local, but with its own identifiable community of interests. The stronger the chapters are, the stronger we are as a union.

Now that Local 888 has adopted Dues Equality, we have increased the allocations for chapter funds in order to strengthen chapters and better support local leaders. The increases allocated to chapter funds provide more resources for members to work with. Chapters can use their increased funds for membership activities and training.

Handbook now available

Local 888 also has a new chapter funds policy handbook to help leaders better utilize the resources available. The handbook contains helpful information on:

- More efficient ways for leaders to access chapter funds
- Using chapter funds to support membership and leadership development
- Suggestions for chapter leadership structures

The environment for Local 888 members has never been more challenging. That's why it's important for every chapter to take advantage of Local 888's resources to increase membership involvement and win better contracts.

Note: the Chapter Funds Policy Handbook is available for download at <http://www.seiu888.org/chapters> ■

If you have questions about chapter funds or how to make your chapter stronger, call 617-241-3300.

Changes to Retiree Health Benefits in the Works

Governor Deval Patrick is proposing major changes to the health benefits received by retired public workers. Governor Patrick's proposal, which he plans to file as legislation, is based on the recommendations of a special commission that included representatives of several public employee unions.

The major proposed change: Future retirees must complete twenty years of service and have reached the age of 60 in order to qualify for retiree health insurance. The changes won't impact current retirees, and will have minimal impact on those employees who are within five years of retiring.

But the impact could be significant for employees for whom retirement is still years away, says Local 888 president DelloRusso. "It's essential that Local 888 members learn about the proposed legislation so that we're prepared to speak up and fight back against measures that are really harmful." ■

A complete summary of the proposed changes is available at www.seiu888.org



Governor Deval Patrick announces proposed changes to retiree health benefits.

Make Your Voice Count

Ask Senate candidates about the issues that you care about at the SEIU Candidate Forum. *Details on Page 2.*

Ask Sparky

Dear Sparky: I get along really well with my boss. I think I could probably get a better deal than what's in the contract if I negotiated with him one-on-one. I "get" why workers at the bottom of the wage scale can benefit from having a union but wouldn't it make more sense for me to strike out on my own?



Worth More in Worcester

Dear Worth More: I can answer your question with two simple words—'new boss.' Do you "get" where I'm going? Contracts can sound complicated but at the end of the day they're simple. They provide an enforceable set of rules, large and small, that lay out the terms of your employment. Say you were able to strike a sweet deal with your boss. But then your boss goes off to be the boss of someone else, leaving you with a new boss who doesn't give a fig about the deal that you cut with boss number one. In other words, by going out on your own, you're left *on your own*. Meanwhile your brothers and sisters have the security of knowing that the terms and conditions of their employment are spelled out in, you guessed it, that handy little contract. *Capiche?* And while I've got your attention, I'd recommend that you take a look at what's in your contract. That's because while having a contract is great, it's meaningless if it's not enforced. Want proof? Check out the chapter reports on page 4.

Do you have a question for Sparky? Send it to spark@seiu888.org.

Mail Bag

Dear Mark:
Thank you for your rapid response to our questions concerning Dues Equality and other issues. I was truly impressed by the concern you showed by coming here in person. I may not agree with what transpired but you convinced me that you followed the letter of the law of the charter on all fronts and you left me with an impression that as our President, you are sincere in your role in making this a better union for all.

Thank you again!

Teri Lambert

Mashpee Clerical/Dispatcher

Coming Attractions

Fundraiser for Tristan Pulsifer's Fight Against Leukemia

When: Sunday, February 10, 1–4PM

Where: The Center Bar and Grill, 102 Green Street, Worcester.

Tristan is the grandson of a Local 888 member who works at the Lottery. \$25 suggested donation. Tickets at the door. To contribute, email or call Donna Mastrovito at 508 450-8639 or mastrovito21@charter.net.

SAVE THE DATE

COMING UP

Public Higher Education Advocacy Day

When: Tuesday, March 5, 11AM

Gardner Auditorium, Massachusetts Statehouse
Governor Patrick has made proposals for reinvesting in higher education. We need to make sure our legislators understand the urgency and the support behind these proposals. Every campus will be making plans for recruiting, training and transporting students, staff and faculty to the State House. Registration details coming soon. For more information contact PHENOM at: massphenom@gmail.com.

US Senate Candidate Forum

When: Saturday, March 9, 10AM – noon

Where 150 Mt. Vernon street, Dorchester, MA

Candidates for US Senate including Ed Markey and Stephen Lynch, have been invited to this SEIU candidates' forum. This is your opportunity to ask the Senate candidates about the issues that you care about.

Lobby Day for State Revenue Bill

When: Tuesday, March 12, 11am – 1pm

Where: Gardner Auditorium, Massachusetts Statehouse

Mass. Jobs with Justice Annual Dinner

When: Thursday, March 14th.

Where: Suffolk Downs, East Boston, MA

For more information about Massachusetts Jobs with Justice and to purchase tickets, visit www.massjwj.net.

Got something to say? An event members would be interested in? Send notices and letters to the editor to spark@seiu888.org

Member Tool Kit: Telling Your Story

Local 888 members have been speaking out about the importance of the work they do to the people they serve and the communities where they live and work.

Town Hall employees in Millis, crossing guards in Springfield, and guards at Barnes and Otis Air National Guard bases are Local 888 members who have been featured in newspaper stories.

"If we don't tell our story, nobody will," said Brenda Rodrigues, Secretary-Treasurer of Local 888. "Our members are the best ambassadors to the community about what unions do and how they help."

Local 888 communications director Rand Wilson says that he hopes that more members will share their stories in public forums. "We want members to tell the public about the essential service they provide," says Wilson.

Wilson offered three tips for talking about your job and your union:

- Always begin by explaining how you and your members are standing up for the public interest.
- Use examples of how the union contract improves staffing, reduces turnover, and provides the good jobs that everyone in the community needs.
- Use personal stories to show how the people you serve and the community at large benefits from the union contract, grievance procedure

- and an active and united membership.
- Share good news. When there is good news, spread it around on social media sites. ■

For more tips on how to share your story with local news media, contact Rand Wilson at rwilson@seiu888.org



The Local 888 Latino Caucus met with John Walsh, the head of the state Democratic Party to discuss upcoming elections and a plan to make their voices heard at the 2013 Democratic State Convention set for on July 13 at the Tsongas Center at UMASS Lowell. The 2013 Convention will determine the platform for the party.

Proposed Changes to Housing Authorities Raise Concerns

A string of corruption charges levied at the leaders of state housing authorities could lead to legislative changes that will hurt hundreds of lower-level authority employees. That's according to some of the 150 Local 888 members who work for eight different state housing authorities.

Al Zenkus, a shop steward and employee of the Worcester Housing Authority, says that he is particularly concerned about a proposal that could require even long-time authority employees to reapply for their jobs. "It doesn't seem right that because of problems at the highest levels, the executive directors and the board members, that the rank-and-file could end up bearing the brunt. We're talking about people who've served their local housing authority for 20, even 30 years," says Zenkus.

Last month, Governor Patrick unveiled a bill to consolidate public housing management—including budgeting, planning, and administrative functions—into six regional offices, while leaving a corps of managers

and maintenance workers at local housing authorities. The six regional authorities would be overseen by nine unpaid board members appointed by the governor. Local boards would be cut, eliminating the need for more than 1,000 local commissioners.

Union leaders say that the proposal raises more questions than it answers, and expressed frustration about the difficulty of getting information about the impact of the changes on housing authority employees. "We're reaching out to the Governor's office and the Department of Housing and Community Development for answers but there are so many questions about what this will mean for jobs, collective bargaining and the quality of service members provide to tenants and the public," says Lisa Field, Local 888 assistant director of field operations.

Zenkus says that he and his members are prepared to take a stand against changes that unfairly punish housing authority workers for problems that they had nothing to do with. "We'll do whatever it takes." ■

Chapter Reports

Wins in Westborough

Westborough DPW and Clerical Unit members overwhelmingly ratified new three year contracts. Both groups won two percent raises for each year. DPW members resolved an



issue over the leadman's pay and got double time for members working when a state of emergency is declared. Clericals won longevity pay comparable to the police and DPW.

Both units will now receive job postings before any outside advertising and notification of any new hires. Chapter chairs will also have a 30-minute union orientation with new hires. Probationary periods have been shortened to six months. The contracts will be put on the warrant for Town Meeting to approve this spring.

Weymouth Clerks Win Upgrade

Clerks in the Treasurer/Collector's Office for the town of Weymouth were doing the work of higher paid clerks in the Assessors' Office without receiving the higher pay for working out of grade. Local 888 Steward **Pat Fitzgerald** relied upon Article 17, Section G in her union contract which provides, "If an employee is required to do work of a higher grade by the department head for more than ten consecutive days, the employee shall receive a fifteen percent premium on the employee's pay grade and step in effect at the time of the requirement. The fifteen percent premium shall be retroactive to the first day of doing the higher grade work."

"It's important that we stuck with it and followed through," said Fitzgerald who has worked for the town for five years. "We felt we were in the right and something should be done. With support from Local 888 we presented a strong case."

Their grievance went to arbitration and the

arbitrator found in the union's favor. "The arbitrator awarded back pay from the date our grievance was filed. Because of our victory, management was willing to reclassify all of us as Grade 8 employees!"

Local 888 Welcomes New Board Member

Diane Foley is the newest member of the Local 888 Executive Board. Foley, who works in Weymouth as a van driver, attended the Local 888 leadership training back in December and expressed an interest in getting more involved in the union. When a seat became vacant earlier this year, President Mark DelloRusso asked Foley if she'd be interested in serving in a leadership capacity. Foley's new position became official at the last Executive Board meeting where she was sworn in. Welcome Diane! ■



President Mark DelloRusso swears in new Local 888 Executive Board member, Weymouth van driver Diane Foley.

Got news?

The Spark wants to hear from you. To submit chapter reports or other story ideas, contact Local 888 communications and policy director, Rand Wilson at rwilson@seiu888.org.



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