

LOCAL 620



Stronger Together

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“Around The Local”

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SEPTEMBER 2007

Largest Chapter Gearing Up for a Strong Contract



‘From the Executive Director’
Walt Hamilton

Most members know that although the County Chapter represents the single largest group of public employees represented by Local 620 with 2,000 members covered by our Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), the County has often been one of the least responsible employers that we negotiate with in terms of their labor relations practices and contract settlements.

This has been a result of a number of factors including the County’s funding sources which are generally less stable than Cities and Districts and, a series of County Supervisors, Administrators and Personnel Directors that did not properly value and appreciate the work that our members perform in our communities.

Times are Changing, Will the County?

There is a hope this year that the Board of Supervisors, County Administrator and Human Resource Director will recognize that it is in management’s best interests and is long overdue to agree to substantial improvements in County salaries; benefits and working conditions.

County Has the Ability to Pay

The county’s fund balances are much more ‘flush’ than they were in 2004, thanks in good part to SEIU member’s who sacrificed a COLA in October 2004 which resulted in millions of dollars in ‘savings’. The County now has to recognize the strains put on the work force by the high costs of housing, fuel and transportation to name just a few. The counties lowest paid employees are seeing ¾ of their take home pay go for rent and a number of them are using public assistance to cover their dependents on insurance!

Secure Retirement?

Our secure retirement plan provides the lowest benefit formula of any public employer within Santa Barbara or San Luis Obispo County and, to make matters worse, Santa Barbara County employees pay more out of their pockets on average to support that retirement benefit than employees of most other public agencies with which we contract. Some County employees pay twice as much as others in their same classification simply because of failed labor relations policies from the past.

Worker Friendly Schedules?

The City of Santa Barbara just negotiated an agreement with Local 620 to close most of their 9 – 5 operations every other Friday to demonstrate leadership on transportation issues and to recognize that with so many employees forced to commute long distances due to our outrageous cost of living, there is no excuse to force them unnecessarily to work and drive back & forth 10 times every week. Sadly, the County still allows each department to make up the rules on alternative work schedules rather than centralize a more worker friendly policy throughout the work-force.

Local 620
Members
More
Determined
This Year

Wherever I go in
the County I am
struck by the in-
creased level of
determination
amongst County
employees to get a
strong contract and
a good raise this
year.

(From the Executive Director Walter Hamilton Continued from page # 1)

As Vacancies Climb, Ventura County agrees to + 7.5% Raises.

The vacancy rates for 'general' employee positions in S.B. county have increased to almost ten percent for many key positions in light of all the above. Ventura County just offered a two year (26 mos.) MOU which included + 7.5% salary increases for general employees during the term.

Local 620 Members More Determined This Year

Wherever I go in the County I am struck by the increased level of determination amongst County employees to get a strong contract and a good raise this year. They are busy organizing their work sites as they have not done for years. As I write this almost 100 more members have already signed COPE cards to increase workers voices in politics and at least as importantly we now have (109 number) of new Contract Action Team members taking responsibility for organizing their co-workers at their work sites for possible actions to support a fair contract this year.

Through Working Together and taking responsibility for their work sites County employees are sending a strong message that they will do what it takes this year to wake the County up and provide good jobs with good salaries and benefits which contribute to the prosperity and health of our communities!

How to Get Involved

I urge all County employees reading this to get engaged in the effort this year. Don't sit back and think someone else will get you a good contract, get involved! Call Local 620's Political Director Mario Chavez @ 805-963-0601 ext. 13 to find out who is leading the efforts in your area.

Remember: Strong Union = Strong Contract!

**SB County Contract Action Team
Gear Up for Contract Campaign**
Submitted by Mario Chavez,
Political Organizer

As many of you are aware our MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) with the County of Santa Barbara will expire this October 2007. We have begun contract negotiations with the county and are expecting that it will be a struggle to emerge from these contract negotiations with a good contract, given the political reality of having only two likely supporters on the Board of Supervisors. We have a great team at the bargaining table that counts on 8 members selected by our membership and the support of our most experienced Local 620 staff members.

The most critical component of a contract campaign is the Contract Action Team or CAT team. You may have heard co-workers or read emails that mention CAT Members. Ever wondered what a CAT is? CAT is short for Contract Action Team. A Contract Action Team Member is a member that has volunteered to serve as activist between our bargaining team and membership. CAT members are critical to our campaign because they are responsible for ensuring that our members are well informed about what is happening at the bargaining table and are also the worksite organizers that will be organizing and turning people out to worksite actions, rallies, and meetings. Without a strong CAT team we will not be able to negotiate a strong contract.

Our CATs understand this and are doing their part in fighting for a strong contract. We currently have the largest Contract Action Team in Local 620's history! With a total of 109 CAT members, we have 46 in Santa Maria, 40 in Santa Barbara, and 23 in Lompoc. Do your part for a fair contract, get involved! Become a CAT member!

For more information contact:
Mario Chavez at (805) 963-0601 ext.13 -
mario@seiulocal620.org.

Safety Concerns at the County Psychiatric Health Facility Union Members Organize and Get Management to Respond (P.H.F.)

The County "PHF", one of only 18 across the state, provides non-medical acute inpatient psychiatric care as a low cost, high quality alternative to acute hospitalization. Two union members became more and more concerned because the perils PHF employees face daily were increasing unnecessarily. Union members (PHF staff) and union staff, brought the concerns to management.

Two issues had to do with the working relationship between the County Jail and the PHF, when inmates from the jail become PHF patients. Sometimes this is short-term: The jail is legally not permitted to give medications involuntarily, so some jail inmate admissions to PHF occur after an inmate refuses their previously prescribed and much needed ongoing medication. New protocols were set up to address this situation, so that PHF nursing staff and jail staff work together in providing medications in safe conditions, and in admitting the inmate to PHF as appropriate.

Other times, a psychiatric patient arrives from the jail accompanied by 1, 2 or up to six deputy sheriffs, especially when the inmate has a history of violence. That history is very important in assessing the potential safety risks to staff; the sheriffs are armed personnel and the PHF staff are not. Recently, such a patient broke a window among other violent acts, and it became obvious that staff levels were barely adequate for the situation. Our brainstorm to resolve this included seeking a cap on the number of inmate-patients. However, exact proportions of jail/non-jail patients realistically cannot be maintained because PHF must comply with court orders, so we developed a wish list of items to assist assessment of violence.

Our union members therefore asked for new protocols, which the PHF supervisors to their credit took seriously and developed further, so that the following are now in place:

"Prior to admission to PHF Jail mental health will provide to the PHF Program manager or a designee in their absence the following information:

- Current legal charges
- Rap sheet of past charges and Incarcerations
- Evaluation of potential for violence based on current behavior
- Jail mental health Physician and staff notes
- Jail Physician medication orders
- Fingerprint results for unknown clients

In addition each client will be assessed prior to admission to determine if it is prudent for Sheriff's Personnel to be stationed at PHF. The results of each assessment will determine whether a special treatment plan needs to be developed to address safety issues. This will include involvement of the Sheriff's Department liaison at the jail in an effort to coordinate any special needs of inmates at the PHF. The number of inmates treated at the PHF will be determined by multiple factors. This would include risk of violence, staffing assignments/patterns and acuity level at the PHF."

Some of these items were already in place, but more were needed to better assess the patients. In fact, the PHF supervisors had been working to develop the relationship with the Sheriff's Department when we brought these issues to them, so we appreciate them for laying the groundwork that will help keep these stronger protocols in place.

Nursing staff also sought clarification on their discretion to decide actions to address immediate safety concerns for any patient, because they are the ones who know what is happening on the PHF floor at any given time. They felt decisions were being made from afar, especially concerning too much roaming by patients with various violent histories. Our victory here: "immediate patient safety will be addressed by shift lead assignments, and will utilize the PHF policy for increased monitoring." The initial steps include provisions for redistribution of staff assignments to provide 1:1 monitoring, physician involvement, a 1:1 protocol policy, and formalized printed behavioral treatment plan posted on front of charts. In addition, patient rights advocates would be advised regarding any restrictive measures taken.

The final issues concerned the safety of the patients usually admitted elsewhere. PHF is not set-up to handle patients who are developmentally disabled, medically fragile, geriatric, bariatric, minors, or semi-ambulatory, and administrators agreed that it would be only on very rare occasions that PHF hospitalize such individuals, i.e. if they were at risk and if there is no other treatment option available to insure their safety. We received basic assurance that the administrators at the PHF will increase efforts to require more complete information at the point of referral to ensure that we admit patients who represent our target population.

We have very strong union membership at the PHF. New safety protocols are in place. Together we achieved a win for the working conditions at the psychiatric inpatient service facility. Remember: We are all the union!



Joining a union is not a one-time event, it's an on-going commitment to build and sustain an organization that works towards goals set by its membership and negotiated by its leadership.

Ask what you can do for your Union!

By Marcelino Sepulveda, Organizer

We are near to completing our current organizing campaign to win union representation for City of Paso Robles part time employees. This campaign has been moving forward due to strong support from other Paso Robles City staff that already have representation with SEIU Local 620.

In many cases, Paso' part-timers have signed membership applications because other City staff, members of SEIU, explained the benefits of a union. Still challenges arise in meeting workers who come from anti-union families or who "like their job" and don't "see a need" to unionize or who simply are unfamiliar with what a union is and how it works.

One of the biggest challenges in organizing workers is guiding workers to understand that their active participation and leadership is essential to building a union. In many cases, workers want union representation, and the benefits it brings, but don't want to do any extra work to make it happen.

It's a sad fact that most workers in the U.S. don't know what a union really is and how it works. I think the most common misperception is that a union is a service organization (i.e. "what is a union going to do for me?") as opposed to understanding that a union is an organization of co-workers coming together to negotiate with management for improvements in wages, benefits, and working conditions.

Anyone who signs up for union representation needs to understand that a union is not simply a service organization and that a strong union can only exist when strong leadership exists in the membership. As union staff our job is to advise, represent, facilitate, and train workers in how to

reach their objectives but membership must determine what the goals of the workers are. Consequently, a union is only as strong as its membership and leadership are.

SEIU Local 620 has a successful history representing part-time employees in Santa Maria and Santa Barbara, and likely soon Paso Robles will be part of this history too. When I tell Paso Robles part-time workers what benefits their counterparts in Santa Maria and Santa Barbara have been able to win through union negotiations they eagerly want to sign up because many of them don't have such benefits.

However, when I explain to them that it will take all of us working together to make their union happen and that they have to talk to co-workers about the union and sign others up for membership and get others involved in the campaign then workers usually express less enthusiasm. And yet, this is the only way that union victories happen.

Joining a union is not a one-time event, it's an on-going commitment to build and sustain an organization that works towards goals set by its membership and negotiated by its leadership. As SEIU, we all can support unions by educating non-unionized co-workers, family and friends as to what a union truly is. To paraphrase John F. Kennedy, ask not what a union can do for you but ask what you can do for your union!



Update From Local 620's Northern Turf

By Bruce Corsaw, Senior Field Rep./Internal Organizer

Local 620 members and staff have been busy up north negotiating contracts, conducting field campaigns and representing fellow members. Bargaining is continuing in the City of Morro Bay. The City's negotiations team is seeking direction from the City Council. It is our position that even though the City is going through financial difficulties members are falling further and further out of market. The bargaining team is committed to work to achieve a fair contract.

Negotiations in Cambria Community Service District have concluded with an overwhelming victory. Members in Cambria ratified their new 5 year contract on July 11th, 2007. The contract consisted of 4.0% per year salary increase, salary equity adjustments of 2.0% to 6.0% the first year & 2.0% to 4.0% the second year and Longevity pay of 5.0% after 10 years of service, an additional 2.5% after 15 years and 2.5% after 20 years. The Bargaining Team Cori Ryan, Andy Dreyfus and Pat Clark did a great job!



Santa Maria City members meet to prepare for negotiations.

All Local 620 staff are also working on the County of Santa Barbara negotiations. Contract Action Team members (CATs) are still needed. Worksites that have stewards are strong, but we have several worksites that presently do not have stewards. I am requesting that members in worksites in Santa Maria with no stewards talk with their co-workers to develop worksite leadership and have them contact me. It is extremely important for all members to participate in County negotiations affecting their wages and benefits by volunteering to be worksite leaders, attending Union meetings and by participating in job actions sponsored by your negotiations team.



Santa Maria Stewards Daniel Vegezzi, Louie Raygoza and Herb Soares.

Together Local 620 membership can overcome obstacles at all of the Bargaining Tables and in support of all working families. One way is by voluntarily contributing to SEIU Local 620's political program (COPE) so that we have the funds to make substantive impacts and changes with Local, State & Federal Government such as Universal Health Care especially due to the ever rising cost of healthcare. Three to five dollars per pay period may not sound like very much, but when you multiply these amounts by thousands of members it enables us to make a difference with our elected leaders and pass much needed laws that benefit working families.

We are also preparing for negotiations for full-time and 32 hour members in the City of Santa Maria. Surveys were collected at a general membership meeting and BBQ on July 31st, 2007. Negotiations will begin in September with both full-time and part-time bargaining teams at the same table, groups will be combined within the same MOU for the first time.

We are continuing to work on representational issues with San Luis Obispo Superior Court. Recent meetings have resulted in better communications between the Court Assistant CEO and union stewards & staff. The Court has requested assistance from the AOC on proper representation procedures and training for items such as 'Weingarten Rights'. We also have scheduled a Labor - Management meeting for August 8th. This is the first meeting in over a year and the agenda is to develop ground rules for future meetings and to begin reviewing the Union survey so that we can address the concerns raised by the membership.

Together we can make a difference.

Local 620
Unite • Participate • Overcome
Stronger Together

California Overtime Law

Submitted by George Green,
Senior Field Rep./Internal Organizer

**California
Overtime
Law**

Qualifications for overtime pay : To qualify for overtime pay, an employee must be classified as a non-exempt employee.

Positions that are classified as administrative, professional, or executives are typically exempt from overtime and must meet the requirements of a salary basis test and duties test.

A leading Los Angeles law firm is investigating overtime law violations and providing free case evaluations for California employees who are due overtime wages. California and US Employment laws protect an employee's civil rights with specific guidelines for overtime pay.

With new state regulations coming out each year and with a new federal overtime pay law established in 2004, employers often misclassify employees, intentionally or accidentally, to avoid paying costly overtime wages.

Premium Pay / Overtime Pay – According to the Department of Industrial Relations, a California employer must pay overtime, whether for authorized or unauthorized overtime hours, at the following rates:

Overtime equals one and one half (1.5) times an employee's regular hourly rate of pay for hours worked over eight (8) in a workday or over forty (40) hours in a work week.

Double time equals two (2) times an employee's regular rate of pay for hours worked over twelve (12) in a workday or for hours over eight (8) on the seventh day of the work week.

Common Employee Misclassifications – California employees paid salary or hourly may both be eligible for overtime pay, whether paid weekly, bi-weekly or monthly. Despite many myths, salary does not automatically mean an employee is exempt/not qualified for overtime pay.

The duties test is met by the actual work being done as opposed to "job titles" or written "job descriptions."

Qualifications for overtime pay: To qualify for overtime pay, an employee must be classified as a non-exempt employee. Positions that are classified as administrative, professional, or executive are typically exempt from overtime and must meet the requirements of a salary basis test and duties test.

Exempt employees are not eligible for overtime pay, meal and rest period requirements, uniform requirements, and other protections of the Industrial Welfare Commission orders.

Examples of Exempt Status guidelines include:

To be Exempt as an Administrative Employee – one requirement specifies that an employee must perform non-manual work as their primary duty, directly related to management policies, general business operations or perform work in educational administration.

To be Exempt as a Professional Employee – one requirement specifies that an employee's primary duties must consistently utilize discretion and judgment, performing work which is predominantly intellectual and varied.

To Be Exempt as an Executive Employee – one requirement specifies that an employee must regularly direct the work of two or more other full-time employees and have management as his/her "primary duty".

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November 9-11th**



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~Bus Trip

~Refreshments on bus

~Accommodations

~Baggage handling

~1 Buffet per person

~Fun Book

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Final payment due September 28, 2007 or
Pay in full early by September 7th

Hosts: Walter Kuhn & Gary Perruzzi

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**Questions? Call Walter Kuhn at:
805-238-2038 or 805-712-0436**

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MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO: WALTER KAHN
Send to: 378 Via Ramona,
Paso Robles, CA 93446**

Circle one below:
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Name: _____

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Phone Number: _____

Check# _____ Deposit Amount _____

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Hospital Confinement Care Indemnity Insurance

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Daily Hospital Confinement Benefit

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Plus ... more

See website for more details:

aflac.com

Once on the website, put CareAssist in the search engine.

Click on Hospital Confinement Care Indemnity Insurance.

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The plan is available on a voluntary basis, fully paid for and controlled by the employee.

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We pay cash benefits fast—processing most claims within four days of their receipt.

Want to learn more? Call 1-800-99-AFLAC (1-800-992-3522) today.

Santa Barbara County Employees' Assn.
 SEIU Local 620
 933 Castillo Street
 Santa Barbara CA 93101

NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION
 U.S. POSTAGE PAID
 SANTA BARBARA, CA
 PERMIT NO. 620

We are always updating our database. Please return the member change form to the Santa Barbara Office.

Santa Barbara Office
 933 Castillo Street
 Santa Barbara, CA
 93101
 Phone: 805-963-0601

If any information has changed:

New address?
 New Email Address?
 Name Change?
 New Job Location?
 New Job Classification?
 New Home Phone?

MEMBER CHANGE FORM	
Name:	Home Phone:
Address:	Work Phone:
City:	Zip Code:
Work Location:	Fax Number:
Job Title:	Date of Birth:
Beneficiary:	Relationship:
Email Address:	Signature:

Chapter: (Place an "X" next to your Chapter)

<input type="checkbox"/> Air Pollution Control District	<input type="checkbox"/> Pismo Beach, City of	<input type="checkbox"/> Santa Maria, City of
<input type="checkbox"/> Arroyo Grande, City of	<input type="checkbox"/> Port San Luis Harbor District	<input type="checkbox"/> Retired Chapter
<input type="checkbox"/> Atascadero, City of	<input type="checkbox"/> San Luis Coastal Unified School Dist	<input type="checkbox"/> Guadalupe, City of
<input type="checkbox"/> Cambria Community Svc District	<input type="checkbox"/> San Luis Obispo Court Tech. Unit	<input type="checkbox"/> Santa Barbara Hourly , City of
<input type="checkbox"/> Carpinteria, City of	<input type="checkbox"/> San Luis Obispo Courts "General"	
<input type="checkbox"/> Goleta Water District	<input type="checkbox"/> Santa Barbara "General", City of	
<input type="checkbox"/> Grover Beach, City of	<input type="checkbox"/> Santa Barbara "TAP", City of	
<input type="checkbox"/> Isla Vista Recreation & Parks Dist.	<input type="checkbox"/> Santa Barbara, County of	
<input type="checkbox"/> Morro Bay, City of	<input type="checkbox"/> Santa Barbara Court Employees	
<input type="checkbox"/> Paso Robles, City of	<input type="checkbox"/> Santa Maria Cemetery District	