

LOCAL 284



We provide a clean, safe, nurturing place for children to learn and grow.

We support teachers, faculty, and families.

We work hard to provide for our families and we give back to our communities.

WE ARE PUBLIC EMPLOYEES AND WE ARE PROUD OF WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE DO!

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- SEIU Convention 2012
- Bargaining for Our Future
- Political Update
- Bullying: A Tragedy
- L.284 in DC
- Zoo Day!
- And More...

Check us on the web for more information:

- upcoming events
- The 1934 Trucker Strike Video

And Much More...
www.seiu284.org

The Communicator

A publication for SEIU Local 284 Education Workers Across Minnesota

STRONGER TOGETHER

SUMMER 2012

2012 SEIU International Convention Report Labor's Crisis, Then and Now: Labor in the 21st Century and its Lesson for Today

Where are we now?

There have never been greater disparities in pay and benefits between Corporate CEO's and front line workers than there is today; a gap wider than during the Great Depression. Yet ironically, even under these circumstances, when organized labor is at less than 7% of the workforce in the U.S. and under an all out corporate assault, many union members do not associate these actions as an attack on their livelihood. How can that be?

Minnesota Labor History

Minnesota is rich with labor strife history. Minneapolis, for example, was ground zero in the labor movement in the mid 1930's, a time when big industry and robber barons wielded a ruthless control over working environments. The Trucker's Strike of 1934 shut down the trucking industry. Its significance in labor history cannot be underestimated. It impacted all businesses that relied on product or supply delivery, and forced corporations to raise pay and benefits, a move which created the conditions to sustain a middle class in our society (For more information, see the Youtube link on our website- seiu284.org). It is vital to understand the history of the labor movement in Minnesota, and the conditions which led to such significant unrest. Not only was there a need for workers to have a voice regarding the conditions under which they were working and improvements in wages and benefits, there was the growing sense of anger and frustration that comes from an inability to provide for your loved ones, staggering unemployment, and a lack of safe and affordable housing. Workers, union and non union, employed and out of work, united and stood strong in the face of fear, hostility and collective corporate greed. And they won. Their victory was significant because it paved the path

to decades of stable working conditions and prosperity for Americans of all walks of life- our working middle class.

What is happening today?

So many of the gains that those in labor fought for has fallen away. The conditions under which our country is operating today are more like the early 20th century than any other in our history- when those with money and power end up making the rules, and the rest of us working to increase their wealth.

What can we do about it?

Like our union brothers and sisters before us, the time has come to organize both ourselves and those who suffer under the ironfisted rules of today's economy. We believe that we can create the change we need to see in this country, and have committed to doing everything in our power to stand up to corporate greed and again

create a country that is fair for all and works for all.

Working National-ly and Locally

At the recent SEIU 2012 National Convention, several members attended and participated in approving the vision and plan that will be our union's work for the next 4 years, which includes:

1. Tackle income inequality
2. Unite more workers to have a voice
3. Develop strategic partnerships
4. Pass comprehensive immigration reform

Bob Cook, Executive Board Member and Bus Driver in Edina Public Schools had this to say about his experience at our International Convention, "What I am bringing home from our convention is, education and involvement within my unit (and others) is critical to defeat these attacks and to further the vision of a just society. I will work to improve my unit through meetings with members and personal discussions. I have learned firsthand of the struggles and successes (and there have been some) of members of our union from all over the country, Canada and Puerto Rico. They didn't win by sitting home."



2012 Convention attendees from left to right: Bob Cook, Val Rolstad, Sandy Trossen, Chris Michaelson, Bill Dial, Denise Welte, Keith Niemi, Carol Nieters, Mark Krey

Continued on Pg. 3

**Stopping the Perfect Storm:
Bargaining for the Future We Want**

A perfect storm is brewing and will break over our heads unless we begin to act decisively to dissipate it.

Looking out toward the horizon of the future both Local 284 members and school leaders see a dark and ominous future. “Bleak, “abysmal” and “very bleak” are just some of the words that school administrators use to describe the future for education in Minnesota. But unlike a storm, this one is made by people. Brewed up in corporate boardrooms and politicians’ offices.

The result of decisions by elites in big business led by the bankers is the collision of: 1) The \$2.2 billion owed our schools due to the “shift” (borrowing” from our schools. 2) Rising property taxes in the form of levies to plug the hole left by the state. 3) The continuing foreclosure crisis contributing to declining property values and instability for families. 4) Protecting the privileged by opposing any tax increase on the richest 1%. 5) Public education and public employees under an attack designed to undermine confidence in public education as a critical element of a democratic society.

These forces will all come together within the budget cycle 2013 - *unless something changes. We need to be the agents of that change.*

What can we as a Union do?

- Call the corporate elites, led by the bankers, to account.

- Take a stand against tax avoidance- close corporate tax loopholes.
- Support the Pay Back Our Kids legislation to pay back the \$2.2 billion our schools are owed.
- Hold candidates for political office accountable. Which side are they on - the future of our children or the corporate CEO’s and bankers.
- Insist that our public dollars be placed with banks that will work with the community to strengthen our local economies and stabilize home ownership.

Local 284 has launched a unique and innovative initiative in our bargaining in 2012 and districts that we have settled contracts with already. We Call it “*Bargaining for the Future We Want.*” One of our ideas is simple: School districts should adopt ‘responsible banking’ by insuring that our public money is deposited in banks committed to stabilizing our communities from the destructive force of foreclosures and investing in the job creation potential of our local small businesses.

We can’t change what the politicians and bankers do – but we can change what our school districts do with our public money and insure that it is put to use to support our communities and our schools.
-Leif Grina, Member Engagement Director

Legislative Update

I don’t need to tell you it’s a tough time to be a public school employee these days. Our members struggle to stay whole in their wages and benefits while school districts slash budgets because the legislature chose to protect millionaires and billionaires while stealing over \$2 billion from our schools. Your basic civil right to collectively bargain has been under attack by many far-right legislators that want to eliminate unions. They also tried everything to undermine your PERA pension plan. State Senator Dave Thompson (R-Lakeville) said that school employees have too much power and the state needs to, “re-balance the power at the bargaining table.”

Despite these attacks, SEIU members fought back and won! School support staff from all over the state visited the capitol, emailed, and called legislators. We were able to stop nearly 50 anti-school employee bills. When we fight, we win!

It’s time to stop being on defense, and start fighting for changes that will improve the lives of school support staff, like: lowering health insurance costs, stopping private corporations from privatizing our jobs, restoring funding to education and fairly compensating school employees. We can only accomplish this by electing a new legislature that supports working families over corporate special interests. There are many ways for you to get involved and make a difference. We will be screening legislative candidates and this is your chance to ask them questions and tell them what is important to you. Join us in helping elect politicians that support you, regardless of party. Our Republican Member Committee is organizing to help GOP legislators that were instrumental in stopping Right To Work (for less).

Get involved in this exciting effort by emailing *Local 284 Political Organizer, Matt Toburen* at: matt@local284.com

Local 284 in Washington DC

SEIU Local 284 is a founding member of the National Coalition of Classified Education Support Employee Unions (NCCESEU). The NCCESEU is a made up of Unions that exclusively represent School Employees. Together the coalition unites over one million workers who work in public schools. The NCCESEU was founded back in 2009 and works to provide a voice at the Federal level for school employees.

In May, I along with First Vice President Mark Hanson, hosted the NCCESEU’s Spring Meeting in Washington D.C., because SEIU Local 284 serves as the lead coalition partner for 2012. As such, we hosted the coalition partners at SEIU’s International Headquarters in Washington D.C. We met with our coalition partners and discussed many important issues such as school funding, the reauthorization of NCLB and a special bill to honor school employees entitled, “The Annual National Classified School Employee of the Year Award Act.” This bill has been introduced in the House of Representatives and has about 100 co-sponsors. In the Senate, it has been introduced and had 14 co-sponsors. Minnesota Senator Amy Klobuchar, after meeting with First Vice President Mark Hanson and myself, agreed

to sign on as the 15th Senate Co-sponsor of the bill. In addition, while in Washington, we met with 7 of the 8 MN Congressional representatives, and both Senator Amy Klobuchar and Senator Al Franken, who had previously signed on as a Cosponsor of the National Classified School Employee of the Year Award Act.

Vice President Mark Hanson summed up his experience in Washington by saying, “I believe we had a great impact in sharing with the Minnesota delegation of Members of Congress and our two Senators, the important work that professional school service employees do in the education of our children.”
-Keith Niemi, President Local 284



Senator Klobuchar, Keith Niemi, and Mark Hanson in Washington DC.

Bullying: A Tragedy

Last summer, on a bright, sunny day I received a tragic phone call from my brother. His son, my godson, was dead. It was suicide. Shock and devastation set in. Over the next few days, we learned my nephew had been a victim of school bullying. His lonely, painful struggle to handle the bullying on his own caused a deep depression that ended with suicide. My family's sorrow was deep and overwhelming.

After some healing time, I contacted the Pacer Center in Bloomington. In 2006, Pacer

launched the National Bullying Prevention Center. They're working hard to change the culture and to give children and young adults the tools needed to stand up to bullies, to speak up to those in power, and to be a friend to those being bullied.

Together, SEIU Local 284 and I have partnered with matching donations for Pacer's bullying prevention puppet show for children in grades 1-3. Puppet shows help students learn ways to respond if they're bullied, how to help if they see someone who is being bullied and, most importantly, it teaches that

no one deserves to be bullied.

The combined donation allowed roughly 100 students in grades 1-3 at Bloomington's Washburn Elementary School to attend the Kids Against Bullying puppet show.

As a school employee, be mindful on a daily basis of the interaction between students. Encourage appropriate words and behavior. It may take effort, but it's worthwhile. Bullying prevention can help save lives.

For more information on how you can help stop bullying got to www.pacer.org/bullying
-Barb Jensen, Bloomington Bus Driver



Residents of Saint Cloud

Residents Tell Politicians to Save Education in Their Communities by Having Everyone Pay Their Fair Share

Multiple meetings were held throughout the state to encourage our elected leaders to support public schools by providing adequate funding. Many concerned citizens packed these meetings and pledged to advocate for investing in kids and communities by requiring everyone and every corporation to pay their fair share. In St. Cloud, a room of concerned parents, district staff and community members asked legislators to make a different choice than they made in the past— to raise fair revenue to support our kids and communities. Unfortunately, none of the area's state legislators chose to attend the community discussion.

To continue reading about these meetings, which were held in Eagan, St. Cloud, and Coon Rapids, go to www.seiu284.org

Continued from Pg 1.

Valerie Rolstad, Executive Board member and Paraprofessional in Columbia Heights Public Schools had the following reflection on her experience at our International convention: "I am glad that I belong to SEIU. I believe the new program Lead, Unite, Fight, Win for the 99% will be a good turning point for us to gain back respect and value for what we do. I heard a new term; Millennial generation. These are our under 35 members. They are not waiting to figure out what to do, but how to get it done. I am looking forward to working with some of our millennial members in the future."

Chris Mickelson, Millennial member and Custodian in Wayzata Public Schools had this to say about his experience at our International Convention: "My experience was all around phenomenal. It was very motivating and inspirational to have so many people together for the same reason and to see all the passion that's out there. Going to the convention really got me thinking how I can make a difference and it provided a lot of good tools and strategies for moving forward. I also had a lot of great support while there from our members here in Minnesota which was a great help for me being it was my first time to a convention like this."

Mark Krey, Executive Board member and Paraprofessional in West St. Paul Public Schools had this to say about his experience at our International Convention, "The presentation on income inequality- the disinvestment to our society by corporations and the highest paid corporate CEOs and very rich, was astounding and really connected the dots as you compound year after year the 100's of billions of dollars they are not paying in taxes. My goal is to bring this information to our members and engage them in what can be done to turn this around for us, our children and grandchildren."

-Carol Nieters, Executive Director

SEIU MN STATE COUNCIL Invites you to a day at the MINNESOTA ZOO

**August 5th:
4:30pm—8:00pm**



Food and beverages can be purchased at the zoo or you may bring a picnic lunch to enjoy in the picnic area. SEIU Zoo Day is limited to full SEIU members and their immediate families only, up to 10 tickets. Member must be present with the party to be admitted. Phone your union if you are scheduled to work that day, but your immediate family wishes to attend. If your party exceeds 10, the SEIU member may purchase additional tickets for reduced rate of \$6.00 each. Children, age 2 and under are admitted for free. The zoo event is not available to fair share members. For more information, contact your CO or call (651) 256-9100

LOCAL 284



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If you have an article or suggestion for the newsletter, please contact Nicholas Frey:
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LOCAL 284 OFFICERS

Executive Director:	Carol Nieters
President:	Keith Niemi
Vice Presidents:	Mark Hanson Sandy Ringler
Trustees:	Terri Buttleman Blaine McCutchan Peter Fitzpatrick
Members at Large:	Linda Leighton Bob Cook Donna Morris Mark Krey Valerie Rolstad
Sergeant at Arms:	Mark Bolin
Senior Member:	Ginia Klamecki

The Officers of Local 284 make up the Executive Board. Executive Board meetings are open to all members in good standing. Please contact Union headquarters if you would like to attend.

August 5th—SEIU Zoo Day!

SEIU Member Picnics

- August 21st—Crosby, MN
- August 25th—Rochester, MN
- September 6th—Buffalo, MN
- September 8th—Mpls, MN
- September 11th—Sauk Rapids, MN
- September 13th—Cambridge, MN



Local 284 Meetings

July 19th	Local 284 Executive Board Mtg: 3:00pm Local 284 General Member Mtg: 6:30pm Location: Kordiak Cty Park 1845 49th Ave NE Col. Heights
August	No Meeting
September 20th	Local 284 Executive Board Mtg: 3:00pm Local 284 General Member Mtg: 6:30pm Location: Edina Comm. Cntr RM 351 5701 Normandale Rd. Edina
October 11th *October 13th	Local 284 Executive Board Mtg: 3:00pm (local 284 Offices) Leadership Assembly (Location: TBD)