

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!

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www.seiu284.org

The Communicator

A publication for SEIU Local 284 Education Workers Across Minnesota

STRONGER TOGETHER

SUMMER 2013



What You Did: Local 284 members came out in record numbers this spring to work for a budget that supports the middle class. Phone calls, letters, conversations, actions, and countless hours resulted in significant improvements for Minnesota’s working families.

<u>ACTION</u>	<u>NUMBERS</u>
Petition signatures for raising fair revenue to support kids/schools	806
Messages left with Legislators	289
Postcards mailed to the Capitol	101
Members at Lobby Day	75



*"As a mother, grandmother and taxpayer, I am happy to pay my fair share to support Minnesota. I only ask that every Minnesotan and corporation do the same."
- Anna Angeles-Farris, Member SEIU Local 284*

Events:

- **50** people came out in Cambridge for a discussion on education funding with four representatives and school officials.
- Members testified in front of **six** different committees at the Capitol.
- **Ten** members spoke to crowds at rallies, actions and press conferences.

What we Won:

- A new investment of \$485 million into E-12 Education
- Closed Corporate tax loopholes that raise \$424 million
- A fairer tax system with an income tax increase of 2% on the wealthiest 2% of Minnesotans
- Student Achievement Levy (formerly know as the General Education Levy)
- Education Advancement Revenue

You Did It: What We Won

This session was historic. The legislature passed a fair and balanced budget and increased education funding and opportunities for every student in the state of Minnesota. After 10-years of disinvestments, the legislature, and the Governor, heard your voices and made important investments in our state.

Governor Dayton signed the education budget bill into law on Wednesday, May 22. This bill fully funds all-day kindergarten, increases special education funds by \$10 million for 2014-2015 and \$30 million for 2016-2017, increases the amount on the general education formula by 1.5% per year, and invests \$40 million in early learning scholarships.

In addition to increasing funding, the legislature made significant reforms to change the inequitable way that Minnesota schools are funded. One reform that passed was reinstating the general education levy—a critical piece of the 1971 Minnesota Miracle. This equalized state-wide property tax levy, renamed the Student Achievement Levy, and ensures that homeowners across the state pay the same amount for a great education re-

gardless of the property wealth of the school district they reside in. The Student Achievement Levy raises \$20 million per year, and there is a hope that it will one day equalize education property taxes, making the system more fair.

In an effort to equalize education funding across the state, the legislature also restructured the school referendum system by making it fully equalized and allowing districts with under \$300/pupil in referendum dollars to levy up to that amount. New increased equalization across the board will make it easier for school districts to pass and pay for levies.

These incredible reforms and investments would not have been possible without raising fair revenue. The Legislature raised significant new revenue while protecting hard working Minnesota families. For the first time in a generation, the wealthiest 2% of Minnesotans were asked to pay comparable tax rates to the rest of the state and closed corporate loopholes that bled money out of the state. This raised \$2.12 billion in new revenue effectively closing the states' \$627 million

budget deficit and paying back the school shift on time. This budget not only makes crucial investments in schools, but property tax relief, higher education and other middle class priorities. Legislators listened to middle class families over the past year—and longer—and have given Minnesota a budget we can all be proud of.

Huge Advances Passed for Family Sick Leave

One piece of critical legislation that slipped under the radar this session allows employees to use their sick days to care for family members other than just their young children. This new bill, signed into law by Governor Dayton on May 24, allows employees to use their sick leave benefits to care for their adult child, spouse, sibling, parent, grandparent or stepparent. This legislation does not add additional sick leave benefits to any employee, it just increases the flexibility with which they can use them. This is a huge victory for families in Minnesota. Families can now care for each other without worrying about taking days off or leaving sick family members alone at home.—*Political Organizing Director Libby Kantner*

YES! We Do Make A Difference!

As you are all aware, our legislature made great strides for the middle class this last session and, one of the biggest determining factors was the effort the Union and its members put forth to elect, support, and channel the work of those legislators who stand by us and work for us. As the legislative session unfolded, the push-back against organized labor and public education took on a variety of forms. It became clear that it would be necessary for us to push back a little harder. One way we did this was through phone banking. While occasionally frustrating, the phone banking experience was generally rewarding and invigorating for those of us who donned the headsets in St. Paul.

As the legislative session approached its end, several bills remained stalled in committee. Our goal was to get the Committee Chairs to bring those bills forward. In a new twist on our phoning

methods, we called members, explained the bills and then asked for their active participation right away by connecting them to the Committee Chair and asking them to give a specific message as we connected members with the Committee Chair. The positive response from the members we called was pretty remarkable. Most were anxious to learn some details about the pending bills. Because of our ability to roll the calls directly to the phones of the legislators, many of our members gladly shared their interest and concern about the bills. It is because of these efforts that the legislature passed more adequately funded public education, while still providing property tax relief.

For those of you who have not yet participated in phone banking, it is a unique and rewarding experience. While, at first, a bit daunting, it becomes a gathering place for friends and colleagues, brothers and sisters.

For each successful call the joy is spread and the enthusiasm grows.

One thing we all have to remember with our recent victories; we must not become complacent! The 2014 elections are just around the corner and it is up to all of us to make these real investments in education continue and we don't go back to shifts and gimmicks that put the future of our children at risk. How do we do that? Stay Engaged. Talk to your neighbors and co-workers, knock on doors and phone bank. Please never forget that democracy is NOT a spectator sport.—

Custodian and Union Steward, - Orono, Steve Miltich



A Learning Experience



I had been a custodian in Edina for nearly 2 years before I started working on the Education

Revenue Campaign with Local 284. I agreed to take part in it because I wanted to see things improve for me and my bargaining unit and I knew that would be done by getting involved with the Union or, getting the Union involved with us. In two years I rarely saw anyone from the Union unless it was time to vote on a contract or, I would see a flier posted on our break room board. I wanted to see things change because, while a custodian isn't the most glamorous job, it was the job that paid me the most and treated me the best. It allowed me to begin my adult life with wages over the poverty line and benefits such as health insurance and a pension. I knew that the only reason I had those things was because of the Union and the work put in by the people who came before me. The apathy of our members concerned me at a time when unions weren't exactly popular and I was fearful that my job would be phased out unless we got ourselves together. That is why I agreed to do this.

This job was a great deal of stress and anxiety for me

as I had to do things like confront people and speak to people, I didn't know, about a very touchy subject—politics. I was convinced that people didn't want to hear from me and would just ignore me. But, the more I spoke to members the more they began to open up and, most importantly, step up and start to take steps to get involved. I wasn't able to win over everyone but I was able to engage more members than I initially thought I could through the many one-on-one conversations and site visits with members.

In looking back at what was achieved this session, I think I did a pretty good job while at the Local; engaging members in what was happening at the capitol. I hope that we, as a union, are able to continue our work and build our relationship with the membership so that future people, like me, have a good job available to them so they, too, can support themselves and their families.—*Custodian-Edina, Tom Kuppe*

Did I Make A Difference?

While working on the Education Revenue Campaign I was sat in on the Education & Tax Committee meetings and testified in front of the legislative committee. Wow! That was empowering!

I helped elect the legislators to office and wanted to be there to hold them accountable to their commitment to make a REAL investment in public education. Elected representatives need to hear from all of us—community members, parents, grandparents, and school workers. Corporations and the Chamber of Commerce have paid lobbyists working for them so it is important, that we as individuals, make our voices heard. I felt my voice, and others, did make a difference because in the committees, the Senators and the Representatives would use some of our slogans or repeat part of our stories. Now, my children and the school children have people fighting for them.—*Sp. Ed EA, Columbia Heights, Valerie Rolstad*



PERA Pension, Health Insurance

This legislative session made a couple of changes concerning PERA.

- The repeal of the pre-age 62 supplemental benefit—good for members,
- Allows non-married members who choose joint and survivor options to rescind the option and go back to the single life annuity if both sign off on the change—good for members.
- School Employees Health insurance pooling bill made it all the way to the final committee before it stopped in both the House and Senate because time had run out—this is where we will pick up next session. — *Political Lobbyist Frank Miskowicz*





SEIU MN State Council

Invites you to a day at the

MINNESOTA ZOO



Admission and parking free for SEIU members and families only

Sunday, August 11, 2013

4:30—8:00 PM

SEIU Zoo Day is limited to full SEIU members and their immediate families only, up to 10 tickets. Members must be present with the party to be admitted. If your party exceeds 10, the SEIU member may purchase additional tickets for \$6.00 each. Children, age 2 and under are free. This event is not available to fair share members.

Pack a picnic or purchase food and beverages at the zoo.

LOCAL 284



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

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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

Local 284 Meetings

June 20	Executive Board Mtg: 3pm (Local 284 Office)
June 20	Finance Comm. Mtg: 6pm (Local 284 Office)
July 18	Executive Board Mtg: 3pm (Forest Lake)
July 18	General Mbr Mtg & Picnic: 5pm (Lakeside Park) 95 E Broadway, Forest Lake, MN
August	<i>No Meetings</i>

****Please watch our website for a regional picnic near you!***

Change of Address or Phone Number?

Please let us know by contacting our office at (651) 256-9100
Or by emailing Terri at terrib@local284.com