

LOCAL 284



# The Communicator

A publication for SEIU Local 284 Education Workers Across Minnesota

STRONGER TOGETHER

SUMMER 2014

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

*We support teachers, faculty, and families.*

*We teach and prepare all students for the opportunities of tomorrow.*

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

**WE ARE PUBLIC EMPLOYEES IN MN SCHOOLS AND ADJUNCT FACULTY IN HIGHER ED. - WE ARE PROUD OF WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE DO!**

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Check us out on the web for more information:

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And Much More...

[www.seiu284.org](http://www.seiu284.org)



## SEIU Local 284 Welcomes our Newest Members— Hamline University Adjuncts

The victory marks the first time that adjunct faculty, at a private Twin Cities-area university, have formed a union in their quest to improve higher education for students and faculty. Hamline adjuncts overwhelmingly voted “YES” to form their union with SEIU Local 284.

David Weiss is an adjunct faculty member in the Religion Department at Hamline and spoke about why the win reflects a victory for the entire Hamlin community. After the vote count was announced, he stated, “This is a great day for faculty, students and the whole Hamline community. It was clear in this campaign that, for adjuncts in Minnesota, our time is now. By coming together to address the low pay, lack of benefits and stability for adjunct faculty, we are taking the steps to strengthen all of higher education for students and faculty alike. I’m confident that our success today will help empower other workers, including adjunct faculty like ourselves at schools like St. Thomas, change working and learning conditions in higher education.”

Jennifer Beckham teaches in the English Department and spoke about the great opportunity this provides Hamline. “We sent a letter to Provost Jensen expressing our excitement about starting a productive relationship based on our shared value of making Hamline the best school it can be for both faculty and students. Adjuncts have been blown away by the support of tenured faculty, students and community supporters throughout this process and we look forward to having a seat at the table to continue this important work.”—Denise Welte, Director of Organizing



## Change is Coming. It's Not a Matter of If—But When

As many of you know, public-sector workers have faced Right to Work (RTW) attacks by corporations and billionaires spending outrageous amounts of money electing politicians to serve the interests of the 1%. The amount of money they are spending totals in the 100's of billions of dollars. As a union, we cannot compete with the spending levels of corpora-

tions and billionaires but can, and do win, by activating members in two ways on the bread-and-butter issues that put food on the table, a roof over your head and the ability to retire with dignity; 1) individually electing to donate to COPE (Committee on Political Education-our political fund) through voluntary payroll deductions and/or, 2) boots on the ground (work and volunteer on political campaigns).

The two states that members quickly mention when talking about the RTW impact on workers is Wisconsin and Michigan. While many public sector workers in Wisconsin and Michigan saw significant reductions to their take home pay, the RTW (for less) fight doesn't stop there. While we were able to stop a serious threat in Minnesota of RTW legislation going on the ballot in 2011, a number of other states around the country have faced the same through the legislative process and a governor's pen. We were lucky in 2010 by electing a governor that supports workers' rights and electing a pro-worker majority in the House and Senate in 2012.

In the political arena there is RTW (for less) threats state-by-state. In the past year these threats have escalated to the judicial arena—the U.S. Supreme Court (USSC). There is a case currently being heard by the USSC called “Harris v Quinn.” This case is fully funded by the National Right to Work Legal Defense Fund (*made up of and funded by corporations and billionaires*) and challenges the First Amendment rights of Freedom of Association. Their decision may redefine what this means and very well may impact hundreds of thousands of homecare workers' collective bargaining power by requiring unions to represent all workers but giving the worker the ability to pay little or nothing and free-load off of the pay and benefits its members and their union negotiated. This case will likely be followed by one case after another to the USSC and are all backed and funded by the National Right to Work Legal Defense Fund. The USSC is a political entity as Justices are appointed by the President. At this point, the USSC is a majority of strong anti-labor justices. It is very likely that decisions on cases in front of this current USSC will be about weakening public sector unions and public employee/worker power.

### How We have Changed

Over the past few years we have gone on the offense and have engaged more members than ever in the legislative process. We led the way in making the challenges facing public education the issue of the time. We have done this through a couple of campaigns; Pay Back Our Kids (by raising the billions in dollars owed to schools—the issue in the 2012 elections) followed by, Every Child Matters (addressing the decades of a lack of investment in education as well as the geographic disparities students in Minnesota face depending on their address). Not only are schools getting paid back, there were significant new investments in education and it was done by

increasing taxes on the top 2% wage earners and asking them to pay closer to their fair share.

### Campaign Results In Win For Members

Many members brought their story of the work they did in the Pay Back Our Kids and Every Child Matters campaigns to the bargaining table and opened negotiations telling the story of their roles in these campaigns. This resulted in better contract settlements, the reinstatement of cut hours and, in some cases, additional staff positions have been added.

### What The Future Looks Like

We have found great success for our members by framing our work around the bigger issues. Early Learning through 12 (E-12) public education faces a national push that is corporately funded to privatize public E-12 education. There is also a crisis in higher education—affordability, accessibility, and the ever growing low-wage contingent adjunct faculty workforce on college campuses. At the same time, the gap in income inequality grows every day on college campuses for adjunct faculty v administration and E-12 for public school support workers v administration. It is time to recognize that all work has value and close the gap in income inequality. To address these issues we must engage broader and deeper than ever before. To do this, staff members are, in some cases, being reassigned as internal organizers to engage deeper in their assigned units. This will mean more “face time” with members as well as deeper support and development of stewards and member leaders. In most cases this will mean the staff person you are working with will continue to work with you on either: 1) Bargaining or, 2) Internal training of stewards and member leaders in representational/advocacy work. Your group will benefit from having one additional staff member working with you.

While the challenges faced by our members and our union are getting bigger—we are evolving to face these challenges head on. To win for our communities and our members! ***Imagine—A Union of members powerful enough to make it happen!***

For additional information regarding Right To Work and the damage it can do to families, communities and states where it has passed, please refer to:

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/wonkblog/wp/2012/12/10/how-right-to-work-laws-could-reshape-michigans-economy/>

—Carol Nieters, Executive Director

### SEIU Local 284

#### Scholarship Winners!



Sarah Rumppe—District 280

Mark Hickman—District 882

Karl Strehlo—District 911

Sam Udermann—District 51

***Congratulations to Everyone!***

**2013-2014 Legislative Session**

We had a great legislative session this year and are really excited about what we accomplished as a union.

- ⇒ Local 284’s priority—the **School Services Accountability Bill**, got an informational hearing in the Senate Education committee. This is helpful because it lets us hear what some concerns about the bill are so we can be prepared when legislation is re-introduced in 2015. Many, many thanks to all of our members that visited their legislators to lobby on behalf of all educational support staff!
- ⇒ Governor Dayton signed **Minimum Wage** into law at \$9.50 plus indexing—this increase raises the wages of 350,000 Minnesotans and will be fully phased by August of 2016.



We have started screening candidates for House seats that are up for re-election in 2014. Our members have taken the lead talking about our legislative priorities and we are excited for their campaigns to kick off so we can talk to voters about re-electing representatives who have been champions for labor and public education.

SEIU staff and members, pictured above, after screening legislative candidates in Northern Minnesota. —Maren Hokanson/Political Organizing Director

**Union Density Matters**

States with higher union density; that is where a higher percentage of the workforce is represented by a Union, have higher wages and benefits on average than states with lower union density.

In Minnesota, Union members accounted for 14.3%\* of the wage and salary workers in 2013. This compares with 14.2% in 2012. Minnesota has defied the national trend of declining union membership for this one year period. Nationally, union members accounted for 11.3% of all employed wage and salary workers in 2013. It is clear that unions raise the standards of wages and benefits of union members. What is also important to understand is union density helps to raise the pay and benefit standards of workers who are not even members of a union. For example, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, the median household income in Minnesota is \$59,126; this compares to \$49,091 in neighboring South Dakota, where union density was only 5.3% of the workforce in 2013. When one looks at the statistics, states with higher union density outperform states with lower union density when it comes to median household income. Moreover, income inequality tends to be less in states that have higher union density.

So next time you are sharing what your union does please share that unions in Minnesota have a positive impact on wages and benefits for all Minnesotans.—Keith Niemi, President

*\*The statistical data is from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor and from the U.S. Census Bureau*

**SEIU Members and Family Enjoy an Evening with the Saint Paul Saints**



Almost 200 members and their families came out on June 18 to enjoy a baseball game on a beautiful summer evening with the Saint Paul Saints. Before the game, SEIU members and their families attended a gathering in SEIU’s picnic area to enjoy food, beverage and conversation.



**SEIU MN State Council**

Invites you to a day at the  
**MINNESOTA ZOO**

Admission and parking free for SEIU members & families only.

**Sunday, August 10, 2014**

**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 fee payers.*

Snap pictures of you and your family at the zoo and share them with us via our Facebook page "SEIU MN State Council" or on Twitter @seiumn using #SEIUZooDay. 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:  
[andrear@local284.com](mailto:andrear@local284.com)

## LOCAL 284 OFFICERS

Executive Director:	Carol Nieters
President:	Keith Niemi
Vice Presidents:	Mark Hanson Sandy Ringler
Trustees:	Anna Angeles-Farris Steve Miltich Sue McNertney
Members at Large:	Bob Cook Donna Morris Mark Krey Valerie Rolstad Amanda Reineck
Sergeant at Arms:	Terri Buttleman
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.

## SEIU Member Picnics

- July 15 **Picnic** 4:30—6:30 Sturgis Park  
Lake Blvd and 2nd Ave S,  
Buffalo, MN 55313
- July 17 **Picnic:** 5pm Sauk Rapids,  
1001 River Ave N., Sauk Rapids, MN
- Aug 16 **Picnic** 12 noon-2pm Nokomis Park  
2401 Minnehaha Pkwy, Minneapolis, MN 55417
- Sept 11 **Picnic** 12 noon—2pm Silver Lake Park  
840 7th St NE, Rochester, MN 55906



## Local 284 Meetings

- July 17 **Executive Board Mtg:** 3pm (Sauk Rapids)
- July 17 **General Member Mtg and Picnic:** 5pm  
(1001 River Ave N., Sauk Rapids, MN)
- August **NO MEETING SCHEDULED**
- Sept 18 **Executive Board Mtg:** 3pm (Local 284 Office Bldg.)

## 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](mailto:terrib@local284.com)