Come Visit Our Kiosk At The Minnesota State Fair

Stop by and say hi! Our Union will have a kiosk on September 1st outside the labor building right inside the main entrance of the MN State Fair at the intersection of Snelling Ave. and Dan Patch Ave. Our kiosk will have our SEIU logo on it. We will have gifts for members that stop by our kiosk that include a cloth SEIU grocery bag or shoulder back pack to carry all your state fair freebies in as well as the MN State Fair Blue Ribbon Bargain Book that will give you a great savings while at the fair on food, activities and retail items found there as well as a few other items. You can checkout this website to find out more about this bargain book savings at: [http://www.mnstatefair.org/pdf/17-BBBB-Coupons.pdf](http://www.mnstatefair.org/pdf/17-BBBB-Coupons.pdf).

You must preorder your coupon book on our website at [www.seiu284.org](http://www.seiu284.org) for pick-up on the above date we are at the fair. We will have pencils for anyone stopping by that answers a labor trivia question correctly. We hope to see you at the Great Minnesota get-together!

The Power To Make It Happen!

We know our economy and our politics aren’t working for families in our state. Minnesota has long had a reputation as a state that values investment in education for all as a path to prosperity. However, we have grown accustomed to reaping the benefits of past commitments rather than keeping that same promise for future generations. Now we are seeing warning signs, particularly for children of color, from student support service spending that are the lowest in the nation to some of the county’s largest racial disparities in educational outcomes, graduation rates, and disciplinary actions. Lack of funding has meant for too many children at the start of their educational journey don’t have access to pre-k, while skyrocketing tuition costs are locking many Minnesotan’s into crippling debt and closing the doors to higher education learning for many others.

This is happening because corporate interests are valued over the lives of working families in our state, particularly the lives of people of color, indigenous people, women, and rural Minnesotans. Last year the Minnesota legislature had a stark choice between more tax breaks for wealthy CEOs and rich corporations or investment in high-quality public education with real support and resources for students, families and education staff - from cradle to career. The politicians chose tax breaks for the rich.

Those in power have been able to get away with it by creating and exploiting divisions. Divisions between the middle class and those striving to enter it. Divisions between rural and urban. Divisions along race, gender, and job class. Maybe the most destructive example of the divide and conquer strategy happens during our contract negotiations, when our interests (and the interests of our families) are falsely pitted against the interests of the kids in our school.

When we go to the bargaining table and negotiate for a fair deal, we often hear “there’s not enough to go around.” Every day we hear more stories about a schools scrambling to provide sufficient support to students who are struggling to succeed. We can reshape our education system into one that embraces our growing diversity and begins to close opportunity gaps, but that’s going to take all of us working together.

Even though we have won important victories over the years, many are not getting what we need in the current system. Continued on page 3.
Freedom, Choice, and School Vouchers

You have probably heard a lot about freedom and choice over the years when it comes to schools and education. And lately, that bell has been rung loud and clear by Betsy DeVos, the new Secretary of Education. As a longtime advocate of vouchers, (School Vouchers are programs that allow parents to take public funds and use them to cover tuition at private schools), Devos describes school vouchers as expanding the freedom and opportunities for children and their families, especially those at the bottom of the economic ladder. Just like the misnamed “Right To Work” initiatives, advocates of these measures use advertising and marketing techniques to convince the American public that these measures promote and expand their freedom while in fact do the opposite. Let’s look at what vouchers really mean to the average American and their children.

Advocates frame their arguments around three basic messages or reasons for pushing vouchers:

1. **School Vouchers Allow Parents The Right And Freedom To Choose: School Vouchers.**
2. **Improve Education Both Private And Public Schools.**
3. **School Vouchers Allow Low Income Students The Right To A Better Education.**

So, those are the main arguments for school vouchers but here are the facts:

1. **School Vouchers Allow Parents The Right And Freedom To Choose:**
   - Private schools do not have to accept all students. They can discriminate if they choose or skin the best students. (Concerning Indiana’s voucher program, one of the largest in the nation, “in a recent investigation of the program, NPR found some private schools turning away children with disabilities and LGBTQ students...”)
   - Private schools do not have to follow the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) which requires such things as wheelchair ramps, note takers, sign language interpreters.
   - Private schools do not have to accept children with special needs.
   - About 85 percent of private schools are religious. Many require adherence to their religious views and practices.

2. **School Vouchers Improve Education In Both Private And Public Schools:**
   - School vouchers detract attention from the real problems in our public schools that we should be addressing – poverty, funding equity, class size, teacher and support staff training and compensation. Moreover, vouchers take away money that could be used to address these problems.
   - Studies have found, at best, a modest positive or a neutral impact on student scores. And, per a New York Times article in February of this year, “...a wave of new research has emerged suggesting that private school vouchers may harm students who receive them. The results are startling- the worst in the history of the field researchers say.” *(For more on this article: https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/23/upshot/dismal-results-from-vouchers-surprise-researchers-as-devos-era-begins.html)*

3. **School Vouchers Allow Low Income Students The Right To A Better Education:**
   - Research has shown that voucher programs tend to increase racial segregation. A pure voucher system would only encourage economic, racial, ethnic, and religious stratification in our society. America’s success has been built on our ability to unify our diverse populations.
   - Vouchers might cover some but not all the tuition at a private school. Students from more affluent families can make up the difference. But, students from low income backgrounds would still be priced out of that choice. Leading to more economically and racially segregated schools.

To me, it seems clear that the three arguments for school vouchers are not compelling. Voucher programs do not increase freedom for parents or their children, especially if your child is disabled, has a learning disability, is LGBTQ, or whatever else the private school finds challenging, unprofitable; or offensive to their beliefs, because it is the private schools that choose to admit the student. Like “Right to Work”, vouchers are an advertising and marketing tactic to sell diminishing the freedom and choice for regular working people while we give our money and our freedom to the rich and privileged.

Vouchers do not improve schools. Many studies on charter and private schools have shown at best a neutral effect and at worst a negative effect on students’ academic performance. I for one believe that at least, like in medicine, the first approach to education should be to do no harm. Moreover, vouchers exacerbate any educational problems by siphoning money away that could be used to improve education.

Vouchers, because they only cover a fraction of the cost, do not allow low income and minority students to choose the elite and prestigious private schools so that they too can realize the American dream. And, lest we forget, in the past vouchers have a sordid history as a means for white residents to avoid segregating their schools and use public money for private, white only, schools. There is no evidence that they are now the vehicle for closing the gap in achievement, improving graduation rates and/or providing real opportunities for poor and minority students who need them.

Betsy DeVos, and other advocates of school vouchers, should instead get behind some of the programs that have and can make real improvements in student learning like equitable funding, eliminating poverty, early childhood education, after school and summer programs, and rigorous curricula standards. Don’t be fooled, vouchers are not about you getting more freedom but you choosing to give away your freedom and money and your children’s education to those of privilege and wealth.

-Matt Lobo, Staff Director
Coming Together Across Campus and Across The Metro Area

The past few months have brought faculty, students and staff together to fight for improved working conditions for better learning conditions in Minnesota.

At the end of the Spring Term at St. Catherine University, part-time non-tenure track “adjunct” faculty filed for their union election to join SEIU Local 284. A delegation of faculty from multiple departments presented a public letter with the signatures of dozens of their colleagues to the administration May 18th. Over the ensuing weeks, St. Kate’s administration fought the faculty efforts, by adding over 150 names to their voter list, and sent multiple emails and mailings. The St. Kate’s administration also held captive audience meetings and the president and other administrators called voters individually. Faculty fought back by calling their colleagues in support, and bringing attention to anti-union efforts on social media. Hundreds of community members took action in support of faculty by signing a petition to demand neutrality from administration. Students wrote letters in support of a faculty union. On July 10th, votes were counted by the labor board. The count was 105 to 96 in favor of the union, with 15 ballots that have been challenged. In the next few weeks, remaining ballots will be evaluated by the labor board and the election results will be determined. Faculty are ready to get to the bargaining table at St. Kate’s. St. Kate’s will be the third metro higher education institution to join SEIU Local 284 in the past year. Adjunct and full time faculty at MCAD and Augsburg University are in contract negotiations, following the path paved by Hamline University in 2014.

Faculty at the University of Minnesota are still waiting for the chance to vote to join Local 284. The University continues to thwart the vote with ongoing legal delays, costing untold thousands of dollars (our last Freedom of Information Act Request showed they have spent well over a half of a million dollars on legal consulting). While the University’s appeals have been denied several times by the courts, the Court of Appeals finally agreed to hear their case and oral arguments were presented on the issue in July. Despite this, faculty are determined to continue their work to unite on campus and fight against bad decisions by central administration. They are working together with students and other labor groups on campus to develop a strong coalition of workers on campus. This year faculty expect serious cuts since the state funded very little of the University’s budget request.

-Liz Engels, Organizing Director

SEIU Local 284: 2018 Member of the Year

Nominations for the SEIU Local 284’s 2018 Member of the Year are due by 4:00 PM on Monday, January 15, 2018 at the Union office. The Member of the Year program is designed to recognize a member who exemplifies the values of Local 284 and lives a life that exemplifies our mission statement. The 2018 Member of the Year will be recognized just as previous Members of the Year honorees have been. Previous Member of the Year honorees are Anna Gmberline, 2017 Member of the Year and Stella Sola, 2016 Member of the Year.

SEIU Local 284 members are free to nominate a co-worker or yourself. You may visit our website www.seiu284.org to get a nomination form or you may contact our office to have one mailed to you. Finalists will be interviewed by the Member of the Year Award Committee and the winner will be recognized at the SEIU Local 284 Leadership Assembly on Saturday, February 17, 2018 at 9:00 AM. In addition, the winner may have an opportunity to be recognized in Washington D.C. in May 2018.

-Keith Niemi, President

MN For All, Cont’d from page 1

Because no one can change this alone, a group of organizations are coming together to do our work in a way that puts people first, that focuses on the issues we care about, and can win real change for Minnesota families.

Here are a few next steps in the fight for equitable education from cradle to career:
Organizing for Power Training: 8/26 at Maple Grove Community Center (12951 Weaver Lake Rd, Maple Grove, MN 55369)
Email Renee Lundgren at reneel@local284.com for more information and to RVSP.
School Board Elections: Help screen and endorse local candidates. Early voting begins September 22nd, Election Day is Nov. 7th
Email Chris Stinson at ChrisS@local284.com to get involved.
December Interorganizational Gatherings (Our Future Minnesota): Watch for an invitation to a large, multi-organization statewide planning meeting in December.
Email Leah Solo at lsolo@seiumn.org to learn more.

- Chris Stinson, Pol. Director

Member Contest Drawings

A total of 17 names will be drawn (3 from each classification over 200, 1 from each classification under 200)

Members can start registering for this drawing on September 5th and the last day to register is October 22nd. The drawing will be done at our fall Leadership Assembly on October 28, 2017. To register go to our website at www.seiu284.org and click on the Member Contest button or type this address in your browser, http://284.seiu.org/page/s/member-contest-2017
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If you have an article or suggestion for the newsletter, please contact Andy Running:
andrear@local284.com

LOCAL 284 OFFICERS

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Mike Poke
Valerie Rolstad
Lori Smith
Michael Sylvester

Members at Large: Cynthia Gross
Sergeant at Arms: Vacant
Senior Member:

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.

Local 284 Meetings

9/21/17 Executive Board Mtg 3-6pm, Old Chicago, Apple Valley
9/21/17 General Member Mtg 6-7pm Old Chicago, Apple Valley
10/26/17 Executive Board Mtg 9am-5pm @ Union Office
10/26/17 Finance Committee Mtg 5pm-6:30pm @ Union Office
10/28/17 Leadership Assembly 9-3pm @ Carpenter’s Hall, Olive St., St. Paul
11/16/17 Executive Board Mtg 9-5pm @ Union Office

Change of Address or Phone Number?
Please let us know by contacting our office at (651) 256-9100
Or by emailing Terri at terrrib@local284.com