

MARCH 2, 2011

UNION UPDATE



Working people fighting back

Thousands standing up against threats to wages, benefits

2,500 members from more than a dozen unions—including Local 1000—came together at a candlelight vigil Feb. 22 at the state Capitol to stand up for working families across the nation whose wages, benefits and pensions are under attack.

The Capitol vigil was one of more than 40 rallies held on the same day as part of a national movement in support of public sector workers in Wisconsin and nearly a dozen other states.

“Last year, we had a governor who thought he was going to break us and we said ‘Hell, no,’ ” said Local 1000 President Yvonne Walker. “We stood strong and we beat them back. We’re going to beat them back in Wisconsin. We’re going to beat them back in Ohio, and we’re going to beat them back in Indiana and every other place where they come for us. We’re not going to let them walk on working people.”

Political attack, economic excuse

All the groups were united in their resolve to fight attacks on collective bargaining in Wisconsin or any other state where they are being threatened. Wisconsin’s governor has demanded concessions that would weaken the ability of public employees to join unions and bargain together.

California Gov. Jerry Brown, who approved collective bargaining for government workers during his first gubernatorial term in 1976, has said that he will respect—not challenge—employees’ bargaining

rights. But Republican legislators in California have introduced bills that would take away the ability of public employees to negotiate for pension benefits.

Wisconsin unions have said they’ll accept concessions that equal an eight percent cut in take-home pay. But more than 60,000 public employees there—including teachers, firefighters and public safety officers—have mobilized to protect their union bargaining rights.

‘We work for the people’

“The governor of Wisconsin is trying to break the unions for profits, not for the people,” said Local 1000 member Paul Hartbower, a Caltrans bridge inspector in Unit 11. “We don’t work for profits. We don’t work for the governor. We work for the people, and like our brethren in Wisconsin we have to stand up for the people and for our rights.”

Walker, Hartbower and other speakers pointed out that workers and organized labor did not create the financial crisis in Wisconsin or in the rest of the country—Wall Street did. Yet bridge inspectors, teachers, nurses, firefighters and other public employees are the ones being blamed.

“This is about us,” said Walker. “This is about working people. They bailed out the banks. They bailed out the investment companies. They said they were too big to fail. Well, you know what ... working people are too big to fail. Instead of trying to break unions, they should be trying to put people back to work.”

How to request flexible work hours

I need to request a change in my work schedule. What are my options?

Answer: Here's how to request flexible work hours or an alternate workweek schedule

(See Article 19.8 Flexible Work Hours; excludes Units 14, 17 and 21)

- A.** Upon request by the Union or an employee, the State shall not unreasonably deny a request for flexible work hours, an alternate workweek schedule or reduced workweek schedule. Employees who have flexible work hours or are placed on an alternate workweek or reduced workweek schedule will comply with procedures established by the department.
- B.** Any denial of requests made under subsection A shall be provided in writing. A copy of the written denial shall also be sent Attn: SEIU Local 1000 Headquarters. In addition, a department head or designee may, upon thirty (30) days notice to affected employees, cancel or make permanent changes to flexible work hours, alternate work schedules or reduced work time schedules.
- C.** An "alternate workweek schedule" is a fixed work schedule other than standard work hours. "Flexible work hours" allows for the change of work schedules on a daily basis. "Reduced work time" is defined in Government Code sections 19996.20 through 19996.29.

I heard our contract gives members one Personal Holiday a year, is this true?

Answer: Yes — Article 7 # C. Upon completion of six (6) months of his/her initial probationary period in state service, a full-time or part-time employee shall be entitled to one personal holiday per fiscal year. The personal holiday shall be credited to each full-time and part-time employee on the first day of July.

Do holidays count toward hours worked for calculating overtime if you do not work the holiday?

Answer: Holidays shall not be considered as time worked by the employee for the purpose of computing cash or compensating time off for overtime.

My supervisor is making me bank my Personal Leave Program (PLP) days. Can she do that?

Answer: Employees will be given maximum discretion to use PLP 2010 subject to severe operational considerations. Request for use of PLP 2010 must be submitted in accordance with departmental policies on vacation/annual leave.

Gov. Jerry Brown has been quoted saying there may be pay cuts for state workers. Does that order include Local 1000 members?

Answer: No, his budget refers to employees without a union contract in place. Local 1000's contract prohibits any further pay cuts.

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