

March: Women's History Month

Local 1000's elected officers make history

Women hold all four top posts for the first time

As the nation celebrates Women's History Month, Local 1000's member leaders are making some history of their own; all of Local 1000's top elected officers are women.

M. Cora Okumura, who was also elected in 2008, Walker led Local 1000 through a tough period of furloughs and attacks by then Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger. After securing our current contract and

as women comprise a larger part of the labor movement – 45 percent now compared to 36 percent in the early 1990s. Researchers believe that a majority of union members will be female within the next 10 years. (Local 1000 membership is more than 60 percent female.)

"It's certainly unusual to see all the officers are women of color – I can't think of any other big local where that is the case," said Ken Jacobs, chair of UC Berkeley's Labor Center. "At Local 1000, the demographics of the leadership really reflect the demographics of not just the membership but also of changes in California's workforce. You see more women in the workforce than ever before and more of these women are Latinas, Asians and African-Americans."



Clockwise from left: Vice President/Secretary Treasurer M. Cora Okumura; Vice President for Organizing/Representation Tamekia N. Robinson; Vice President for Bargaining Margarita Maldonado and President Yvonne R. Walker.

"If you look at where labor is growing, it is in sectors that are predominantly female, such as in education, service and healthcare," Jacobs said. "We should expect to see more and more women leaders in labor like you see at Local 1000."

Diverse leadership team

When Yvonne R. Walker was elected president in 2008, she became the first African-American and the first woman to lead Local 1000. She took over a statewide labor organization of 94,000 members, 200 employees and a \$60 million budget. Along with Vice President/Secretary-Treasurer

an end to furloughs in 2010, Walker was joined by Margarita Maldonado, vice president for bargaining, and Tamekia N. Robinson, vice president of organizing/representation.

With a female leadership team, Local 1000 is out ahead of what Jacobs and other experts see as a national demographic trend in labor

Union membership pays off for women

Joining a union pays off for women. Nationally, women are paid about 78 cents for every dollar a man makes at work. However, women represented by unions are closing the gap; they earn almost 87 percent of what male union members earn.

"Union membership is one of the best things for working families," Walker said. "It only makes sense that women are taking increased leadership roles in labor as we have in the workplace, the community and in the political arena."

Mary Kay Henry

SEIU's national leader

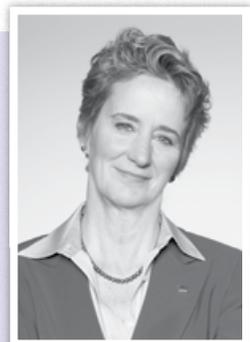
A career in healthcare organizing

SEIU International President Mary Kay Henry, one of the most powerful labor leaders in the nation, became the first woman elected to our union's top job in 2010.

Henry spent much of her career organizing healthcare workers, who are predominantly

women and among the fastest growing sectors of America's economy.

"I am moved by the countless acts of individual courage I've witnessed in building this incredible organization called SEIU," Henry said.



Political action – accountability from leaders

Legislators report back to members who helped get them elected

Political action is not just about helping elect people who support state services; it also includes maintaining a relationship between our members and the people who represent them.

For nearly two months, SEIU members have been holding meetings with political candidates and incumbent legislators to ask questions and discuss legislative priorities.

“It’s important that legislators see SEIU members, especially Local 1000 folks like us, as their constituents and active participants in government and politics,” said Marc Toft, an Employment Development Department employee from San Francisco.

Some of these meetings, which were open to any member of an SEIU local in California, involved political newcomers who were asking for support. Other events featured veteran legislators who met SEIU members in their home districts to report back on activities in the Capitol that impact state workers and other public employees. In one such event on March 10, two legislators from San Francisco – Senator Mark Leno and Assemblymember Tom Ammiano – met with members of Local 1000 and other SEIU locals.

Leno commended Local 1000’s effort to review state contracts and, when possible, replace outside vendors with state workers. Ammiano said he supports Local 1000 teachers by working to expand prison education programs even as the state’s inmate population is decreasing.

Members quizzed both San Francisco legislators about various threats and attacks on the rights of public employees to collectively bargain in California and other states.

Don’t be complacent

“Working people, especially public employees, should never take their wages and benefits for granted. Everything you have can be lost through the political process. Look at what has happened in Wisconsin and other states,” Ammiano said.

“I really appreciate it when legislators have an open door to us and are willing to listen to state employees,” said Robert Lehman, an employee at the Public Utilities Commission. “As a constituent, I want legislators who are willing to answer our questions.”



EDD employee Tami Bryant with Assemblymember Tom Ammiano

“The SEIU ‘One Voice’ town halls are a great opportunity to collaborate with our sister locals and carry on a healthy dialogue with our state representatives about issues that matter to us.”

– Tami Bryant
Employment Development Department

“These are two of the easiest go-to people I can imagine when it comes to endorsements,” said Robert Lehman, an employee at the Public Utilities Commission. “I really appreciate that they have an open door to us and they are very responsive. I feel honored that they each came and spoke with us today and answered every question we put to them.”

Members meet statewide

Over the past two months, Local 1000 joined with other SEIU locals to offer 24 “One Voice” town hall election meetings in cities all over California, ending March 24 in San Diego. The town halls are part of an open endorsement process in which more than 300 Local 1000 members interviewed candidates and then discussed each candidate’s positions. Members of each local then voted on recommendations to SEIU’s California State Council.

“The SEIU ‘One Voice’ town halls are a great opportunity to collaborate with our sister locals and carry on a healthy dialogue with our state representatives about issues that matter to us,” said Tami Bryant, who works at the Employment Development Department and serves as chief steward for Local 1000’s District Labor Council 743 in San Francisco. “We want legislators who are willing to stand by us when we are under attack. These meetings allow us to really communicate with our legislators and build stronger relationships.”

UNION INFORMATION

Resource Center

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7 a.m. to 7 p.m.
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