

**PROFILE:** Thomas Perine

# Helping workers help themselves

## Grassroots leader finds fulfillment in making a difference for workers



Thomas Perine always wanted to be in a labor union but he never realized how much fun it would be – or how much work.

“The more I saw what the union was all about the more I realized I could get active and help people to empower themselves,” said Perine, who as president of Local 1000’s District Labor Council (DLC) 790 represents about 3,000 workers at more than a dozen agencies in offices scattered about Sacramento’s eastern suburbs.

“It’s really a second job – it’s become a passion. Helping my coworkers takes a lot of time, but it’s very fulfilling and its work that needs to be done. That’s why we are a union.”

“I know that not everyone is able to devote as much time to union work,” Perine added. “But we need everyone to get involved as much as they can. Especially right now, we need everyone involved and working together because we all benefit from a strong union.”

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Perine grew up in the Washington D.C. area, where his father was a civilian engineer in the Department of the Navy. Before moving to California nine years ago, Perine worked for the federal government, for the Commonwealth of Virginia and as a private contractor doing government work. “I’ve seen both sides and taxpayers usually get a better deal with public employees performing government work.”

“I never had the opportunity to join a union, even though I always supported the ideals of unions,” Perine said. “So on my first day of work at Franchise Tax Board, in 2001, I joined Local 1000.”

### **Bad bosses boost union**

Perine did not really become active in Local 1000 until after his information technology unit was

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transferred to the Department of Child Support Services.

“I saw things happening to employees that I didn’t think were fair,” Perrine said. “I got a copy of our contract and found out these were contract violations.”

“Bad bosses are our best recruiting tool,” Perine said. “It makes for a more productive workplace when there is mutual respect between management and rank-and-file employees. Our job as stewards is to mitigate problems.”

Since then Perine has been involved in numerous workplace issues including union rights, discrimination, reasonable accommodation, career mobility, reclassification and the costly outsourcing of our members’ jobs.

### **Out of control outsourcing**

“About a third of the 300 technology workers in my division are contractors, including some who have been here for 17 years,” Perine said. “Information technologies change yearly so there is no valid excuse to keep IT contractors that long. It’s an insult to our members when they are locked out of their offices on furloughs while contractors are allowed in.”

Perine is reaching out to numerous co-workers, who have fallen on hard times from furloughs, by supporting foreclosure prevention workshops in the DLC and is making plans for free financial counseling.

“At first people don’t want to admit how tough it is,” Perine said. “I believe that one of the most important things a labor union can do is help build and preserve a strong middle class. In times like this, we need to help people keep their piece of the American dream.”

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UNION UPDATE

LOCAL 1000  
  
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## Summaries of General Fund furlough lawsuits

**Furlough plan unconstitutional:** This lawsuit, on appeal after a Sacramento judge sided with the governor in January of 2009, asserts that the governor's executive order violates the state constitution and other laws. The court has asked both sides to file additional legal briefs in the case; a decision is not expected before this summer.

**Furlough implementation illegal:** This challenge asserts that the furlough order violates the Administrative Procedures Act, which governs the revision of state regulations. A Sacramento Superior Court judge agreed with Local 1000 and denied Schwarzenegger's effort to dismiss the case. Local 1000 is awaiting relevant documents from the state.

**Emergency Services Act violated:** This litigation asserts that the third furlough day was implemented in violation of the Emergency Services Act, because the state's fiscal crisis was not an emergency and the third furlough is a product of political expediency related to a labor dispute. Local 1000 waiting on the state to produce key documents.

**Judge stops State Fund furloughs:** A San Francisco Superior Court judge ruled on Sept. 10, that under the California Insurance Code the furloughs are unlawful as applied to employees of the State Compensation Insurance Fund (SCIF). The governor is appealing the ruling, which ended furloughs and awarded back pay to 6,200 SCIF employees.



## Judge asked to lift stay, end furloughs immediately

Local 1000 attorneys are scheduled to go to court on March 22 or 23 to formally ask Judge Frank Roesch to lift his stay and require Gov. Schwarzenegger to immediately end all furloughs and pay back wages for approximately 53,000 furloughed state workers. It is not clear how long it will take Roesch to issue a decision.

The stay was triggered automatically when Schwarzenegger appealed Roesch's Feb. 25 judgment for all non-General Fund state workers.

Meanwhile, Local 1000 attorneys will be filing legal papers to oppose the governor's effort to consolidate all the furlough lawsuits and put them before the state Supreme Court.

"Gov. Schwarzenegger had choices. He could have honored the contract we negotiated and saved the state more than \$350 million; instead, he chose to litigate," said Local 1000 President Yvonne Walker. "So we will fully participate in that process, as required by law, and file papers responding to the governor's petition to consolidate."

## CHANNEL 1000 LIVE

Interact with President Walker in her second online town hall meeting.

Local 1000 President Yvonne Walker will be answering your questions live during an interactive webcast.

**Monday, March 22  
6 p.m.**

Chat with members, submit questions, watch the town hall.

Tune in at [seiu1000.org](http://seiu1000.org) and click on Channel 1000.