

APRIL 7, 2010

UNION UPDATE



“There are thousands of us at risk of losing our homes. We are all in this together.”

—Claudia Gambaro
Local 1000 homeowner relief workshop organizer

MEMBER PROFILE: Claudia Gambaro

Member leads campaign to help thousands avoid foreclosure

Workshops help furloughed state employees keep homes

Claudia Gambaro often looks for ways to help fellow state workers but she never predicted she would become Local 1000’s expert in helping them avoid foreclosure.

But when the housing crisis hit Gambaro and tens of thousands of state employees, she wanted to help herself and others keep their homes.



Claudia Gambaro spoke to 80 state workers at a March 30 financial workshop for homeowners hurt by furloughs and the recession.

Gambaro, an activist since junior high, realized that the information she received that helped her hang onto her house could help people suffering the same predicament because of furloughs.

Local 1000 sponsors counseling

Gambaro was able to pair Local 1000 with Hope Against Hope, a Sacramento non-profit that helps financially challenged home owners, including those who owe more than their houses are worth. Since last fall Local 1000 helped Gambaro organize more than a dozen homeowner counseling workshops reaching more than 1,000 state workers all over California.

“Once I had the information to help myself, I thought ‘I know at least 95,000 other people who need this too’ so we started the workshops,” said Gambaro,

biologist at the California Military Department. “Because of furloughs there are thousands of us at risk of losing our homes. We are all in this together.”

Her leadership on homeowner issues is a natural outgrowth of lifelong activism that began when she in junior high school, continued through college life at Chico State University, nonprofits such as the Make A Wish Foundation and on to Local 1000 as a steward, Classification Bargaining Unit Representative (CBUR) and bargaining team member for Unit 1.

Knowledge is power

Gambaro, who was hired in 2001, became a steward in 2003. She sees the union as a place to channel her desire to be active and make a difference. She also came to see that our contract was a powerful tool to help fellow workers.

“Knowledge is power – I believe that with my whole heart,” she said. “And, you also must be your own best advocate; while you are advocating for yourself you may as well do so for others.”

Foreclosures hit home

Gambaro isn’t just an advocate for those trying to avoid foreclosure—she herself was financially challenged by the furloughs.

But she refused to sit back. Instead, she chose to be a leader in helping others.

“These sorts of challenges seem to find me,” Gambaro said. “I don’t care for conflict, but I am not willing to stand idly by and watch bad things happen to good people. That’s why I became a steward. There is much adversity in the world. We can’t fix everything, but we need to try to do what we can. We may not be changing the world here, but we are helping to change the path that some folks are on.”

Resource Center

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Frequently Asked Questions

Legal battle over Special Fund department furloughs

1. What is next in the lawsuit over furloughs at Special Fund departments?

On March 30, the California Court of Appeal temporarily re-imposed furloughs for employees in non-General Fund departments and agencies. The appeals court did NOT decide the merits of the case, but put everything on hold in order to review arguments on whether furloughs should be lifted until it makes a decision on the governor's appeal. Local 1000 is scheduled to submit written arguments on April 7 asking the appeals court to stop furloughs and allow non-General Fund workers to resume work at full salary. It is unclear when the appeals court will issue a decision.

2. What happened to legislation that would end furloughs at non-General Fund departments?

In March, Gov. Schwarzenegger vetoed SBX8 29 by state Senate President pro Tem Darrell Steinberg (D-Sacramento). That bill would have made it illegal for the governor to furlough state workers at non-General Fund agencies and the Franchise Tax Board and the Board of Equalization. Assemblymember Hector De La Torre (D-South Gate) has introduced AB 1215, a virtually identical bill that will be heard in the Legislature later this month.

3. My department is a Special Fund department, but it is not included on the list of 68 departments named in the court case, do I continue the furlough days?

All state employees are still subject to the governor's furlough order. If you believe you qualify as a "non-General Fund" department (i.e., federally funded, special funded or self-reliant) and are not on the list, please e-mail the name of your department or agency, along with your contact information in case someone needs to follow up to nofurloughs@seiu1000.org. Please note that if your umbrella department is listed, Local 1000's legal position is you are covered. For example, if you work at Disability Determinations Services Division, you would be covered because the Department of Social Services is a named party and that division is within the larger department.

4. My department falls under "the umbrella" of a non-General Fund department. Does that mean my group is included in the recent court ruling even if my team is part of the General Fund?

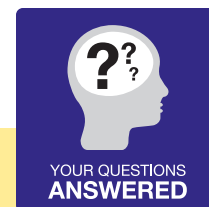
If your department is named as a whole, the court order ending furloughs applies to every sub-entity (i.e., office, division, board, etc.) within the larger agency or department even if your position itself is funded through General Funds. The court reviewed the overall percentage of General Fund money as compared to non-General Fund money. However, as noted above, that order is now on appeal.

5. When the furloughs end for non-General Fund departments, will I return to my original rate of pay?

Yes.

6. Are furloughs still scheduled to end in June 2010 for non-General Fund departments?

Yes.



Are there lawsuits that could end furloughs for workers at General Fund departments?

Yes, Local 1000 has three separate pending lawsuits that would stop furloughs for all workers in all state agencies regardless of funding source. All three are in different phases of litigation.

For more information go to seiu1000.org