

# Feinstein urged to back free choice bill

## *Recalling anti-union bosses, members join national effort*

Local 1000 members have joined thousands of other Californians calling on U.S. Sen. Dianne Feinstein to back the Employee Free Choice Act (EFCA).

Feinstein is the only California Democrat in Congress who remains undecided on EFCA. This bill would allow workers to freely choose whether or not to join a union in the private sector and strengthen penalties for employers who break the law. All across the state, activists have been writing letters, sending e-mails and making phone calls to convince the senator to vote for EFCA.

### Members back free choice

Like many Local 1000 members active in the Employee Free Choice campaign, Florence Ross has personal experi-



**At rallies like this one outside the state Capitol, workers are calling for political leaders – especially U.S. Sen. Dianne Feinstein – to vote for the Employee Free Choice Act.**

ence with anti-union private employers. Ross and others also understand that low wages in the private sector put pressure on legislators to reduce compensation for public employees.

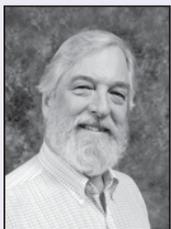
### Boss changes rules

“I know what life is like when you don’t have a union,” said Ross, who now works at the Employment Development Department but spent many years as a temporary employee. “Every time I would get close to working enough hours to qualify for health benefits, they’d up the hours. Without a contract, they can change the rules whenever they want.”

To urge Feinstein to support the Employee Free Choice Act go to [seiu1000.org](http://seiu1000.org) and click on the Employee Free Choice icon or call toll free at 1-866-207-2060.

# Big win for free speech at work

## *Arbitrator backs state worker on political posters*



**Leonard Seitz**

In a decision that could affect state offices throughout California, an arbitrator has ruled that workers represented by Local 1000 have the right to post signs for or against state propositions and initiatives.

“This is a victory for nonpartisan advocacy in the workplace,” said Leonard Seitz, a long-time Caltrans employee, whose 2005 grievance set the stage for the legal battle. “This ruling supports proper reading of our contract workers and their unions are

allowed to express nonpartisan political opinions in the workplace.”

The key distinction is “nonpartisan.” Since 1982 our contract has prohibited the distribution of literature of a “partisan political nature” at work. But in races that under California law are nonpartisan, such as state propositions or local initiatives, state workers are free to post literature.

### Anti-union propositions

The case stems from December 2005 when a visiting Caltrans official said that Seitz had to take down two political posters – one each opposed to propositions 75 and 76 in the 2005

special election – from his cubicle.

“I agreed to take down the posters because the election was over, but I feel strongly that they were violating our contract,” Seitz said.

### Nonpartisan elections OK

Local 1000 attorney Brooke Pierman argued that the state election code defines propositions as nonpartisan, so a supervisor or manager cannot arbitrarily interpret the law or our contract otherwise.

Arbitrator Norman Brand agreed, saying in his decision “the plain language of the (contract) supports the union’s position.”

# More hidden hazards at BOE building?

## *Independent study: extent of mold unknown*

An independent report confirms the serious health and safety problems caused by mold, water leaks and “latent construction defects” at the Board of Equalization (BOE) headquarters in Sacramento.

The new report by the Lacroix Davis consulting firm outlines the potential hazards caused by mold throughout the building and notes that because of construction defects there may be mold inside many interior walls in the high-rise, especially near elevator shafts.

### **Total staff relocation**

“We need to move every single person out of the building, then go through the building with a fine tooth comb to find everything that causes the mold and water leaks and fix these problems once and for all,” said BOE employee Bobbi Smith, a Local 1000 leader who testified after the DGS presentation. “This report raises more questions than it answers. No one is sure what is causing this mold.”

**“No one is sure what is causing this mold”**

**—Bobbi Smith**

BOE employee & Local 1000 leader

Department of General Services (DGS) officials who presented the report at the April 15 BOE Board meeting stopped short of recommending that all BOE employees should be relocated until all the health safety hazards were removed – a stand which perplexed board members and angered Local 1000 BOE workers.

“We can’t be moving people around while the building is still being fixed,” Smith said. “It’s not safe, and we will never really be sure that the mold problem is gone for good.”

Deanna Payne, a 29-year BOE employee, testified that when her work station was moved near an interior wall ventilation duct in 2007, she immediately began experiencing coughing, sinus congestion and other flu-like symptoms.



**BOE employee Bobbi Smith is calling for a total staff relocation until the mold problem is solved.**

“At first my doctors and I thought it was just a very bad cold that wouldn’t go away,” she said. “But we began to notice that the symptoms improved when I wasn’t working. My doctor concluded that it must be related to mold at the office.”

She now works from home 50 percent of her time, and her office at BOE headquarters is on a different floor.

“No one should be afraid of going in to work,” she said. “Your office should not be a health hazard.”

## **KNOW YOUR NEW CONTRACT**

### **Two holidays traded for two personal days**

Many members have been asking about the changes to holidays in our new contract. Here’s how it works.

Fed by conservative pressure against state employees, elimination of the of Lincoln’s Birthday and Columbus Day holidays was a priority for the governor. In return for giving up these holidays in February and October, Local 1000’s elected negotiators won two new personal holidays, which are much like vacation days and allow employees more flexibility in planning time off.

The new provision means that state offices will open as usual on those days and that employees working on Lincoln’s Birthday or Columbus Day will no longer receive premium pay.

The changes do not affect any other state holidays. Under our new contract, time off for a state holiday will still count toward the accumulation of overtime.

For further information on personal holidays and state holidays, go to [seiu1000.org](http://seiu1000.org)

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CALL LOCAL 1000 TOLL FREE: **(866) 471-SEIU (7348)** or visit our website: [www.seiu1000.org](http://www.seiu1000.org)

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Read our new agreement & frequently asked questions at [seiu1000.org](http://seiu1000.org) or [local1000ratification.org](http://local1000ratification.org)