

Finding strength in a united voice



Labor leads way to California for all

BY YVONNE R. WALKER

This weekend, we celebrate Labor Day, a federal holiday for 125 years. It's not the end of summer; it's a historic milestone.

A salute to the enduring contributions of American workers, Labor Day – like the American labor movement – was born out of strife. Back in the late 1800s, workers could expect to toil 12 hours or more a day, seven days a week, just to earn enough to eat and a place to sleep. Safety was an afterthought. Every member of the family worked hard, including young children. Public education? Health care? Retirement? Paid vacation? Racial justice? Minimum wage? Those concepts hadn't been invented yet.

A few extremely rich families controlled most of the nation's fortune. (Sound familiar?) During this "Gilded Age," the top 10% owned three-quarters of all American wealth while the bottom 40% had nothing at all.

That's when unions started organizing American workers. Facing extremely unsafe working conditions in mills and factories, union members demanded to be treated like people – with respect. Their hard work and sacrifice lifted up all Americans.

Things got uglier before they got better. As unions gained power, companies tried to beat them down. Union members were killed while fighting for such basic rights as fresh air, clean water and breaks on the job. After some particularly bloody incidents, unions pushed Congress to pass laws to protect workers, regardless of gender or race. In 1894, Congress also created a special holiday for the worker: Labor Day.

In the 20th century, unions won many important rights that most people now take for granted. (The fact that workers have weekends at all is thanks to organized labor.) But after so much success, people took their unions for granted, too. Employers seized the opportunity to whittle away at those hard-won union gains.

Now, only 10% of Americans belong to a union. That's down from 20% in 1983 and nearly 35% in 1954. Meanwhile, worker rights have slipped away, too. That's led to increased safety hazards; according to a recent survey, one out of four workers know someone who was hurt on the job. Wage inequality is approaching levels not seen since the Great Depression.

Without union support, workers have lost political power and strength at the workplace. Employers are free to ignore worker concerns, use hordes of unpaid interns, demand

employees work 60-hour weeks and illegally treat workers as independent contractors. We're back in another "Gilded Age" with the top 5% holding two-thirds of American wealth. Without strong unions, that inequality will only grow.

Americans haven't lost faith in unions. According to a 2018 MIT study, 46% of non-union workers would like to be in a union, up from 32% in 1995. Yet only 6.4% of private sector workers are union members.

By contrast, more than one-third of state and local government workers belong to a union. Why? As union organizers have known from the beginning: There's strength in numbers. I see it every day in my union, SEIU Local 1000. Our power is amazing. When we speak with one voice, it demands to be heard.

The largest union of state workers in California, the Service Employees International Union Local 1000 represents about 96,000 state workers.

We're still fighting that good fight, demanding a living wage, the right to retire in dignity and access to quality health care. Together, we can lift up California like our union predecessors lifted up America more than a century ago.

We're working on a California for all, where every Californian can have an affordable place to live, access to quality health care, racial justice and freedom from hunger and poverty. In the coming weeks, I'll share more about that goal and how we can get there.

As Thomas Huang, SEIU Local 1000 member said after a work-site victory, "Once workers get a taste of their power, they won't stop. I get that now. I feel like this is the first real win we've had — meaning we won what we did through collective struggle. And now, I am voracious."

We state workers know the strength of a strong, united voice. We're speaking up for everyone.



Yvonne R. Walker
president,
SEIU Local 1000

PHOTO COURTESY OF SEIU LOCAL 1000

It pays to belong to a union

\$28.50

Average salary
of female California
union worker

26%

more than
non-union
counterpart

\$30.41

Average salary
of male California
union worker

15%

more than
non-union
counterpart

*According to research by the UC Berkeley
Center for Labor Research and Education



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Economic Justice for California

People struggle to make ends meet in one of the richest economies in the world

BY YVONNE R. WALKER

What can you do to end poverty for all? That can be a difficult question to ponder when you may be a paycheck away from poverty yourself. According to the Federal Reserve, one out of eight Americans say they'd be unable to pay for a \$400 emergency by any means.

California is the fifth largest economy in the world, bigger than most countries. Amid so much wealth and opportunity, you should expect that the work force can do well.

In the past, that was true. The backbone of California's middle class, state workers benefited from fair wages and good benefits. They were able to keep hard times at bay while lifting up all of California.

Today, most everybody is struggling. We live farther and farther away from work. People have to make choices. It affects where they live, how they live. And that "emergency expense" may be something as likely as increased health care premiums.

When you live in the fifth largest economy in the world, nobody should be reduced to living in poverty. Yet last year, California had the highest poverty rate in the country.

Take for example Debra and Kellie, two state workers. "As a single woman in my 60s in a high cost of living area, I am currently working two jobs to make ends meet," Debra said. "I live in a studio apartment and my rent takes half my take-home pay. Any increased costs to my health care premiums would essentially assure that I not only would barely survive month to month, but may put me out of my apartment and essentially make me homeless."

"Living on the Central Coast of California has kept my family near the brink of financial disaster for years," said Kellie, who provides her family's only income. "Living from paycheck to paycheck and praying that nothing breaks that will cost me extra money is incredibly stressful."

It shouldn't be a decision of shuffling cards with our lives, choosing between health care, clothing, food, air conditioning, heat. That's a choice we shouldn't have to make.

Because there's not a wealth problem in California; there's a distribution problem. By choice — of corporations and politicians — so much of that wealth never trickles down to the people who need it most. Nearly one in five

children in California lack resources to meet their basic needs. Overall, almost four out of every 10 Californians are living beneath or near the poverty line.

For the last 60 years, conservative politicians and wealthy corporations have implemented what's known as the Southern strategy to hold onto their wealth and reduce our political power by pitting poor white, black and brown people against each other. We should be united as allies in a common cause — ending poverty — but Republican politicians keep us at odds and in turn keep us from organizing together and winning elections. Playing off centuries-old racial resentment, it worked 60 years ago and, as we've seen, is still working today.

Reverend Dr. William Barber of North Carolina is leading a different approach that is challenging this strategy and winning political elections and policy campaigns by bringing people together and strengthening their power.

My vision is to end poverty in California. We can make changes to distribute resources differently, like reducing the profits drug companies extract from our economy and lowering health care costs. We can vote to cap rent increases and make housing affordable. We can join together to lower childcare costs and make college more affordable. A key part of this pathway forward is fighting for racial justice and welcoming immigrants, ensuring that we have the political power to make these changes that benefit all of us.

California now has another choice. We can set an example for the nation and take up that banner to end poverty. If we succeed, that would truly make our state a California for all.



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PHOTO COURTESY OF SEIU LOCAL1000

Unions make a difference

Average hourly pay by race

WHITE

\$29.85 Non-union
workers

\$32.59 Union
workers

BLACK

\$21.85 Non-union
worker

\$25.88 Union
worker

LATINX

\$17.84 Non-union
workers

\$24.97 Union
workers

ASIAN

\$29.86 Non-union
workers

\$32.86 Union
workers

*ACCORDING TO RESEARCH BY THE UC BERKELEY
CENTER FOR LABOR RESEARCH AND EDUCATION



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Keeping our heads above water

Tentative contract helps lift up bottom, close inequality gap

BY YVONNE R. WALKER

A rising tide lifts all boats – but only if there’s enough water to go around.

To create a California for All, that rising tide also needs to narrow the gap between the top and the bottom. Right now, the top 1% swims in oceans of wealth; the rest navigates in puddles. We’re not all floating on a level sea.

Our union, California’s largest representative of state employees, recently reached a tentative contract agreement. That’s great news, not just for state workers but everyone who cares about the middle class and ending poverty.

Overall, our new contract helps lift up middle class workers. The only way to get ahead financially is to beat inflation and this contract does that with a 7% salary raise spread over the next three years.

In particular, our tentative agreement has provisions to help low-wage workers. Those making less than \$15 an hour were given an increase to \$15 or more, and those in that career path were given comparable raises to avoid compaction in their employee category.

In addition, every worker will receive \$260 a month to offset high health care costs. For many state employees, especially low-wage workers, that stipend will be a godsend. In rural areas, they’ve suffered from lack of access to HMOs, and been stuck with high deductibles and co-pays.

“Health care in the rural area where I live is already very expensive,” said Kayla, one of many state workers we heard from about this issue. “(Rising) health care costs would be very detrimental to me and my family.”

One other key piece of our deal focuses on the future. As you know, many workers suffer from uncertainty and face negative consequences of the implementation of automation and technology. We created a joint task force on the “Future of Work and Civil Service” to allow our members to partner with the state on predicting, planning and ultimately determining our own future around important technological innovations, automation and the

ever-changing nature of work in our society.

We know unions help decrease inequality in two major ways – one, increasing wages for middle class workers faster than inflation; and two, reducing outrageous corporate pay and profits.

Our union has worked towards that second goal through supporting laws such as Prop. 30, California’s Millionaires Tax, that we helped pass in 2012. Now extended through 2030, that proposition created four high-income tax brackets with those earning more than \$1 million paying 13.3% in state income tax, a 3% increase. Those extra funds have supported a wide range of services throughout our state.

The next step is decreasing that growing gap between the bottom and the top. In recent years, that gulf has widened substantially. In 1965, the average CEO made 20 times the pay of a typical worker; by 1989, CEO compensation had nearly tripled to 58 times the average worker pay.

In 2018, that average (not exemplary) CEO is making 362 times the pay of the average worker.

Some cities are trying to address that chasm. These pilot ideas at the local level are the first small steps on the long journey to closing that gap. In Portland, Oregon, for example, a new tax targets CEO compensation if that pay is greater than 250 times what that company’s average worker earns. Companies can either pay the tax, or pay their people more.

Like that rising tide, lifting everyone is the better option.



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PHOTO COURTESY OF SEIU LOCAL 1000



Growing inequality gap

1965

\$126,000 Average CEO

\$6,540 Average worker

20 times ratio

2018

\$14.5 million Average CEO

\$39,888 Average worker

362 times ratio

Source: Economic Policy Institute and U.S.
Securities and Exchange Commission.



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Health care shouldn't be a headache

Open enrollment an annual reminder of rising costs

BY YVONNE R. WALKER

It's that time of year again when families pull out their calculators, crunch the numbers and keep their fingers crossed. (For this headache, they may reach for some pain relievers, too.) It's open enrollment, that annual period when state workers stress about their health care for the coming year.

During open enrollment, state workers have to make a lot of tough decisions, often having to weigh the value of keeping their doctors and specialists versus saving a few dollars by going to a cheaper network — and perhaps even changing plans once a year to lower their costs.

Bouncing around between providers and systems can be stressful and hurt the quality of their care. For rural members, they usually don't even have that choice and continually are forced to pay increasingly higher costs.

We are working to change this.

That starts with recognizing that affordable health care shouldn't be a numbers game. Health care should be a human right.

Why is affordable health care so important? It's literally a matter of life or death. Not only is it crucial to physical and mental well being, but can mean the difference between maintaining a roof over your head or being out on the streets.

There's a direct correlation between uninsured catastrophic illness and bankruptcy. Mounting health care bills can overwhelm a family's already shaky financial situation, forcing them to lose their home.

Even with coverage for our members and coverage under the Affordable Care Act, people often fall into this category of being under-insured. This means you have health insurance on paper, but you can't afford to use it. How do we know?

A recent survey by the Kaiser Family Foundation and California Health Care Foundation found that almost a third of state residents making \$49,000 or less for a family of four had problems paying medical bills. More than half delayed getting medical and dental treatment such as check-ups, tests, prescriptions and mental health care. Even for those with higher incomes, about a third delayed care, the survey found.

Even when they did get medical or dental care, a majority of low-income Californians had difficulty paying for it. Almost three quarters of low-income residents said they had

to cut spending on other household items to pay medical bills, and about six out of 10 said they'd gutted their savings, put off vacations, or had to borrow money from family or friends to pay their medical bills.

As we fight for lower costs, we also need to be even more vigilant that employers and health insurance companies are not keeping premiums low on one side but under-insuring people on the other — making it impossible for people to afford to use the health insurance that they have.

I've heard from many state workers hit by sky-high deductibles. They may delay vital procedures such as a colonoscopy or cancer screening because they feel they can't afford such preventative measures.

Here's an example from Debby, a state worker: "Although I need medical care, I've been putting off important medical procedures because my \$3,500 deductible is way too high. I'm still struggling with last year's medical bills and being off work for several months to recuperate. I appreciate having insurance — I really do — but if we can't afford to use it or are forced to pay more each month for an HMO that doesn't include our doctors, how is that much of a benefit? Having to choose between housing and health care is a detrimental choice that employees should not have to face, but we do."

To help workers like Debby, we successfully negotiated for the state to pay \$260 a month to all our represented employees who get insurance from CalPERS. We continue to look for ways to bring down the cost of health insurance.

It takes time to make real systemic changes on all sides. In future columns, I'll discuss ways those changes can be accomplished.

But know this: Our members are leading the charge for affordable, accessible health care for all.



Yvonne R. Walker
President,
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Insured but still struggling



1 in 5

insured Californians struggled with medical bills in 2018



4 in 10

Californians say they or a family member skipped care due to cost

Source: Kaiser Family Foundation



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Affordable housing key to ending poverty

Renters' rights important part of this fight

BY YVONNE R. WALKER

Sacramento used to be a bargain. People moved here from all over because our city was considered an affordable place to live and work. We were known as the most diverse and the most integrated city in the country.

People still want to move here, but that affordability factor has disappeared.

Rents have been going up faster here than almost anywhere in the country. And most Sacramento residents are renters; less than half own their own home – far below the national average.

Dream of owning a home? In 2018, Sacramento ranked among the top 10 worst cities for first-time home-buyers. Sacramento needs to build at least 60,000 more affordable homes just for the people who currently live here.

Housing is a human right. It definitely affects how we live, not just where we live. Affordable housing is key to ending poverty for all Californians. We need to keep the affordable housing we have, and find ways to build a lot more.

Why should a union worry about the cost of housing? People have to be able to afford to live where they work. Our members are concerned about the environment and being able to live close to work. They care about rising homelessness, and their neighbors' suffering that comes with it. And their own suffering, as state workers have been priced out of their apartments and forced to live in their cars.

Renting should not mean living in deplorable conditions because advocating for something better means losing your home.

Unfortunately, that is all too often the case, as it was with a worker named Mari. Pregnant, she was concerned about the living conditions in her two-bedroom apartment. She complained to the landlord about rats gnawing the wood and leaving droppings under the kitchen sink. She complained about mold on the walls and the ceiling. She complained about an infestation of cockroaches. She complained about no heat in the winter, and no air in the summer.

And all this for the low price of \$1,255. In the 18 months Mari lived there, her landlord raised the rent \$200, a 20% increase.

What did she get for her extra money and complaints? At seven months pregnant, Mari got evicted.

Fear of eviction keeps many tenants from speaking

up. But if we're going to solve California's housing crisis, homelessness and poverty, we can't keep quiet.

Just because you are a renter, you should not have to face being displaced from your home, your neighborhood, or your kids from their school. You should not be stuck with an abuser because you can't afford to move out or afford a place of your own. You should not suffer severe sunburn or die of dehydration and thirst because you don't have a place to live.

For all of these reasons, SEIU Local 1000 is part of a local coalition, Housing 4 Sacramento, and we advocate for state-wide housing solutions as well.

This year, we fought for – and won – rent stabilization policies to keep landlords from jacking up rents more than 5% plus inflation. We fought for – and won – just cause eviction protections so a landlord can only evict you under very limited circumstances. And we fought for – and won – a rent registry where all landlord actions including rent increases and evictions must be logged and reported, so we can track the trends and challenges as well as insure the law is enforced.

In Sacramento, the City Council adopted the Tenant Protection and Relief Act, which we supported. Our Housing 4 Sacramento coalition had worked on getting rent control and just cause eviction passed for three years. This act, which went into effect Sept. 12, is a step towards helping tenants like Mari and countless other residents who are squeezed by rising rents and landlords who ignore residents' concerns.

Stay tuned here for many more policy fights and volunteer opportunities to partner with us on ways to redistribute housing wealth and insure housing affordability for all.



Yvonne R. Walker
President
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House Rental

Overpriced!

Expensive

Moderate

Reasonable

Sacramento's housing gap

48.6%

**Sacramento
homeownership rate**

63.9%

**National
homeownership rate**

63,118

**Additional affordable rental
homes Sacramento County
needs to meet current demand**

**Source: U.S. Census Bureau and California
Housing Partnership Corporation**



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Taking a stand against high drug prices

Members' personal stories at the heart of campaign

BY YVONNE R. WALKER
PRESIDENT, SEIU LOCAL 1000

California has the most poverty in the country. We don't have a resource problem; we have a distribution problem.

And one way we are kept from thinking about redistribution is to pit working people against each other. Expanding access to medical care for immigrants or lower wage workers, for example, does not raise the cost of care or reduce services for other people. More health care for me does not mean less health care or services for you.

We reject how people are pitted against each other. Instead, we advocate that everyone have affordable medical care. Drug companies, hospitals, and insurance providers should not make excessive profits at the expense of working people – black, white, Latinx, Asian-Pacific Islander, born here or in another country.

We all know drug companies are making excessive profits, and the prices for drugs are much lower in other countries. According to Congressional research, U.S. drug prices were nearly four times higher than average prices compared to similar countries.

How greedy are some drug companies? They're not only among the most profitable companies in the country, but once patents expire, they pay producers of generic drugs to not make those lower cost alternatives to keep lower-cost generic drugs off the market.

In California, Assemblymember Jim Wood of Santa Rosa authored a bill that would ban this practice, otherwise known as "Pay for Delay." The bill analysis noted this practice costs consumers nationally at least \$3.5 billion per year.

From a state worker perspective, in addition to the high cost of prescription drugs, the high cost of care in rural areas in California is a problem. Fewer public hospitals and HMOs are in rural areas; they have a monopoly and can charge a lot. Also, it's harder to recruit and retain doctors and specialists in rural areas. In addition, consolidation further limits choices.

Costs vary widely, but it's hard for consumers to tell in advance what they'll be charged. Also, laws around transparency allow hospitals and insurers not to disclose all the information about the level of profits they have, and the services they charge for.

As a pilot project, CalPERS has started to identify a reasonable cost for treatment. Centers of excellence that provide non-urgent procedures are free for our employees. If people prefer to use a different center or specialist, then they pay the difference.

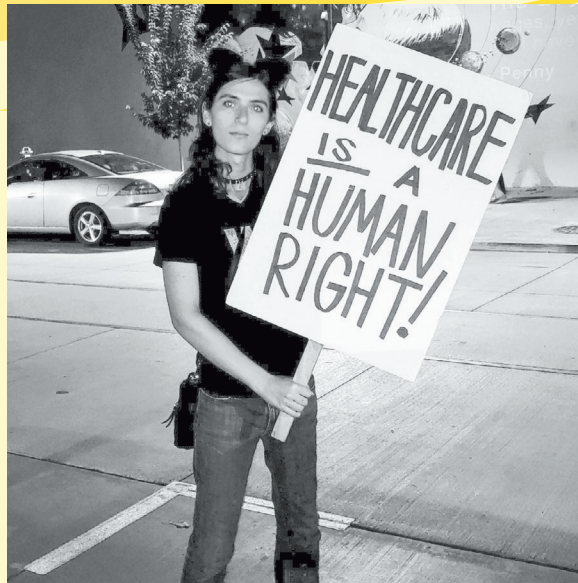


PHOTO COURTESY SEIU LOCAL 1000

We will continue to explore ways to lower costs, control profits and maintain quality. One way we are doing this is asking our members to share their experiences with us and make sure that the pilot projects CalPERS implements address problems our members face.

Here is Lisa's story. She lives in Redding, where there are only two small HMOs. There are no specialists. Many people travel to San Francisco, Sacramento or even out of state to Oregon or Nevada to see a specialist, she said. And even when they follow the insurance rules, they run into big bills.

"One of my sons was operated on, and I received a bill for \$23,000 because the anesthesiologist was out of network. How can the hospital be in network, but the anesthesiologist out of network? And when I talked with the insurance company, we were told it was my responsibility to check."

This was not an isolated case, Lisa said. "One of our members had a baby, and while she waited for the bill, she received a 30-day notice that she would be sent to collections if she didn't pay for the out-of-network doctor who helped to deliver her child, again at an in-network hospital."

Our goal as a union is to continue advocating with our CalPERS Board to force insurance companies to improve services and reduce costs. By sharing these stories, we're pushing them to listen to our members, to reduce the amount of profit being leaked from our health care systems, and make sure everyone receives quality health care at a reasonable price.

Because we don't have a resource problem – we have a distribution problem. And lawmakers and the CalPERS Board can and should be allies in helping redistribute resources.

Tough pill to swallow

ANNUAL PHARMACEUTICAL SPENDING PER PERSON

U.S.	\$1,220
Japan	\$838
Canada	\$832
Germany	\$823
Australia	\$673
France	\$653
Sweden	\$515
UK	\$468
Portugal	\$403
Netherlands	\$396
Denmark	\$318

SOURCE: HOUSE WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE



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Making changes, one bill at a time

These new laws will help workers

BY YVONNE R. WALKER

This week, Jews around the world are celebrating the end of their New Year period with a day of fasting on Yom Kippur, October 9th. For some, it is a day to focus on doing better next year, and asking forgiveness from people they have wronged. For some, the pain of hunger during a 24-hour fast helps them to connect with people who spend many days, weeks and months going to bed hungry and getting up hungry. It is a period of celebration as well as seriousness.

The legislative session in California is also coming to an end, and Gavin Newsom has worked diligently with labor and community organizations to look at using his position to help advance his vision for a California for All.

Gov. Newsom started this year with a renewed hope for a California Dream. He recognized that too many Californians are experiencing the squeeze of stagnant wages and the rising price of building-block necessities such as housing, health care, education and child care.

This week, I want to highlight three bills he signed that resonated with me – and Local 1000’s vision – to eradicate poverty, change how we distribute the vast wealth of our state and our country, and make it easier for people to join unions, which will help improve working conditions and wages.

SB 206, nicknamed “Fair Pay to Play,” is a boon to college athletes. It allows them to get paid for endorsements and the use of their image without losing their scholarships.

Under restrictions by the National Collegiate Athletic Association, universities and the sports industry had made billions off these kids while the student athletes themselves struggled to get by. Coaches and staff got six- or even seven-figure contracts while the players were not allowed to profit from their work on the field or court until after they left school. It’s even worse for women athletes, since only about 1% go on to professional sports.

“Collegiate student athletes put everything on the line – their physical health, future career prospects and years of their lives to compete. Colleges reap billions from these student athletes’ sacrifices and success but, in the same breath, block them from earning a single dollar,” Newsom said.

“Assembly Bill 5 is an important step. A next step is creating pathways for more workers to form a union, collectively bargain to earn more and have a strong voice at work.”

GOV. GAVIN NEWSOM

AB 378 allows family child care providers to negotiate a contract with the state for improvements to the child care system, such as expanding access to child care for working families, improved training, increasing the standards of quality care, and negotiating for pay that can support their own families. After 16 years of taking action and standing strong, child care providers have won the right to collectively bargain a contract with the State of California.

This bill comes in addition to the increased funding for affordable child care slots and funding to provide year-long care for low-income families, as well as funding for increased reimbursement and facilities grants that Gov. Newsom included in his budget.



After his experiences with Lyft, Mike Robinson is now trying to organize other gig workers.

PHOTO COURTESY SEIU LOCAL 1000

AB 5 restores employment status to more than a million California workers misclassified as “contractors.” Looking to cut costs at the expense of workers, companies relied on this illegal business model to decimate the state’s worker safety-net programs, and subject law-abiding businesses to unfair competition. Uber drivers, for example, must pay their own car insurance, repairs, maintenance and gas. Their employer avoids paying workers compensation, disability, sick leave or unemployment insurance.

Mike Robinson was one of those “contractors.” A former union sheetmetal worker, Mike started driving Lyft full time after his factory was bought by an overseas billionaire. But as the rates went down, he had to drive longer hours to make ends meet. At the same time, the CEO of Lyft has a net worth of \$695 million. Mike is now dedicated to fighting for a union for gig workers.

In his message about the bill, Gov. Newsom included the importance of taking the next step and creating pathways for more workers to form a union: “Assembly Bill 5 is an important step. A next step is creating pathways for more workers to form a union, collectively bargain to earn more and have a strong voice at work.”

It is heartening to see legislators such as Assemblywoman Lorena Gonzalez, the bill’s author, and Gov. Newsom recognizing the critical role unions play in advocating for workers so that they are not misclassified, overworked, underpaid or abused on the job.



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Retirement security for all

Big difference between a pension and a 401(k)

BY YVONNE R. WALKER
PRESIDENT, SEIU LOCAL 1000

Thinking about retirement? For many Californians, that day will never come. They work hard their whole lives, but never have the means to finally stop worrying, put their feet up and relax.

A good pension, that golden reward for a lifetime of service, is an endangered species as employers shift the burden of planning onto employees. But when you're living paycheck to paycheck, it's hard to put money aside for anything – including retirement.

Social Security is an important safety net that helps millions of Americans live out their years with some dignity and peace of mind, but it's not enough on its own. What if you're denied the opportunity to even participate?

Meet Robert. He's an SEIU member who currently serves as a home care provider.

"I've worked hard my whole life," Robert said. "I worked in refineries, worked for the Conservation Corps, and started pursuing a business degree to better my life, and provide for my family."

That all changed with the birth of his son, Amorrie.

"I spend my days caring for him," Robert explained. "He has been on a ventilator with a feeding tube practically all of his life."

"I love my son and he is a blessing in my life," he continued. "But as a family home care provider, I don't qualify for any form of retirement – not even Social Security. Like so many others living paycheck to paycheck, I'm left without a safety net. Who will take care of me in retirement? I'll be exactly where I am now in 20 years, working full time and struggling to get by."

Typically people talk about retirement security as a three-legged stool – Social Security, pensions and individual savings. For people like Robert, it's more like balancing on a pogo stick as he wends his way down the road towards retirement.

And consider this: Half of all Californians working today have no access to a retirement plan through their employers.

Robert is not alone in this situation. Many seniors never retire; they can't afford it.

One in four California seniors lacks income to meet basic needs. In particular, women and seniors of color feel the effects of our broken system even more. That's because they tend to earn less while working, and get fewer benefits when they stop.

To end poverty, we need to help bolster retirement programs and preserve pensions. Less than a third of Americans now qualify for a pension program. Yet, pensions are an important anti-poverty tool.

And contrary to myths, employees contribute mightily to

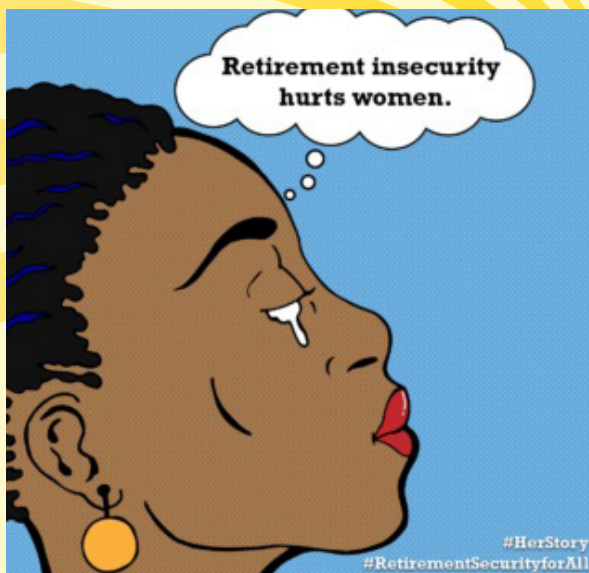


PHOTO COURTESY SEIU LOCAL 1000

their pensions; public employees on average kick in 12% of their salaries towards their pensions. The average pension is \$2,945 a month in California, or about \$35,340 a year.

As future retirees, we have to understand the big difference between a "defined benefit plan" and a "defined contribution plan." They are by no means equal ways to guarantee a comfortable retirement.

That's why protecting pensions is so important to those of us who may still have one. That also is why I helped pass a law in California requiring employers to offer a plan for their workers. And why I helped create a plan for private sector workers called CalSavers. It offers low-wage workers a way to save for retirement with low fees and the benefit of professional management, with a public oversight board of which I am a member.

We are still adamant about increasing wages and controlling skyrocketing housing costs. Our seniors' insecurity represents the sum of decades of bad decisions by employers, politicians and developers. No one should live on \$15,000 a year in California at the end of decades of work and have to work until they die.

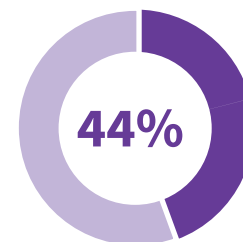
What's the difference?

A defined benefit, such as a pension, is a **promise**. Under a **defined benefit plan**, an employee knows for sure that he or she will receive in retirement a certain amount of money. Investment risks are shared by the employer and spread across a giant pool.

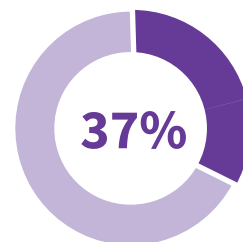
By contrast, a defined contribution plan, such as a 401(k), **has no guarantees**. What's defined is how much the employee pays into the plan each month. That money is then invested. The plan's potential benefits depend on the market. The employee carries all the risk. In addition, **the employee pays hidden fees to Wall Street** – which can really add up. When the employee is ready to retire, there may be no benefits at all.

Seniors in poverty

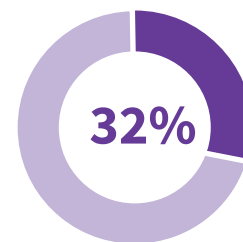
Percent of California seniors who cannot afford basic necessities



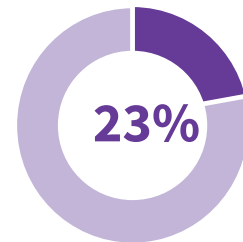
Latino seniors



Black seniors



Asian seniors



White seniors

Women overall earn about half of men.

\$15,500

Average senior woman's annual income

Source: CalPERS



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Worried about your retirement? You are not alone

High earners should pitch in fair share to Social Security

BY YVONNE R. WALKER
PRESIDENT, SEIU LOCAL 1000

How do you feel about your retirement prospects? Are you optimistic that you'll be able to afford to stop working some day?

If you're anxious just thinking about this subject, you're not alone.

Last week, I wrote about the problems with our retirement system on a policy level. What strikes me about this issue is that more and more people are deeply concerned about retiring without security of any kind.

Will you have enough money to live comfortably in retirement? Almost half of Americans say no. That anxiety keeps growing. Back in 2002 when Gallup first asked that question, only one in three Americans expressed doubts about their retirement savings.

This makes sense. In 2002, many more people had pensions, and Social Security wasn't under continuous attack.

Now in California, one out of every two workers has nothing saved for retirement. Nationally, the numbers are no better. On average, older workers age 56 to 61 – very close to traditional retirement age – have \$17,000 saved for retirement.

Counting on Social Security alone? The average monthly payment in California is \$1,377 – less than the average rent for an apartment.

We see people in their 80s, looking for work because they need the money. We know people who live on Social Security alone, with no consistent transportation, no way to afford regular dental or vision care, no way to visit loved ones.

This is no way to end one's working years.

These statistics reflect the difficult situation so many working Californians face. Take Pablo Narvaez. Now in his 50s, he has been working in the fast food industry for almost two decades, and is always holding two or three jobs to make ends meet.

When I met him, he was working in the morning in construction and in the evening in a restaurant. He had just finished sending his children to college and was going to start – at age 52 – to try to put some money away for retirement. Besides that, he's worried about continuing to work. Pablo shared that, as he gets older, he has fewer opportunities to be hired or to get a full-time job.

We are fighting back against federal attacks on retirement that would make our retirement even riskier. The Koch brothers



and other billionaires have spent millions trying to privatize Social Security, the best anti-poverty tool for seniors. Although these opponents have yet to gut this safety net, they have been successful in making more people believe Social Security is in trouble.

The real problem with Social Security is high earners are not paying their fair share. Currently, people pay Social Security taxes on their income up to \$132,900. Any income above that amount is not taxed. By removing that cap, billions more every year would go towards ensuring Social Security's future benefits.

That would be a popular move. A 2017 Pew Research Center poll found that 95% of Democrats and 86% of Republicans preferred to maintain or expand Social Security.

We don't have a resource problem, we have a distribution problem. If more wealthy people pay their fair share, we will have plenty of money in the Social Security Trust Fund for our lifetimes. And we could look ahead to a future where our senior years are indeed golden.



Yvonne R. Walker
President
SEIU Local 1000

Scrap the cap

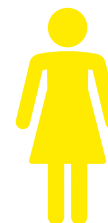
\$132,900

Current Social Security
earnings payroll tax cap



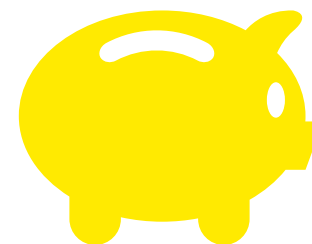
184,861

California men
who make more
than \$400,000



44,855

California women
who make more
than \$400,000



\$17,900

Average Social Security annual
retirement benefit in California

Source: Social Security Administration



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Facing fears with a pen

These bills target real-life horror stories

BY YVONNE R. WALKER
PRESIDENT, SEIU LOCAL 1000

Ghosts, vampires, zombies; Halloween is packed with scary things.

While trick-or-treating as children, we learned to laugh at our fears. (These monsters lived in our imagination, not under our beds.)

But as adults, we have to cope with plenty of real-life horrors, not just for our families but for our society as a whole.

How do you deal with these nightmares? Sometimes, with a stroke of a pen.

For this Halloween edition, here are three very scary, very real problems facing Californians and three bills signed by Gov. Gavin Newsom to address our fears.

Nobody should worry about getting shot, especially by a police officer, yet this is a real fear for some people. Among the bills Newsom signed was Assembly Bill 392, the California Act to Save Lives, which regulates police use of deadly force.

This bill is considered one of the toughest laws in the country regulating when officers can use a gun and delineates when deadly force would be considered necessary and reasonable. San Diego assemblymember Shirley Weber, the bill's author, said, "This bill sets a higher standard that authorizes deadly force only when necessary to defend against an imminent threat of death or serious bodily injury."

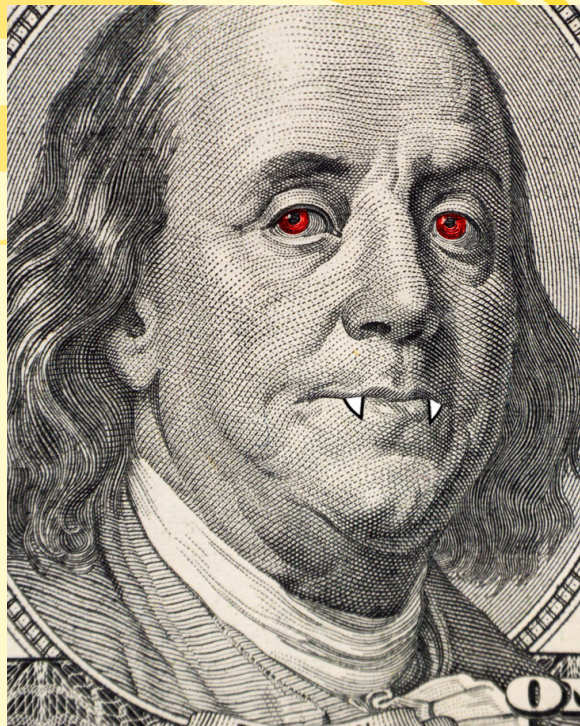
Built on best practices already in place in some departments, this common-sense bill is an important step towards rebuilding trust between police officers and the communities they serve. We know these methods work and this new law will save lives. If it can stop a tragedy from happening, it will be worth it.

Do you fear being locked up? Incarceration is another real fear for thousands of Californians. That fear haunts refugees seeking asylum, but there's also fear that some want to lock up more people because they profit from it. Also signed by Newsom, AB 32 phases out the use of private, for-profit prisons and immigrant detention centers by 2028.

According to Oakland assemblymember Rob Bonta, the bill's author, "Californians in these facilities are hurt, abused, neglected."

SEIU Local 1000 has organized for years to reduce the use of private for-profit prisons that undercut wages and benefits for employees, and that cut corners by failing to provide adequate rehabilitation and medical care – let alone adequate food and living conditions – in order to make money. Conditions in these facilities tend to be less safe for both people detained and people who work there.

"This is truly a historic moment for California," Bonta said at the bill's recent signing. "By ending the use of for-profit, private prisons and detention facilities, we are sending a



powerful message that we vehemently oppose the practice of profiteering off the backs of Californians in custody, that we will stand up for the health, safety and welfare of our people, and that we are committed to humane treatment for all."

With AB 539, Newsom and the state legislature went after blood suckers: Payday loan companies. Santa Barbara assemblymember Monique Limón authored this bill that tightens regulations on these lenders and closes a black hole that sucks in desperate borrowers.

Earlier this year, the Trump administration rolled back regulations on payday lenders, which specialize in high-interest, short-term loans. On average, these loans have an annual percentage rate of about 400 percent – 20 times a typical credit card – and target low-income workers who need cash in a hurry.

But this blood money is ultra-expensive. In its research, Pew Charitable Trusts found that borrowers usually take five months to pay back that loan at an average cost of \$520 in finance charges.

By stopping greedy lenders from preying on those in need we can all sleep better at night.



Yvonne R. Walker
President
SEIU Local 1000

Scary money

Why payday loans can be a nightmare



400%
Average annual
percentage rate
on payday loans



\$2,000
Annual interest
on \$500 loan



\$46 billion
Total payday
loans a year



\$4 billion
Estimated annual
fees paid to
payday lenders

Source: Consumer Financial
Protection Bureau



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HONORING OUR VETERANS

Yvonne R. Walker
President
SEIU Local 1000



"I have worked for the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation for the past 23 years," Charles said. "I served in the United States Marines Corps for 12 years. After being medically discharged, I remained in California where I married and later adopted five children from 6 to 20 years old. I am also completing my doctorate in educational leadership." These inspirational veterans demonstrate their continued commitment to service.

About 11,500 veterans – 10,000 men and 1,500 women – work for the State of California. They are continuing to do what they did in the military: Serve their fellow citizens.

That's why they refer to the military as "the service." It's the military's main job: To serve. Our veterans served our country, and now they continue to serve while working for our state. They are not done. And we appreciate their service.

Imagine if more people had this concept of service. Imagine the richness they provide, the leadership they bring, their experiences from active duty.

Imagine what a richer place our state would be if everyone had the notion of service.

As a nation, we have been in conflict longer than any time in our history. According to CalVet, California anticipates receiving an additional 30,000 discharged members each year for the next several years. Those veterans will need services themselves.

As a Union, we're committed to our veteran members. Our contract has enhanced sick leave benefits for veterans. The impact that long periods of conflict and multiple rounds of duty has on people and their families is significant and painful and very difficult. Those benefits are one way we can thank veterans for their service as they continue to serve all of us.

Semper Fi.

Veterans served our country; now many serve our state

BY YVONNE R. WALKER
PRESIDENT, SEIU LOCAL 1000

Everybody is familiar with the Marine Corps motto, "Semper Fi"; it means "always faithful." In the Marines, that faith is in God, Country, Corps.

The Marines also have another motto, "Ductus Exemplo"; "lead by example." Behaving in a way to inspire.

There are lessons we learned and practiced during my Marine Corps service. You are faithful to the Corps. Every Marine is responsible for watching out for each other. You make sure the whole squad can complete the mission, down to each individual.

Now, with thousands of our members who are veterans, we watch out for each other. And for all Californians.

Let me introduce you to two veterans who are now members of SEIU Local 1000 and continue to serve others.

Born in Yokosuka, Japan, Tom came here in 1974 and served in the U.S. Navy for 20 years before retiring in 2007.

"In 2009, I had the honor to begin serving the citizens of the great State of California with the Department of Motor Vehicles," Tom said. "Being in a military town allows me to interact with active duty, veterans and their

family members. I enjoy sharing the information I have learned about the valuable benefits CalVet has to offer.

"I also enjoy educating the public on the services offered by our Motor Vehicles Department and making each individual feel as though they are the most important person I am interacting with for that day," Tom added. "The values of honor, courage and commitment have been instilled in me through my service to our great country and I would gladly raise my hand again if asked to do so today."

A former Marine, Charles now works as an elementary school teacher at a state prison in Northern California. His job is teaching prisoners who never got a basic education.

**"The values of honor,
courage (and) commitment
have been instilled in me
through my service to our
great country and I would
gladly raise my hand again if
asked to do so today."**

Tom, U.S. Navy veteran
DMV employee, SEIU Local 1000 member

Union apprenticeships offer leg up

Groundbreaking program creates path to a better career

BY YVONNE R. WALKER
PRESIDENT, SEIU LOCAL 1000

Imagine how difficult it is with kids, working, saving for their education, while also trying to dream of a different professional life for yourself. When do you decide to give up on your dream?

Or do you find a different way to attain that goal?

One path to achieving that better job is through an apprenticeship, an old-fashioned idea that is gaining renewed relevance for today's super busy workers. It gives them a second chance to follow their dreams while still bringing home a paycheck.

This is National Apprenticeship Week and, in recognition, I want to share how apprenticeships change lives for the better. Apprenticeships let workers increase their skills and get paid while learning.

Launched in 2016, our groundbreaking LVN-to-RN Apprentice Program – the first of its kind nationwide – has helped scores of workers advance their health care careers. Seeing a major gap in the upward mobility opportunities for our members, SEIU Local 1000 partnered with state agencies and local colleges and won access to nearly \$10 million in grants to create new career pathways and more sustainable careers.

I met someone who had given up all hope and then, through our union program, was able to finally make her dream for herself and her family come true.

Married with two children, Anilyn works at the California Health Care Facility in Stockton. She always knew she wanted to be a nurse, but as a young adult, school was pushed aside when she needed to start working.

After many years as an administrative assistant, she returned to school and, in her 30s, became a Licensed Vocational Nurse or LVN.

Her goal was still to be a Registered Nurse, but her family struggled with the cost of returning to school. She learned about the union's LVN-to-RN Apprentice Program through Delta College. She applied and was among the first selected for the program. As an apprentice, all costs were covered. While working part time and going to school, she still earned her full salary.

Today, Anilyn works as an RN at CHCF. "I wouldn't be where I am today without the union," she said. "I don't



SEIU Local 1000's LVN-to-RN Apprentice Program is helping health care workers advance their careers.

think I would have gone back to my goal of becoming an RN without the program. I know it helped a lot of us to finish."

Gursharn is another SEIU Local 1000 member who benefited from the apprenticeship program.

"I had lost hope of being able to complete school and would have days where I would get so sad thinking about it," said Gursharn, a 2018 apprentice graduate. "But with the apprenticeship program, I was able to go back and attain my goal – to be a Registered Nurse."

Our LVN-to-RN program has expanded from Delta College and Sacramento City College to Riverside City College. In addition, we now have information technology and financial services apprenticeship programs.

Part of addressing inequality is giving more people a chance to get a better paying job, not just improve salaries of existing jobs. This is what career mobility means to me.

Apprenticeships such as these offer one big step in that right direction.



Yvonne R. Walker
President,
SEIU Local 1000

Apprenticeship pays

SEIU Local 1000's apprenticeship program leads to:

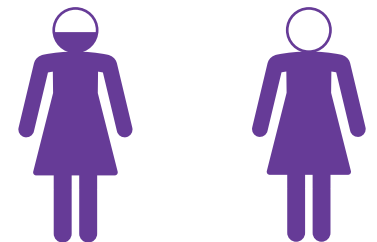
Rapid advancement



Half of the people who registered as Licensed Vocational Nurses now work as Registered Nurses

Greater diversity

Of LVN-to-RN program participants,



90% are women

80% are women of color

Better pay



Up to double their previous salary

Source: SEIU Local 1000



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Nurturing new leaders can bring change

How one Fresno worker helped his community for the better

BY YVONNE R. WALKER
PRESIDENT, SEIU LOCAL 1000

Where will we find tomorrow's leaders? Look around; you may already know a leader in the making.

Leadership is a skill that takes support and nurturing. Just like an apprentice, leaders benefit by learning while they work.

As a union, we regularly support our members and help them develop their leadership skills. Such help is intentional; it gives these new leaders the power to bring change to their communities and to people's lives.

Let me tell you about Leroy, a SEIU Local 1000 member. His example shows what can be accomplished when we help someone lead.

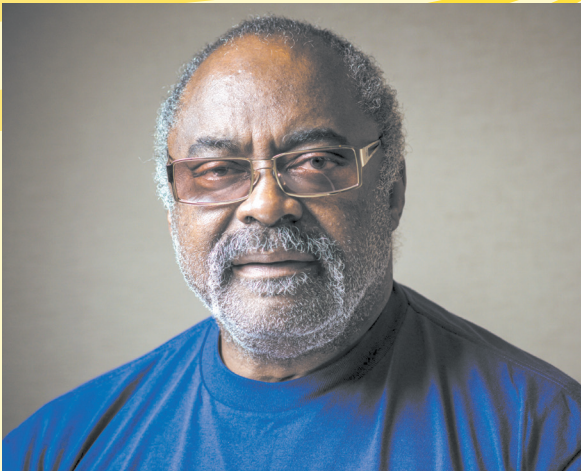
Leroy grew up in Fresno, which suffers from terrible air quality. One in six children in the San Joaquin Valley develop asthma. Residents in the poorer Southwest Fresno neighborhoods have a life expectancy of 20 fewer years than people who live in Fresno's wealthier and whiter neighborhoods. In addition, a lot of people are out of work; unemployment in Fresno County is among the worst in the state. Public transportation is a problem, too.

Leroy became inspired during a leadership development event to work locally to improve his community. The vehicle to bring much needed change? High speed rail.

Leroy saw investment in high speed rail as an opportunity to bring good-paying construction jobs to the Fresno residents who needed it most. Not only would the rail line provide transportation, but it could improve air quality in the poorest parts of Fresno, run-down neighborhoods polluted by highways and dirty industries. He saw how high speed rail had the potential to change a lot of lives for the better.

But how do you make that happen? The Labor Council had received funding for neighborhood outreach, but had not had success attracting people from West Fresno to apply for jobs. They were using this to justify the need to recruit people from outside of Fresno. With support from myself and our leadership team, Leroy contacted churches and non-profits across his community, identifying partners who shared our vision and inviting them to a kickoff event.

About 175 local people showed up, confirming that Leroy had a great idea. Representatives of the building trades who attended the meeting told attendees about the job opportunities that were available – good jobs with good retirement. So many people tried to sign up, it crashed the website.



Leroy Candler of SEIU Local 1000 saw a need and worked for change, with his union's support.

But the process to get one of those jobs wasn't easy. The first step was to take a difficult test just to become eligible. If accepted in the pre-apprenticeship program, workers were expected to quit their current jobs. They would not be paid for training and there was no guarantee of a new job.

We ended up creating our own non-profit coalition to help workers develop their skills, pass required tests, get training and find new higher-paying jobs while receiving support and mentoring needed to succeed. We are now in the process of getting more funding for our own training programs.

Eventually, local trade unions reached out and asked Leroy to supply workers. He identified candidates, then continued to support them as they launched new careers. Initially, they experienced racial tension at worksites. However, with involvement from the supervisor, we succeeded in changing the culture on the job. Racism also is a common symptom of apprenticeships, which historically reflect the ebb and flow of different cultures coming into changing industries.

But because of leaders like Leroy, the door had been opened for these workers. Leroy walked through it with them, changing their lives for the better.

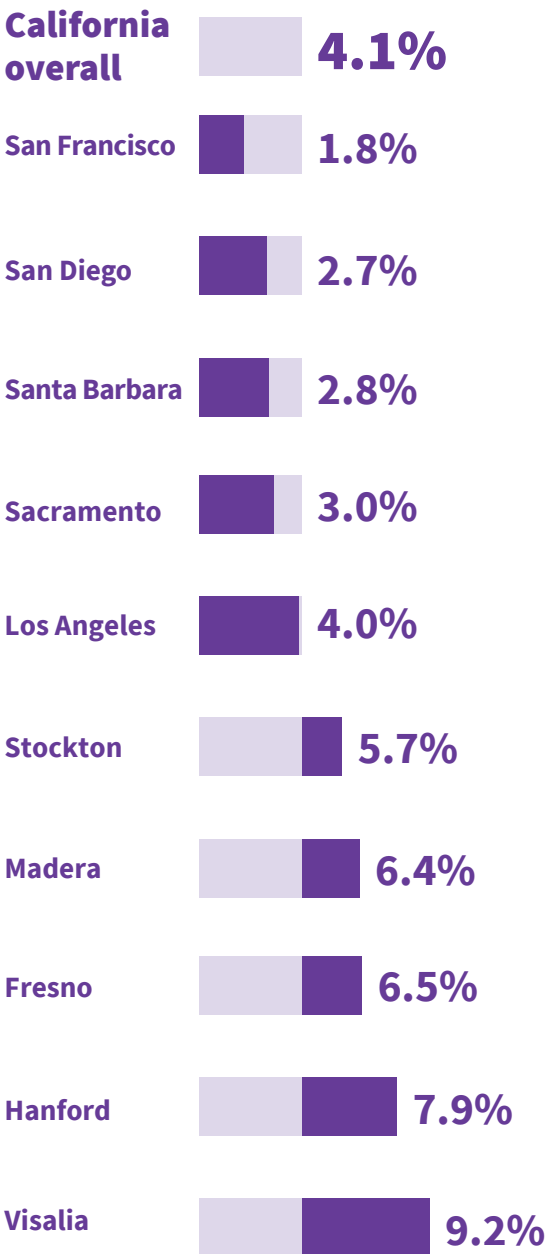
That's what leadership looks like.



Yvonne R. Walker
President,
SEIU Local 1000

Unemployment in two Californias

*Coastal communities tend to
have lower unemployment
than inland cities*



Source: U.S. Department of Labor



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Giving thanks for many people



Yvonne R. Walker speaks to SEIU Local 1000 members during a rally at Sacramento City Hall.

PHOTO COURTESY SEIU LOCAL 1000

Being part of a union tops this list

BY YVONNE R. WALKER
PRESIDENT, SEIU LOCAL 1000

What am I thankful for this holiday?
I'm thankful for unions, and my union in particular. Up to 45% of all U.S. workers are legally excluded from the right to bargain collectively. I'm thankful to be part of the other fortunate 55%.

Last year alone in California, we won the right for 40,000 child care workers to bargain collectively and fight for better wages as well as more subsidized child care. We also fought to get legislation to clarify and expand who is an employee with rights to wages and benefits.

Overall, I am thankful that unions fight to improve the quality of life for working people. No matter how hard they work, millions of people are falling behind and drowning in debt and insecurity while juggling jobs and family responsibilities. I am thankful that my union is a vehicle for working people to organize and reverse this troubling trend toward greater insecurity and fear.

I'm thankful for leaders in our union who step up and fight for their peers and all Californians. That includes Rose Gudiel, who leads anti-poverty work in Southern California with our union in partnership with Rev. William

Barber and the Poor People's Campaign. Rose has engaged hundreds of union workers and community members to fight for living wages and end racism as a tool to divide and weaken the power of working people.

And many thanks go to the scores of leaders in Local 1000 who are part of our bargaining team. They leave their families for weeks to negotiate with the state, encourage their co-workers to take action and build our power to win at the table.

I am thankful that my union is a vehicle for working people to organize and reverse this troubling trend toward greater insecurity and fear.

I'm thankful for the commitment of our members to step up and take leadership in the political process. We have a huge year ahead of us — a presidential year. And in California, we have a huge opportunity to reshape the funding for public education for decades to come through the Schools and Communities First initiative. Right now, our member political organizers are fanning out across the state to help get signatures to right a quarter century of wrongs in

funding public education and essential services and getting some of the wealthiest corporations to pay their fair share of property taxes.

I'm thankful for artists who are changing our culture, pushing the boundaries, asking questions, and helping us stay connected to our histories. Artists such as Ava DuVernay; the woman who brought us “When They See Us” is the same person who created the equally engaging and enlightening “13th,” one of the best non-fiction stories of the 21st century, regardless of medium. More, please.

Also on this list are Angie Thomas, debut author of the novel, “The Hate U Give,” and George Tillman Jr., director of the movie based on that book. They provide a vivid, heart-wrenching description of life spent living in different worlds, the racism that we confront from a young age, and how these disparate experiences are not easily combined or circumvented.

And last but not least, I'm thankful to have this venue through which I get to speak with all of you. Happy Thanksgiving, everyone!



Yvonne R. Walker
President
SEIU Local 1000

How to fix Prop. 13

Who attends California public schools?

Large corporations need to pay their fair share

BY YVONNE R. WALKER
PRESIDENT, SEIU LOCAL 1000

Proposition 13 was passed because the legislature at the time couldn't agree how to help families stay in their homes and keep their property taxes from rising and pricing people out of their homes. The provisions that protect property taxes from going up for people who own their homes — especially aging seniors — will not be changed by the initiative proposed for the November 2020 ballot.

What does change is the provision that allows business property owners not to pay their fair share of property tax. Currently, corporations avoid paying hundreds of millions of dollars in property tax. This isn't fair to other companies buying property at market rates in California. And it is especially devastating for schools, firefighters, police officers and anti-homeless funding; all of the things that property tax pays for in California.

Now gathering signatures, the Schools & Communities First initiative would restore \$12 billion to our local communities and schools. It requires commercial properties to be taxed based on their market value, rather than their purchase price. Exemptions would be made to protect family farms and small businesses.

This initiative corrects the then-unforeseen consequences of Prop. 13. For 40 years, commercial property owners have paid taxes based on purchase prices and not on market values. It makes it possible for large commercial legacy landowners such as Chevron and Disney to get a tax break originally meant to keep seniors from losing their homes.

For example, Disneyland still pays property taxes at a rate close to what it paid 40 years ago. That's when admission cost \$6.50; it's now \$135 during peak season. Chevron reported one quarter profit last year of \$3.7 billion. Clearly, Disney and Chevron are not passing on savings to us.

Our schools feel the consequences of Prop. 13 every day. Before Prop. 13, California had an educational system that worked for working class people. Grade schools had programs that actually enriched student learning — after school, summer school, music, vocational education, counseling. In 1977, we spent more than the national average per student. Now, we rank 41st in per student spending.



California public schools would greatly benefit from the Schools & Communities First initiative.

This issue hurts families of all races across the board. About 60% of all white children are in public schools in California. And about 70% of Black, Latino and Asian-Pacific Islander students are in public schools.

Prop. 13 didn't only devastate educational funding. Local governments cut jobs and services across the board. From 1994-2014, firefighter staffing in California was cut 24%. And we see the failed policies to house Californians every time we go to work, go out to dinner, or go to school.

We have an opportunity to fix these problems and ensure corporations pay their fair share to strengthen local communities. The next major step in truly building a California for all will take place at the ballot box next November.

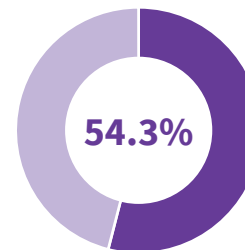
If we want thriving communities with services that support them, we need to send a clear message to large corporations that in order to benefit from California's prosperity, everyone (including them) must pay their fair share.



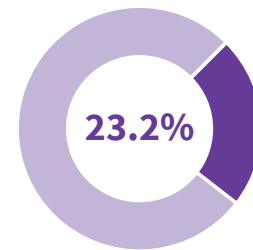
Yvonne R. Walker
President,
SEIU Local 1000

Racial breakdown of student population

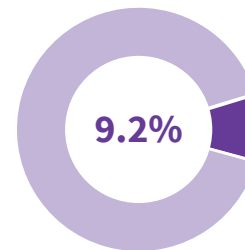
Latino



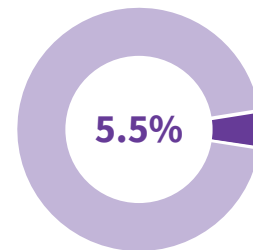
White



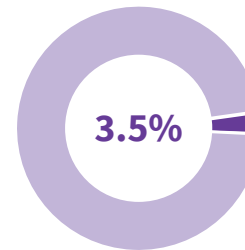
Asian



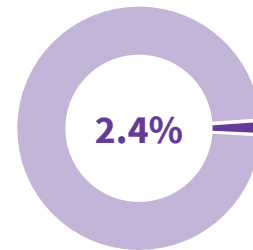
Black



Multi-racial



Filipino



Source: KidsData.org

Be a leader, find the light

Ending poverty in California
starts with shared vision

BY YVONNE R. WALKER
PRESIDENT, SEIU LOCAL 1000



The purpose of SEIU Local 1000 is to have the power necessary to give our members — and all Californians — the opportunity to have a good life, live in sustainable communities and enjoy the fruits of social, economic and environmental justice.

But to achieve this, we need to engage and develop our members by creating strategic alliances with key leaders and organizations who share our purpose and values.

It won't be easy. And we can't do this alone. In order to achieve a California for all, it will take hundreds of thousands of people sharing a vision about ending poverty, providing shelter for all, eradicating institutionalized racism embedded in our fabric, and creating a health care system where health care is truly affordable.

I feel fortunate to have spent so much time talking to other leaders who are on a similar path, working to create opportunities for people to step into their leadership, solve problems and create a better society.

One such leader is Father Greg Boyle, a Catholic priest in Los Angeles, who spoke at a Sacramento ACT breakfast a few years ago. Father Boyle is known for founding Homeboy Industries, the largest gang-intervention, rehabilitation and re-entry program in the world. His stories about spending time with former gang members resonated then and have continued to stay with me ever since, but one in particular stands out.

In this particular story, Father Boyle talked about mistakenly trying to save young men and women trapped in gang life. However, over time, he realized that wanting

a young person to have a different life would never be the same as the gang member wanting a different life.

He further recounted a dream told to him by one of the young men who was in rehab. The young man told him about the dream while they were on their way to the funeral of the teen's brother, who had shot himself. In the dream, the young man and Father Boyle were in a pitch black room together, at which point Father Boyle shined a thin light on the light switch. When the young man flipped it on, the room was bathed in light.

“Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much.”

— HELEN KELLER

At Local 1000, we're on a never-ending journey to shine a light with our members — and to serve as a beacon to draw non-members in. We're constantly searching for new ways to be the flashlight that helps people find their own light switches and guides them through the darkness.

And we're constantly exploring how to give state workers the opportunities to envision themselves in the role of change makers within their worksites and their communities alike.

There is a scourge of homelessness in Sacramento, and it will take many of us fighting in order to commit precious resources to shelters, to point the way so others may see the light, and to finally see people off the streets and onto a healthier path.

We have a new saying: Because I lead, California can. Can what? Anything!

Because I lead, California can end poverty.

Because I lead, California can have thousands of state workers who invest in their union.

Because I lead, California will have thousands more people represented by a union with better wages, benefits and a voice at work.

Because I lead, California can have a brighter, better future for all.

As we wind down this year and think about the year ahead, ask yourself: What does your leadership look like? Take a look in the mirror. That person staring back at you; that's the face of leadership.

We have the power within all of us to step up and lead. I encourage you to find the leadership in yourself and to join me in working to create a California for all.



Yvonne R. Walker
President
SEIU Local 1000

Striving to do MORE

This tale of two organizers shows
the power of people united

BY YVONNE R. WALKER
PRESIDENT, SEIU LOCAL 1000



SEIU Local 1000 organizer Rose Gudiel
leads the union's MORE program.

PHOTO COURTESY SEIU LOCAL 1000

This time of year, people reflect on what they've accomplished and what they aspire to do in the year ahead. As they celebrate the holidays, they take time out to renew their faith and share their values.

One of the moral leaders who inspires me most this season is Rev. William Barber. He is the national leader of the Poor People's Campaign, a call for moral revival modeled after Dr. King's original campaign of the same name.

In this moral movement, he says it's not about left and right or conservative or progressive; it's about right and wrong.

He recently launched a new campaign reminding us to do MORE—mobilize, organize, register, educate.

Rev. Barber started organizing more than 20 years ago. He worked to build bridges between non-traditional allies. And it worked. Their efforts successfully blocked voter ID laws intended to keep poor people from participating in elections.

This movement helped secure a narrow victory in the 2008 presidential election for Barack Obama in North Carolina.

But the North Carolina legislature blocked people from voting, creating a very conservative legislature passing regressive policies that increased inequality and poverty.

Rev. Barber fought back by launching a series of protests in 2013 at the North Carolina state house called

Moral Mondays. By the end of that summer, more than 1,000 protesters were arrested over voter suppression.

Rev. Barber is still organizing. He is touring more than 20 states as part of his MORE Campaign. That tour will culminate June 20, 2020, with a People's Assembly and Moral March on Washington, D.C. to demonstrate our power.

Here in California, SEIU Local 1000 member Rose Gudiel is helping to organize our participation in the MORE program. During the Great Recession, she learned firsthand the power of people united when a big bank tried to foreclose on her home. Her protests at the bank's offices gained national attention. With the help of her union, she fought and won, keeping her house.

Her experience transformed her into an organizer who connects with Rev. Barber's vision. She sees how the right uses racism to divide working people and keep them from being more powerful. This led her to fight for the right of fast food workers to earn \$15 an hour, and then connect to our fight for \$15 an hour for thousands of our own members in our last contract campaign.

Rose is always trying to do MORE. Inspired by Rev. Barber, she sees how issues are interconnected, linking racial justice, environmental justice, tax fairness, and aligning our spending priorities. She shared her vision about how budgets are choices, as Rev. Barber explores in his poor people's budget. Shifting small amounts of

resources from the multi-billion dollar war budget, for example, could provide clean drinking water for everyone in the country. (California alone needs clean drinking water for 1 million people.)

Today, Rose is helping to organize thousands of people to come together for Martin Luther King Jr. Day, January 20, 2020, to walk with me and Rev. Barber. She is one of our shining lights, and while the days grow shorter and nights grow longer, Rose continues to fill me with hope.

This season, let's envision a world that could be different. Let's follow Rose's lead to find that spark, then use it to ignite our passion and our belief that through our actions we can change the world.



Yvonne R. Walker
President
SEIU Local 1000

Time for reflection and connection

Take a few moments during this busy season to look at yourself

BY YVONNE R. WALKER
PRESIDENT, SEIU LOCAL 1000



*You may write me down in history
With your bitter, twisted lies,
You may trod me in the very dirt
But still, like dust, I'll rise.*

The preceding words come from one of my favorite poems, “Still I Rise,” by the late Maya Angelou. The poem is primarily about confidence, self-respect, resiliency, and the ability to overcome and rise to the occasion by not letting anything hold you back — not your skin color, your ethnicity, your sex — or anything else. All of which speak very personally to all that I once was and all that I am now.

Ms. Angelou’s words continue to speak to me today because at Local 1000 we always rise to the occasion to meet challenges and opportunities alike. And because we do, and because we do it so well, we build leaders at Local 1000.

Leaders help themselves – and others – do the right thing, even when no one is looking. Leaders do this neither because it’s easy nor because they have to, and certainly not because there are no barriers to surmount. Quite the contrary. Leaders persevere in the face of adversity and draw inspiration from their own resiliency. And that resiliency in turn makes us not only better leaders, but better people.

It’s easy if you’re wealthy and have all the tools to succeed handed to you. But there are many people

who are struggling just to get by and don’t have that same access to resources and opportunities. In order for that to change, we — the leaders and those who strive to lead — need to rewrite our destiny and become the change we want to see in this world.

“Learn to be quiet enough to hear the genuine within yourself, so that you can hear it in others.”

MARIAN WRIGHT EDELMAN

Among the four habits of leadership we practice, the first is reflection. Another is building relationships, both of which seem very appropriate during the holidays, the perfect time of year to connect with others and yourself.

Thinking back on the past 12 months, I ask myself: Is there anyone I have wronged throughout the year? If so, how can I get into the right space with that person for the coming year? In maintaining our connections, we can do what we can to make amends and strengthen relationships. And realize not

all relationships will last. Some people are in your life for only a season or brief time. Friends, partners, groups — we align with some for a moment, others for a lifetime.

And that’s perfectly natural. After all, this isn’t a competition to see who can accumulate the most friends. It’s about how we make the most of the time with those we spend our time with.

As we reflect, also remember that our primary relationship is with ourselves. As such, practice compassion and empathy for yourself as you would others. Can you make amends to yourself? Can you forgive yourself? Work to do so.

I invite you to celebrate all that we accomplished in 2019 and to use this time to prepare ourselves for 2020. There’s so much still to be done.

Merry Christmas! Happy holidays!



Yvonne R. Walker
President
SEIU Local 1000