

SEIU 121RN Political News

Nurses Shaping Public Policy

Over the next 260 days, SEIU members will be mobilizing in record numbers to send a message to President-elect Barack Obama and the new Congress that we too want change and that the time is now to enact real healthcare reform, an economic stimulus package that works for the middle class and legislation which makes it easier for worker to organize. SEIU Nurses are standing up for an economic reform package that will:

- Get our economy back on track by enhancing Medi-Cal funding for Californians, addressing infrastructure funding for hospital construction, funding health information technology, and training and upgrading funding for health professions.
- Provide RNs an opportunity to join unions so more RNs can bargain for improved wages, benefits and nursing practice issues at the hospital;
- Address problems in healthcare from long waits in the ER, to staffing shortages to hospital funding practices

SEIU 121RN is participating in this fight because our economy is not working. Workers are losing their jobs—even some hospital workers and nurses. Anyone who has a 401k has been hit hard. And now, banks are foreclosing on our homes. According to the Economic Policy Institute:

- There were 9.5 million unemployed workers in September 2008, up 25% from 7.5 million in January.
- Median weekly wages for a full-time worker have fallen by 1.6% over the last year.
- There were 265,968 home foreclosures in September 2008 alone, 21% higher than last September.
- An estimated \$2 trillion in pension wealth has been lost in the past year and a half because of the financial crisis. (That's our 401Ks. "Ouch").

Although the effects of the economic crisis have been magnified over the past few months, workers' wages and benefits have been slowly eroding over the past two decades while at the same time earnings grew for the richest 1% of Americans. A look at the wage disparities

between workers and their CEOs tells the story: the average Lowe's employee earns \$11 an hour while their CEO earns \$2,209; the average Walmart employee makes a little more than \$10 an hour while their CEO earns \$15,800 hour. Corporate CEOs are earning wages that are 300-2000% of what their workers make. And the story isn't any different for our hospitals, where our CEOs are earning similarly high salaries.

Here at Local 121RN, two of our coworkers will be coming off the job as part of our effort to mobilize all of our coworkers to sign the Employee Free Choice Act petition (see box below).

"I am excited to be coming off the job to talk to SEIU 121 members about the Employee Free Choice Act," says Jim Owen. "We know how important it is for workers to have a voice at work, and we know how hard it is for workers to form a union when management uses threats and intimidation. We will be making sure that our real-life stories don't get lost in the debates between lobbyists and politicians."

Sign the Employee Free Choice Act Petition Today!

We also know that employers will do most anything to stand in the way of Nurses working to organize their Unions. We've have faced threats and intimidation and some of us have even been fired illegally while trying to form our unions. We need the Employee Free Choice Act so Nurses can make the choice to join a Union at work without the fear of retaliation by management.

The Employee Free Choice Act will give more workers a chance to form unions. We stand for the Employee Free Choice Act because we want all RNs to have a choice to join a Union. When more RNs throughout the country are in unions, we will be stronger at the bargaining table and stronger in the halls of government where we can stand up for better patient care.

Help us reach one million signatures. Go to:
www.freechoiceact.org/page/s/petition
and sign onto the petition today!

California Nurses at the State Capitol



A Nursing Agenda for the 2009 Legislature

SEIU Local 121RN members will be working this legislative season to address California's \$28 billion budget crisis to protect healthcare and begin an economic recovery for California's families.

The \$10.3 billion in state budget cuts already enacted for Fiscal Year 2008-2009 have added to the fiscal strain on California's families, erasing once-secure jobs, reducing hospital reimbursements and placing California in 49th place for state funding of education. Now the Governor is proposing deeper cuts in the state's Medi-Cal program.

Funding cuts will affect our hospitals' budgets, some of our employers have already begun to reduce staff. Medi-Cal cuts will cause overflows in our Emergency rooms and the patients who end up there will be sicker because of reduced access to preventative care.

SEIU has already proposed a sensible plan for California's economic recovery which includes increasing the federal match for California healthcare dollars. Nurses will need to make their voices heard this legislative session in order to maintain funding for healthcare and to make sure there is a sensible plan for providing care to the uninsured.

Legislation to Watch in 2009

- Legislation to give Nurses and healthcare workers a voice on hospital infection control committees
- Legislation to improve on existing law that is supposed to protect Nurses and other healthcare workers against violence in our hospitals
- Legislation that would impose fines on hospitals that continually violate the ratio law and would punish hospitals that undermine staffing standards by cutting support staff

California State Budget Priorities

- Funding for Medi-Cal, SCHIP and other healthcare programs to ensure that state budget shortfalls don't create a budget crisis for our hospitals
- Funding to ensure Hospitals meet the 2013 deadline for seismic retrofitting so patients and healthcare workers are safe in the event of a major earthquake
- Sensible budget solutions that help the state stabilize and grow the economy, ensuring that Health care and education funding are preserved during these hard times.



2008 Year in Review

SEIU Local 121RN Nurses Lobby for Hospital Services

Last year, Local 121RN members travelled to the State Capitol to advocate for legislation to improve staffing, reduce infections in healthcare facilities, increase funding for healthcare, and to maintain hospital services in Tarzana and Encino.



State Leaders Come out to Support SEIU 121RN Contract Negotiations

We look to our State Legislators to support us with Legislative initiatives that improve working conditions, ensure patient safety, fund healthcare need and maintain standards for nurse licensure. But, we also call on our Legislators to use their influence as public leaders to call on our Hospitals to do the right thing

for patients and Nurses during contract negotiations. This past year, SEIU 121RN nurses were supported in contract negotiations by a number of elected leaders and political candidates, including Assemblymember Bob Blumenfeld, Assemblymember Norma Torres and Pomona City Council Member Steve Atchley.



2008 Legislative Report

SEIU went into the 2008 Legislative session with an ambitious agenda to improve patient care, protect our nursing practice and introduce community standards for the sale and closure of hospitals. We fought hard, but a budget shortfall and Governor Schwarzenegger blocked our way. While we are going into the 2009 Legislative session with a more modest agenda, we understand more than ever that our legislative success depends on us having a strong, well-organized ELECTORAL plan for 2010, when we elect a new governor.

■ SB 1058 (Alquist) This year the California Legislature passed legislation to establish the Medical Facility Infection Control and Prevention Act (Act), which requires hospitals to implement specified procedures for screening, prevention, and reporting specified health care associated infections also known as hospital associated infections (HAIs).

■ SB 158 (Florez) The Legislature also passed legislation which establishes an infection surveillance, prevention, and

control program within the Department of Public Health to provide oversight of hospital prevention and reporting of general acute care hospital-associated infections.

■ Increases fines on hospitals to \$100,000 and gives the Department of Public Health the authority to implement regulations to increase the fines to \$150,000 for immediate jeopardy of injury or death and to create intermediate fines of \$25,000 for violations of rules and regulations that do not result in immediate jeopardy, including violations of hospital staffing requirements. (Gov. signed in Sept. and this is now law)

■ AB 13 (Brownley) SEIU supported staffing standards for support staff, to ensure that Nurses are not loaded up with more responsibilities as hospitals trim support staff to cut costs. The Governor vetoed the bill.

■ SEIU supported a series of bills that would regulate the sale and transfer of hospitals to ensure that communities are protected against the sudden loss of healthcare services.



Be the Rx for Change

CONTRIBUTE TO COPE

Everyday, political decisions are made that affect our quality of life—our professional standards, our healthcare, our right to retire, the cost of housing, the schools our children’s attend. And politicians are making healthcare funding decisions in Sacramento that will impact our ability to deliver healthcare

We formed our Union for a voice at work and we built our membership for the power to win the best healthcare contracts in Southern California. COPE builds our voice and is our membership in the legislative arena. Just like we formed our union to get stronger at work by signing up

and paying dues, we have to extend our reach to the public arena. By uniting with nurses across California and across the country, with all of us contributing to COPE, we can make politicians listen and we can make our government work for us.

For a small fee, once a month, RNs can have a strong voice in making the laws that impact our professions and our patients. A small monthly contribution of \$5 or more helps us build our political power by electing politicians, regardless of party affiliation, who will stand up for working families.

YES! I want to join other SEIU Healthcare members and be the Rx for change.

I want to: Contribute \$10/month Contribute \$7/month Contribute \$5/month
to SEIU Healthcare (SEIU COPE)

I hereby authorize my Employer to deduct \$5 per month or \$____ per month and forward that amount to my Local as my contribution to SEIU Healthcare (SEIU COPE) subject to the terms set forth below. By my signature, I state that I have reviewed and agree with the terms set forth below.

SIGNATURE _____		DATE / /	Social Security Number _____
		<i>(For internal use only)</i>	
Name _____		Address _____	
City _____		State _____	ZIP _____
Home Phone _____	Cell/Other Phone _____	E-Mail _____	
Employer _____	Occupation _____	Registered to Vote? <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	

I understand that: 1) I am not required to sign this form or make SEIU Healthcare (SEIU COPE) contributions as a condition of my employment by my employer or membership in the union; 2) Only union members and union executive/administrative staff who are U.S. citizens or lawful permanent residents are eligible to contribute to SEIU Healthcare (SEIU COPE); 3) The contribution amounts on this form are merely suggestions, and I may contribute more or less by this or some other means; 4) SEIU Healthcare (SEIU COPE) uses the money it receives for political purposes, including but not limited to addressing political issues of public importance and contributing to and spending money in connection with federal, state and local elections.

Contributions to SEIU Healthcare (SEIU COPE) are not deductible for federal income tax purposes.
This authorization shall remain in effect until revoked in writing by me.