

JUNE 25
2014

UNION UPDATE

LOCAL 1000

SEIU
Stronger Together

Member meets President Obama



SEIU joins national push for student loan reform

Local 1000 member Erin Thuston was invited to join President Obama and supporters from around the country for an event at the White House on June 9.

At the event, President Obama announced new executive actions to expand upon his administration's student loan reforms of 2010, and further lift the burden of crushing student loan debt on American workers. The new actions include a presidential memorandum that will allow an additional 5 million borrowers with federal student loans to cap their monthly payments at 10 percent of their income.

It was announced that SEIU members will join numerous partner organizations working to get the word out about the new repayment options and federal student aid resources that are available to the millions of American students and workers struggling with debt.

Thuston was honored and excited to be invited to the event, but the fact that she got a chance for an impromptu chat about an issue close to her heart with the leader of the free world, was beyond her wildest dreams.



Local 1000 organizer Tariq Bruno (left) and member Erin Thuston (third from right) pictured outside the White House

“Our fight for our members and all working families must include making higher education more attainable and more affordable.”

—Yvonne R. Walker, Local 1000 president

“I had the chance to ask the president to continue his fight against a problem that plagues millions of Americans including myself,” said Thuston, who works at the Department of Social Services (DSS). “I’ve seen first hand how the student loan crisis is holding back a generation of young professionals in America, and because of Local 1000 and some luck, I got the chance to get my point of view across directly to the world’s most powerful leader.”

Staggering college debts are a “union problem.”

Thuston is a member of Local 1000’s “Young DLC” program – a group of under-35 members organizing around economic and workplace issues unique to younger workers. She became active in her union in part because she

understood the disadvantages so many young workers face in today’s economy.

Workers in their 20s and early 30s are burdened with the highest percentage of college-related debt of any generation in American history – and entered the workforce just as the nation experienced its worst economic slowdown in 80 years. In Erin’s case, she entered state service with about \$165,000 in debt.

“Our fight for our members and all working families must include making higher education more attainable and more affordable,” said Yvonne R. Walker, Local 1000 president. “When this generation of workers leaves college with staggering debt, that’s an economic justice problem and that’s a union problem that we must take on.”

Helping others motivates member leader

Successful organizing at Sierra Conservation Center prison

As a nurse who has spent his career dealing with medical emergencies, Randy Stan is used to high-stress situations at work.

A big reason Stan became a steward at Sierra Conservation Center is because he believes that a strongly enforced union contract makes his workplace less stressful.

"I'm a first responder—I deal with injuries on daily basis and it's a high pressure job," Stan said. "As a steward, I see my role as someone who works to make the workplace less stressful—and a place where everyone treats one another respectfully as we work together to make things go as smoothly as possible."

Stan, a native of Manitoba, Canada, has been an emergency room nurse since 1991. He has worked in emergency rooms in Texas and California before moving to the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation in 2009. At Sierra Conservation Center, Stan works with inmates who work on fire-fighting teams.



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"As a steward, I see my role as someone who works to make the workplace less stressful."
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—Randy Stan,
Steward,
Sierra Conservation Ctr.



"We are so much stronger as a union when members like Randy Stan step up to be leaders in the workplace."

—Tamekia N. Robinson, Local 1000 vice president for organizing/representation

Abuse of power spurred organizing

Stan decided to become a steward after he saw supervisors abusing their power at work.

"I saw what was going on around me and a lot of it was inappropriate. Neither supervisors nor members really understood the contract," Stan said. "I started to read our contract and realized that we had protections that were not being enforced. I volunteered because we really need a steward among the nurses here."

Since that time, Stan has organized his coworkers and participated in several major grievances, winning five in the past year. He is active in the legislative fight to stop mandatory overtime for nurses—after a coworker fell asleep while driving home after working 40 hours in a 64-hour period. He is also instrumental in pushing for a new Joint Labor Management Committee (JLMC) to address ongoing concerns at Sierra.

One of his biggest victories came after a supervisor began docking the pay of nurses who failed to present a doctor's note for every sick day—a violation of our contract. In addition to filing a grievance, he organized members to submit paperwork for mileage reimbursement for every trip to the doctor. That tactic got the attention of senior management and the practice was halted.

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