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2014

UNION UPDATE



Retirement Security: The big picture

By: **YVONNE R. WALKER**
President, SEIU Local 1000

While extremists and billionaires attack the middle class, Local 1000 fights for retirement security for everyone.

America is facing a retirement security crisis that could cripple our economy for decades, and California is leading the way to solving the problem.

The rise of income inequality in our nation has eroded the very core of the American Dream; the ability to retire with security and dignity after a lifetime of hard work and responsibility is slipping away from the middle class. More than 45 percent of working-age households have no retirement assets and will face the choice of retiring into poverty or working until they die.

And yet, instead of encouraging solutions that allow all Americans to retire with dignity and economic security, billionaires and extremists have used this retirement crisis to turn working people against each other and attack the retirement rights of public workers.

Secure Choice Program offers hope

The Secure Choice Retirement Savings Investment Board, on which I am proud to serve as a member, is working to address the retirement crisis in California for over six million people

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who have no access to retirement plans through their employer.

This program is a result of the SEIU-sponsored SB 1234, which was signed into law by Gov. Brown in 2012 and established California as a leader among states in creating retirement security for all.

The board met for the second time on Jan. 27, and we discussed launching a feasibility study that would drive implementation of any proposed program. We also heard the personal experiences of Barbara Williams of SEIU Local 99 Education Workers United, a former aerospace worker who lost her retirement dream when that industry downsized. Now a 66-year old early childhood education worker, she does not see herself retiring anytime soon.

“This isn’t how things should be ... a person should be able to enjoy a dignified retirement after working hard and following all the rules,” said Williams.

Without a solution to the retirement crisis, retiring comfortably will be impossible for millions of middle-class workers. I am proud to represent Local 1000 members and all working families as we begin to meet this enormous

challenge head on with programs that will bring us closer to providing all workers with a retirement they can count on.

You asked; the MRC answered

Local 1000 members are getting quick answers to a range of questions at our Member Resource Center (MRC) – a toll-free service available weekdays from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Whether you're looking for information about the next worksite meeting, the name of your Local 1000 steward, assistance with a worksite issue, or seeking understanding about an article of our contract, the MRC is ready to help.

The center handles thousands of calls and questions from Local 1000 members each month, and their service has earned a 92 percent satisfaction rating from members.

Here are the answers to some of the questions the MRC team hears most frequently:

Q: Is there a rule in our contract that says that my supervisor can ask for a doctor's note after three days of absence?

A: No. Supervisors may only ask you for a note from your doctor if you have demonstrated a pattern of abusing sick leave, or if they have cause to believe you were gone for an unauthorized reason.

Q: How many hours do I need to have worked to qualify for the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA)?

A: You must have worked for at least 12 months and a minimum of 1250 hours during that period.

Q: Can I request an unpaid leave of absence?

A: Yes. This absence cannot exceed one year and must be approved by the department.

Q: I did not receive my check on payday; can I get an advance?

A: Yes. You can request one from your department's payroll office. Please refer to article 11.4 Timely Payment of Wages in our contract for restrictions.

Q: I take the bus to work; can I be reimbursed for my bus pass?

A: Yes. You may be reimbursed for 75 percent of the cost for mass transportation passes sold by state agencies (bus, train, etc.) up to \$65 per month.

Q: Can I view my official personnel file during work hours?

A: Yes. If your personnel file is not located at your worksite, the state will make arrangements to make it available to you at your work location.

Resource Center

Monday-Friday
7 a.m. to 7 p.m.
866.471.SEIU (7348)

Website

seiu1000.org

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HAVE A QUESTION?

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2014 Mileage Reimbursement Rate

The Department of Human Resources (CalHR) Benefits Division has announced that the personal vehicle mileage reimbursement rate for 2014, effective Jan. 1, will be 56 cents per mile. This rate has dropped from the 2013 rate of 56.5 cents per mile.

Additionally, the relocation/moving mileage reimbursement rate for all current state employees and new hires will now be 23.5 cents per mile.

In 2006, Local 1000 negotiated a change in our contract so that our mileage expenses were reimbursed at federal rates – proscribed by the IRS. This simplified the filing of expense reports by our members, and eliminated the previous practice of bargaining over mileage rates each time the contract expired.