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UNION UPDATE

Local 1000-sponsored bills pass big hurdle

Legislation for working families moves to Senate

The state Assembly overwhelmingly passed four bills sponsored by Local 1000. The four pieces of legislation, which are each designed to help California's families at work, at the ballot box, and at home, have moved to the state Senate.

"Our legislative agenda reflects the vision of our purpose statement," said Local 1000 President Yvonne R. Walker. "We are working for our members and for all Californians who are struggling to keep the middle class dream alive for future generations."

The most far-reaching piece of legislation is AB 1792, which would expose the employers of low-wage workers who are forced to rely on taxpayer subsidized safety net programs to survive. The bill now includes public and private employers with more than 25 employees.

AB 1792 (Gomez, D-Los Angeles), would expose the hidden subsidies that low-paying companies such as Wal-Mart, McDonald's and Burger King use to pad their profits. Research by UC Berkeley and other institutions indicates that many retail and fast-food employers employ thousands of workers that need food stamps, Medi-Cal or other public benefits to survive—providing an indirect subsidy to employers who rake in billion-dollar profits while failing to pay a living wage to their workers.

"AB 1792 is an important first step, and will become a powerful weapon in our fight against income inequality in California," Walker said. "Anyone who works for a living should not have to rely on public programs to get by and support their families—the burden should be on their employers to pay them a living wage.

Local 1000's other sponsored bills passed by the Assembly include:

- ✓ **AB 1783**, by Assemblymember Reggie Jones-Sawyer (D-South Los Angeles) would require the state to complete personnel investigations within two years instead of the current three-year period.
- ✓ **AB 2177**, by Assemblymember Cheryl Brown (D-San Bernardino), would require counties to provide early voting on a Saturday and Sunday before every statewide election. The bill now exempts several counties that already vote exclusively by mail.
- ✓ **AB 2155** would ban mandatory overtime for nurses, an unsafe practice that compromises patient care and worker safety.

(see related article on the back page)

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—Yvonne R. Walker, Local 1000 president



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Local 1000 Nurses back bill to limit OT

Nurses organize statewide support for AB 2155

Local 1000-sponsored legislation to ban the unsafe practice of mandatory overtime, for nurses and nursing assistants, has passed the state Assembly and is now before the state Senate.

The Assembly vote on AB 2155 came after a determined campaign spearheaded by Local 1000 nurses who work in prisons and mental hospitals. Frustrated by frequent double shifts and callbacks without proper rest, the nurses organized in support of the bill and took their message to the Assembly.

“Mandatory overtime threatens the quality of patient care, and the safety of our members and the general public,” said Rionna Jones, Bargaining Unit 20 chair. “We’re asking for reasonable working conditions—nothing more.”

Mandatory overtime for nurses in the private sector was banned in 2001 by the Industrial Welfare Commission—but didn’t include public sector workers. AB 2155 (Ridley-Thomas, D-Los Angeles) would extend the protection to the public sector. Already, 11 other states have adopted legislation similar to AB 2155.

Local 1000 gains ally in BOE building fight AB 1656 would relocate headquarters

Local 1000 members working in the troubled Board of Equalization (BOE) offices at 4th and N streets in Sacramento may have relief on the horizon.

Assemblymember Roger Dickinson’s AB 1656—a bill aimed at relocating BOE’s headquarters—passed a key vote in the Assembly Appropriations committee on May 23. The legislation authorizes the Department of General Services take the necessary first steps to identify and secure a new site for the offices. The bill will now move to the Assembly floor.

Dickinson cited a recent report that projected another \$159 million in costs associated with fixing the building, on top of the approximately \$60 million already spent on failed fixes. “I’m pleased that Appropriations recognized the wastefulness of continuing to throw precious taxpayers’ dollars at a bad building”

Local 1000 has long fought to correct the dozens of safety and health problems facing members at BOE. Windows crashing down from upper floors, broken water pipes, mold, air quality and free-falling elevators are just some of

the issues that have plagued the structure over its 22-year history.

“Local 1000 has called for this necessary and overdue solution to a situation that has affected our members for years,” said Tamekia N. Robinson, Local 1000 vice president for bargaining/representation. “The state has already poured enough money down the drain in failed attempts to fix the problems, while this building clearly continues to endanger not only the Local 1000 members who work there, but the surrounding community.”



“We’re asking for reasonable working conditions—nothing more.”

—Rionna Jones
Unit 20 Bargaining Chair

Grassroots organizing made a difference

Nurses and nursing assistants working in prisons and mental health facilities up and down the state rallied around AB 2155—having conversations and collecting nearly 300 cards and letters in support of the bill’s passage. Those cards and letters include personal stories of being required to work a double shift with no notice or finding themselves exhausted because they have worked multiple mandated double shifts with insufficient time off in between.

Bob Mutebi, a licensed vocational nurse at the California Health Care Facility in Stockton, collected 75 messages for legislators in just over 24 hours.

“I don’t feel that prison administrators are ever going to solve this problem unless there is legislative intervention,” said Mutebi. “Mandated overtime should be the last resort but we have seen—throughout the state—that it’s the status quo.”

“I have signed out from my eight-hour shift and been ordered to sign back in again without warning to start a new shift,” Mutebi said. “Everyone I work with has stories about being too tired to drive home, about falling asleep in the parking lot after working 16 hours or pulling over on the side of the road because you can’t keep your eyes open.”

AB 2155 is currently awaiting action before the Senate Public Employment and Retirement Committee. If you wish to share your story of mandatory overtime, send an email to 2155yes@seiu1000.org