

Local 100 Service Employees International Union

Louisiana News

April—May 2001

Local 100 Louisiana

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State Senators

Call: (225) 342-2040
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Governor Foster

Call: (225) 342-7015
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**CALL THEM NOW TO
TELL THEM TO SUP-
PORT A PAY RAISE
FOR SCHOOL SUPPORT
WORKERS!**

HELP WANTED

Local 100 is now hiring organ-
izers in all parts of Louisiana.
Great benefits. Work full-time
for the union. Must have car.

Call Ron at 1-800-349-7348.

Public Service Workers Deserve A Living Wage: The Heat is ON in the battle for higher pay for low-wage workers

About 60 East Baton Rouge Parish School Support Workers packed the Local 100 hall on Saturday, March 10, to hear from four State Representatives from the Baton Rouge area. Representatives William Daniel (District 68), Kip Holden (District 63), Michael Jackson (District 61), and Sharon Weston-Broome (District 29) all attended and expressed their support for a support worker pay raise. We also met with BESE Board Members Richard Musemeche and Linda Johnson.

In addition to expressing their support for us, they also suggested that public service workers contact our state representatives and senators more often and tell them that they need to fight harder to raise the pay of low-wage workers.

The raise that teachers re-

ceived during the special session that just passed happened because, for years, teachers have been knocking down the doors of legislators and telling them that teacher pay was a priority. Now we, as low-wage public service have to do the same. We will not win a significant pay raise until we can put enough pressure on enough legislators and on the governor, and on our local elected officials to make support worker pay a priority.

We have many legislators and local politicians who believe that low-wage workers need and deserve a pay raise, but they also have hundreds of other priorities that all cost money, and our public bodies are short on cash.

So the only way we are going to win is by making enough noise to get ourselves at the head of the list. That is why the un-

ion is planning the events in May and June listed below.

We encourage all of our members to become involved in as many of these activities as you can.

In addition, **CALL YOUR LEGISLATORS AND THE GOVERNOR** (phone numbers are listed at the left) to tell them that raising the pay of low-wage workers is a priority and you expect them to support us.

Please also review page 2 of this newsletter for information on other aspects of our legislative agenda.

Finally, please take a minute to fill the form on the top of page 3 and return it to Local 100. Your participation is vitally important to winning a living wage!

We look forward to seeing you in May and June.

CARAVAN For a Living Wage For School Support Workers!

For three consecutive Saturdays in May, Local 100 support workers will caravan around the state and call attention to local media in all areas to our fight for a living wage for school support workers.

May 5 Hammond, New Orleans, Thibodaux

May 12 Baton Rouge, Lafayette, Lake Charles

May 19 Shreveport, Monroe, Alexandria

Join us on the caravan and at the activities at your home location. Call Ron at 1-800-349-7348 for more information.

ACTION At the Capitol For a Living Wage!

Tuesday, June 5, 2001

ALL DAY EVENT
In Baton Rouge

**Lobby your legislators &
Confront Governor Foster**

For more information, call Local 100 at
1-800-349-7348

Legislators Push Privatization, Anti-Tenure Agenda: Local 100 Fights Back!!!

Once again, legislators hostile to school support workers are sponsoring legislation aimed at hurting us and taking away the few rights and protections we have.

Senator Jay Dardenne from Baton Rouge is the primary culprit once again. Having failed last year to pass legislation to allow school districts to privatize food service, he has returned with his bill, SB 631. This year, Representative Hunt Downer from Houma has joined him in filing a similar bill in the House of Representatives, HB 549. Convinced that school food service workers are being paid too well, these lawmakers have decided to open up our kitchens to minimum wage employers with no commitment to provid-

ing quality meals for the children of our school systems.

Dardenne also is sponsoring legislation to privatize more and more portions of state government. SB 275 by him and companion bill HB 1110 by Representative Loulan Pitre of Cut Off are sponsoring this legislation. While this only directly effects state workers, it threatens to expand the enterprise of privatization, which, if allowed to spread unchecked, could effect all public employees, local as well as state.

Several bills in the legislature also aim to modify or end tenure for school bus drivers. SB 294 by Senator Mike Michot of Lafayette and SB 440 by Dardenne both attempt to add "failure to achieve the standard required for satisfactory performance

on an evaluation" as a cause to terminate school bus drivers. Furthermore, HB 1554 by Carl Crane of Baton Rouge and SB 447 by Dardenne attempt to eliminate the benefit of tenure for all school employees who have not yet achieved it.

Local 100 is fighting these measures and has written one to regulate privatization as a way to fight these measures. See the article below for more information on the Public Services Accountability Act.

Call your senator and representative now and urge them to vote against these measures and to support the Public Services Accountability Act.

The future of your job and the jobs of your coworkers depends on your action!

Local 100 pushes the Public Service Accountability Act to protect the services our members provide from greedy privatizers.

With the anti-employee measures coming out of the woodwork, Local 100 felt it was important to get off the defensive, and for a change, go after privatization with an aggressive, positive measure, that clearly articulates our values. As the people who perform public service work for our schools, cities, parishes, the state and for private companies who receive a significant portion of their income from tax dollars, our first priority is to be able to provide the best quality services we can and we ask only for the resources that enable us to do that.

Hence, we have asked Rep. Kip Holden to sponsor this legislation, HB 1432, the Public Services Accountability Act.

What is in the PSAA?

- Safeguards to protect private information
- Protections to Whistleblowers
- Accurate Review of Contractor Costs
- Contractors must save money for system
- Contractors must pay wages and benefits roughly equal to previous public employer
- Public has right to access public information
- Funds must be used to provide services— not to fight union organization.

ServiceMaster continues to drain system resources?

Over the past two years, Local 100 has made numerous requests for information from the East Baton Rouge Parish school system that would allow us to evaluate the financial impact of their "partnership" with ServiceMaster. All of this information is public information under law. No information has been received yet, which means that either the administration is incompetent or it is hiding something. The PSAA could have prevented this confusion. Stay Tuned....

Living Wage Study Commission Bill Introduced

Even if we do win a support workers pay increase this legislative session, the fact will remain that many school support workers, state employees, and employees of nursing homes and community homes are paid well below the federal poverty level.

For instance, in 2000, the federal poverty level for a family of four was \$17,050. The AVERAGE Louisiana Support Worker's pay was \$13,500. That is, roughly \$3,500 below the federal poverty level. This is unacceptable, and

this is how we need the public to think about support worker pay.

In an effort to call public attention to the extent to which school support workers and other public service workers in Louisiana, Representative Kip Holden has introduced HCR 64. The bill brings together public employers (school boards, local governments, state agencies), unions representing public service workers, and legislators and instructs them to develop a plan to increase pay to a living wage.

Please fill this out and return to: Local 100; 5177 Greenwell Springs Rd.,; Baton Rouge, LA 70806

Count on Me...

- To participate in the caravan for at least one Saturday in May.
- To participate in the action at the capitol June 5.
- To call my senators, representatives, and the governor.
- To call my co-workers to let them know what needs to be done or to turn them out to an event.
- To serve as a steward at my worksite.

Name: _____

Phone _____

Local 100 to file suit on Lafourche

In Fall 1998, the Louisiana state legislature passed a pay raise for teachers. One of the conditions for the pay raise was an extension of the school day by one-half hour. Despite the fact that the expansion of the school day meant an expanded school day for many school support workers, the legislature decided not to also raise the pay of any support workers.

Most school boards accommodated the situation. They either expanded the number of hours that these support workers worked and expanded their pay or they kept their teacher aides working the same number of hours as previously.

However, some school boards, most notably the Lafourche Parish School Board, did not.

While Lafourche expanded the number of hours that Teacher Aides had to work from 6.5 to 7, they kept the salaries exactly as they were before the expansion of the day. The result was that the "hourly wage" of the Lafourche Paraprofessionals was reduced, since they were working more hours for the same pay. This is a violation of state law. Local 100 is preparing to file a lawsuit.

Rapides Bus Drivers...

Rolling the union ON!

A one-day job action in December by Local 100 school bus drivers in Rapides Parish was just the wake-up call the Rapides Parish School Board needed to vote overwhelmingly to increase funding for bus operational costs.

The drivers, who own their own buses, have long charged that inadequate operational reimbursement rates—unchanged since 1980— have made it difficult for them to properly maintain their vehicles. And that, they say, was a pure and simple matter of safety.

After the job action, the members implored the school board to take action. And school board members did, voting 7-1 to pay the drivers a \$200 per month operational supplement. They also voted down a measure to discipline drivers that participated in the action. The challenge will be now to renew the \$200 per month supplement next year.

EBR City-Parish Workers Prepare for Contract Talks

With the City-Parish union contract expiring at the end of the year, Local 100 leaders have begun informal discussion with Mayor-President Bobby Simpson and members of the Metropolitan Council. Talks thus far have been very cordial. Mayor Simpson and Local 100 have committed to working together to improve conditions for city-parish workers.

Local 100 members Aaron Butler (DPW- Traffic Engineering) and Jeff Turner (DPW- South Street Maintenance) have been conducting these meetings with the assistance of State Director Ron Neimark and Executive Board Member Vernon Bolden.

Mayor Simpson and DPW Director Fred Raiford have agreed to begin an employee recognition program, the details of which are being worked out by the union and management. They have also agreed to work with us to make the public aware of the variety of important work being performed by the regular employees of city-parish, whether in DPW, Juvenile Detention, Head Start, EMS, Animal Control, Mosquito and Rodent Control, civilians in the police department, or maintenance and custodial workers at the Metropolitan Airport.

Head Start Workers win Upgrades

For several years, Local 100 has been arguing that the Head Start grants received by the EBR City-Parish needed to be used to enhance the wages of the low-paid workers through upgrades or across-the-board wage increases. In the past, the city has argued that the merit increases that employees receive each year fulfills the requirement of the grant, and that additional increases were not necessary or possible.

This year, thanks to the intervention of the Human Resources Department and the support of a new mayor, the city did implement an upgrade for Head Start workers, including Teachers, Teacher Aides, and Cooks. Unfortunately, building attendants were not included in the raise this year, but the shift in strategy is still a good sign.

Louisiana Nursing Homes to Get Windfall: Workers will need to fight for our Share!

Louisiana Nursing Homes are about to receive \$63 million from the State of Louisiana. If nursing home workers don't take action now, the money is liable to be wasted away on profits for the owners, who are currently planning to change the reimbursement formula to write in larger profits for themselves.

A bill supported by Jay Dardenne will cost the state the full \$63 million dollars in windfall, and will likely not be funded completely by Medicaid, which will mean that the state will have to foot the bill and go further into the hole. The bill is also likely to double the cost for private-pay nursing home residents.

The money is available because the state legislature voted last year to raise the money by utilizing a little-known scheme to collect additional federal matching funds called an "Intergovernmental Transfer".

Some of the money has been utilized this year to raise the wages of nursing home workers (primarily CNAs, though Local 100 supports spreading the money to include nursing home support staff as

well), but unless we change the practice of the Department of Health and Hospitals, the future of the additional resources is likely to be squandered.

What Local 100 has proposed from the beginning is that the money be utilized to require nursing homes to put the bulk of the new monies received into direct care, meaning increased salaries and/or increased staffing of the facilities. We have proposed that this money be "passed through" the nursing homes to the workers who make it possible for the nursing home to function: LPNs, CNAs, Housekeeping, Dietary, Laundry and Maintenance.

Because of our activities in 2000, the original act that made this financing scheme possible, against the will of the Governor and the Department of Health and Hospitals, did include language that allows the Department to utilize the additional funds to support wage enhancements.

However if Dardenne's SB 445 passes the legislature, the entire supply of new money will be used as nursing home own-

ers want it to be used. The bill practically writes in larger profits for the owners and larger wages for the administration. If we defeat this bill, we save the money for additional wages for continual increases in funds for nursing home workers and other workers that work with the elderly.

Unfortunately, the act only addressed nursing homes, and not the community homes for the developmentally disabled. Community Home owners, who are mostly not-for-profit, do not have near the clout that nursing home owners do. Nursing home owners have one of the strongest lobbies in the state.

We urge you to call your senator and representative (phone numbers are on the front of this newsletter, on the left hand side) to urge them to vote against SB 445 and tell them that that money should be used to give the workers a well-deserved pay raise so that nursing home workers can be paid a living wage. We know from long experience that unless they are forced, nursing home owners will hoard the money for their own profit and workers will lose.

Legislators move to kill "Labor Peace"

In our efforts to organize the hospitality industry in New Orleans, HOTROC (which is a committee including Local 100, the Operating Engineers and the Hotel and Restaurant Employees Union) has attempted to use "Labor Peace" agreements to bring the industry to the bargaining table and to secure our organizing rights. A bill currently in the House, HB 1312 by Steve Scalise of Metairie would kill the possibility of these agreements and essentially give the industry an even greater upper hand. Please urge your legislators to vote against HB 1312.

**Living
Wages
Now!**

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