

THE VOICE

OF LOCAL 200UNITED

LOCAL 200UNITED



SEIU

Volume 9, Issue 2

Winter 2009

Mark Keith, Communications Director

Stronger Together

IDA REFORM

For two years, the New York State AFL-CIO has spearheaded an effort in the Legislature to tighten up the legislation that governs the operation of county and metropolitan Industrial Development Agencies (IDA).

In 1969 legislation was enacted providing for the creation of IDAs to facilitate economic development in specific localities, and outlining their powers and status as public benefit corporations. The number of IDAs has fluctuated over time, and there are currently 115 active IDAs; one in each of the State's 62 counties, as well as a number of cities, towns, and villages.

As a rule, IDAs try to attract new employers to locate in their jurisdiction, or they attempt to retain businesses that might be considering relocation or an expansion elsewhere. Tools at the disposal of the IDA are financial. Tax exemptions, loans, PILOT agreements, and virtually all other manner of corporate welfare might be utilized by an IDA to entice private business to locate or expand in a given area.

While an IDA owned property enjoys many of the benefits of public property, being tax exempt for example, they are not necessarily burdened by some of the responsibilities to taxpayers.

Several years ago Local 200United staff researched downtown Syracuse office buildings as part of our *Justice for Janitors* campaign and learned that a majority of the key buildings were owned by SIDA, the Syracuse Industrial Development Agency. Because SIDA held the mortgages on the properties, they were listed as owners and the properties were tax exempt. But, in spite of the quasi-public nature of the IDA, as a public benefit corporation, SIDA is not bound by the New York's Building Service Contract Act, which requires a public entity to pay the Prevailing Wage for janitorial services.

The Current Campaign

In 2008 the New York State AFL-CIO, the 2.5 million member federation of 57 New York unions, began a fresh campaign to rewrite or reform the laws that govern our IDAs. Unlike past efforts at reform, the State AFL-CIO pledged to include service workers and construction workers in coalition with community activists. All are committed to policing our public dollars so that this corporate welfare will create *good* jobs that will benefit our

communities and not just the high rollers and developers who typically feed at the public trough.

In addition to the State AFL-CIO and the affiliated Building and Construction Trades, our SEIU Local 200United joined the team to oversee the interests of service workers in the Upstate region. SEIU Local 32BJ plays the same role for New York City, Long Island, and Westchester County. UNITE HERE tends to the interests of restaurant and hospitality workers, while RWDSU looks out for retail clerks, largely a Downstate constituency. Connecting to the community and helping to hold this coalition together is New York State Jobs With Justice (JWJ).

Last year we faced down efforts by State senators to divide our coalition and settle separately with the Building Trades. This resulted in a freeze on many projects which awaited an annual renewal of IDA legislation. This year Gov. David Paterson has come forward at the end of the legislative year to propose supportive measures. On November 18, the New York Times reported on draft legislation that would require the payment of prevailing wages in construction and services for development financed by public money.

Will the Governor's steps ultimately shift the balance in our favor? It remains to be seen. But on this issue, our presence is felt. Our solidarity is firm, and *the struggle continues!*



Carrie Brunk, left, Executive Director of New York State Jobs With Justice, testifies at a State Assembly hearing with our SEIU members peppering the gallery behind her. Sec-Treas. Mike Lonigro has spearheaded Local 200United's activist participation in the IDA Reform Campaign. (Photo by NYS JWJ)

President's Message Jerry Dennis

The month of December has been marked with some major victories for Local 200United. We had been fighting for over a month with a company in Binghamton who was trying to take our long-standing janitorial contract non-union. This would have cost over forty members their hours and long standing benefits. Some of these workers have been on the job over twenty years. After waging a comprehensive campaign in the workplace and at the bargaining table, we are proud to announce that the contract was again awarded to a union contractor! We would like to thank all the legislators who helped us win justice for our Binghamton members and we would like to thank our members themselves. Their active support for our friends in government made certain that we had the relationships necessary to relate our cause to those community leaders who are concerned for the long term prosperity of the Southern Tier.

Health care has taken a major step forward on the national stage as well. The United States House of Representatives voted to pass a comprehensive health care reform bill in late November. The US Senate is now working on passing their version, hopefully by the end of the month. We will continue to need your help as this legislation continues to develop on the national level.



While events on the national level are moving toward comprehensive reform, our New York State legislature leaves a lot to be desired. On December 2, 2009 the NYS Assembly and Senate passed a "Deficit Reduction Plan" to help the state

balance the budget. We lobbied long and vigorously to stop cuts to our OMRDD agencies.

We were successful in reducing the cuts to Medicaid-funded OMRDD programs from 10% to 5.4%. Other non-Medicaid programs will be cut 10%. These cuts will be devastating to agencies across the state, and we believe that worse cuts are yet to come, when the new 2010 budget comes through in April. Not only will the OMRDD agencies once again be on the chopping block, but school districts will be as well. While school districts avoided cuts this cycle, after the recent addition of a Tier 5 to the NYS pension system, we believe next year's cuts will be severe.

We will be on the front lines of this budget battle. With the help of our hard-working membership we will convince our legislators that these cuts will harm our facilities, programs, jobs, and consumers. For us, it's about quality of service. We want to enrich the lives of those with disabilities and their families, and cannot do so without adequate funding.

ENOUGH IS ENOUGH!

THE CUTS TO OMRDD HAVE TO STOP!

Students Against Sweatshops Win Big for Honduran Workers

By AJ Schneeberg

August Schneeberg, a research and communication specialist in the Local 200United Organizing Department, is a recent graduate of Rutgers University. There he was an activist in support of United Students Against Sweatshops (USAS) and participated in the campaign against Russell Athletic.

Many of us, including myself, own pro or collegiate team apparel – clothing that shows pride in the school we work for, our children go to, or we graduated from. But how often do we stop to consider where that clothing is made? It is as easy to pull a shirt off of the rack at a campus bookstore as it is to forget its very existence is thanks to the work of human beings.

On October 8, 2008, Russell Athletic announced it would be closing one of their largest factories in Honduras, Jerzees de Honduras. The factory, located in the town of Choloma, employed over 1,200 workers. Why was the facility closing? It was not performing poorly, and its parent

company was not underperforming either. In fact, the factory's ultimate parent was Berkshire Hathaway, whose shares trade at over \$100,000 each. Berkshire Hathaway

Honduras? Because the workers in the factory joined together to form a union.

At the time this announcement was made, I was finishing my degree in Labor Studies at Rutgers. Our licensing agreement with Russell, which allowed them to print Rutgers name and logo on their apparel, was worth over \$800,000. Our campus based student-labor group was contacted by United Students Against Sweatshops (USAS), who told us they were organizing a nationwide campaign to pressure colleges to cut their contracts with Russell for violating the workers' right to freely associate and bargain.



is led by Warren Buffet – the richest man in the world. So why, then, did Russell announce it would be closing Jerzees de

(continued next page)

Students Against Sweatshops Win Big

(continued from page 2)

On campus, we introduced the campaign to the students by bringing Moises Alvarado, the President, and Norma Mejia, the Vice President, of the workers' union in Honduras. In front of a group of students, staff, and professors, Alvarado held up a sweatshirt that was purchased the day before at Cornell University. He told us that sweatshirt was made in the very plant he worked. That sweatshirt cost \$50 – the amount he is paid for a week's labor.

Norma Mejia told us how losing her job was not the end of her troubles, which began while she was still working. She received death threats for her involvement with the organizing campaign. After the factory doors closed, Norma, along with many of her coworkers, were blacklisted as union activists, leaving them unable to find another job.

After we demanded Rutgers University cut its contract with Russell, the story appeared in an article on the front page of the University's student newspaper and I began reaching out to my fellow students. In one large class, a young male student asked if he signed my petition, and the workers were rehired and given raises, would the cost of his Rutgers sweatshirt go up. Fortunately I had been prepared for this question. I had learned the workers, who are paid the value of one sweatshirt a week, make on average 800 sweatshirts in

that same week. Even if the workers salary were to double, it would still only be equal to one quarter of one percent of the retail value they produce.

As the Honduran workers' story spread, student outrage grew; both at Rutgers (which became the third school to end their licensing agreement with Russell) and across the country. Schools from the University of Miami to Cornell to Stanford ended their agreements with the company. In the end, the boycott wound up becoming the largest in the history of modern student activism. Ninety-six schools in total severed ties with Russell Athletic in response to their actions stifling their workers' right to unionize.

On November 19th of this year, USAS proudly announced an unprecedented victory in the global race to the bottom. Russell Athletic agreed not only to reopen Jerzees de Honduras and reinstate the 1,200 unionized workers, they also agreed not to block organizing campaigns at its seven other factories in Honduras. The announcement said the victory, "has proven that together, we can successfully fight back when those in power take advantage of the economic crisis to attack working people. We can fight back – and WIN – against policies that benefit a privileged few and hurt our communities."

Union Security Agreements

Notice to persons covered by Union Security Agreements regulated under the National Labor Relations Act.

SEIU Local 200United, like other unions, spends the vast majority of its funds on collective-bargaining related activity, as well as some amounts for political lobbying, community services, citizenship fund activities, international affairs, organizing, charitable donations, publications advancing the union's political positions, certain litigation, and other matters. Under the Supreme Court decision in *CWA v. Beck*, non-union members who pay money to the Union under union security agreements may file objections to non-representational related expenditures of the money they pay under such agreements. (Such agreements, including those that SEIU Local 200United is a party to, may be and are applied by SEIU Local 200United only to require as a condition of employment that covered employees be and remain persons who tender to the Union "the periodic dues and initiation fees uniformly required as a condition of acquiring or retaining membership" in the Union. The application of such clauses to nonmembers who submit objections to SEIU Local 200United under Beck is handled in the manner described herein.)

To comply with the Beck decision, SEIU Local 200United honors objections by nonmembers of the union covered by NLRA union security agreements who notify in writing SEIU Local 200United, 1153 West Fayette Street, PO Box 1130, Syracuse, NY 13201, of their objection. Objections may be filed at any time but must be renewed each year. Objectors will be charged only for expenditures related to representational activities.

All nonmembers who file such an objection will receive SEIU Local 200United's current Report of Expenditures Incurred in Providing Collective Bargaining Related Services. This Report provides the basis for the amount which will be charged to Objectors as a result of their objection. The Report arrives at this amount by an analysis of SEIU Local 200United's prior fiscal year expenditures which provides a detailed allocation of those expenditures between expenditures which are related to SEIU Local 200United's representational activities, and from which the amount charged Objectors is derived, and expenditures which are not or may not be so related.

Any challenge by an Objector to the calculations in the Report or any challenge by an objector claiming the Report does not properly determine what portion of SEIU Local 200United's expenditures were expended on matters unrelated to representational matters, will be referred to an impartial decision-maker appointed by the American Arbitration Association under its Rules for Impartial Determination of Union Fees. Such challenges by Objectors to the Report must be made in writing, and must be addressed to SEIU Local 200United, 1153 West Fayette Street, PO Box 1130, Syracuse, NY 13201. Objectors are notified of this deadline at the time they receive their copy of the Report.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Please remember the following changes in the Post Office Box numbers for our union and fund locations in Syracuse, NY:

SEIU Local 200United's address is now:

PO Box 1130

The Service Employees Benefit Fund is now:

PO Box 1240

The Service Employees Pension Fund of Upstate New York is now:

PO Box 1240

LOCAL 200UNITED Local 200United
 Service Employees International Union, CTW, CLC
 1153 West Fayette Street
 PO Box 1130
 Syracuse, NY 13201-1130

SEIU
 Stronger Together

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



Non-Profit Org.
 U.S. Postage
 PAID
 Permit No. 3638
 Syracuse, NY

www.seiu200united.org

Copyright © 2009 SEIU Local 200United.

Fallen Comrades

Randy Coates, Jr.

Ten year Local 200United veteran at the Gateway-Longview agency in Buffalo, Randy Coates, Jr. died unexpectedly on Tuesday, November 24, 2009. He was 57. Serving first as a Steward, Randy later ran for the position of Co-Chairperson, the position he



Randy Coates

Union Representative Corinne Zajak remembered Randy, "He was the best, and he will be truly missed by everyone because he touched so many lives."

held with Local 200United at the time of his passing. As Co-Chair, he was intimately involved with the day-to-day operations of the union and administration of the contract.

In addition to the hands-on nature of his work, Randy was often found volunteering his services as a basketball coach with various youth groups. He was also active at True Bethel Baptist Church where he was recreation leader, basketball coach, and a member of the choir.

Sheila Hulbeck

Job Coach and Local 200United Chairperson at Unity House, Sheila Mary Dobell Hulbeck of Auburn died Tuesday, October 13, 2009. She was 76. Born in Great Britain, Sheila brought a straight-shooting, no nonsense style to leadership at Unity House. In spite of the nurturing work performed by Local 200United members working as Human Service Professionals, the nature of the employer agencies often demand tough negotiators, strong advocates, and hard-scrabble trade unionists to fill officer and steward positions. That's what Sheila brought to the table as a steward, chair, and contract negotiator.

Union Representative and Local 200United Executive Vice President Liz Golembeski worked with Sheila. "She was a great fighter for the rights of her fellow workers," Liz said, "We will really miss having her on the front lines at grievance meetings and contract negotiations."

Frances M. Demperio



Fran Demperio

On September 2, 2009 Fran Demperio of Memphis passed away at age 62. A 23 year member of Local 200United, Fran worked as an aide in the library at Jordan-Elbridge schools.

Earlier in her career, she served as an elected union officer at J-E. More recently Fran sat on the contract negotiating committee. "Fran's greatest quality was her giving and caring nature," said Liz Golembeski. "She will really be missed."