

The Labor Movement in the US: SEIU 721 Advocates for Fairness

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Local Organizing campaigns have served as an intricate part in the labor union movement whether for equal rights or a fair living wage within today's economy. As part of our educational series on the labor union movement, one local organizing campaign where union organizers and workers submitted a petition to Riverside County's Human Resources Department, seeking to unionize the county's temporary medical workers was rejected.

There's a threat to quality jobs and services in Riverside County.

A March 2008 study by the Center on Policy Initiatives found that the County of Riverside employs temporary workers at double the rate of similar-sized, neighboring counties. Many workers are involuntarily in temporary jobs for a year or more, performing functions that should be permanent jobs.

The County does not provide healthcare coverage for temporary workers--forcing taxpayers to subsidize the cost of their care. The workers also do not receive vacation days, sick days, or payment of Social Security, and they are paid less than permanent workers doing the same jobs.

The study's findings indicate that African Americans and women are disproportionately placed in temporary jobs.

Besides the harm to employees, temporary work diminishes the continuity necessary for quality services provided by the county, especially healthcare services. Three grand jury investigations conducted in the last four years have linked the overuse of temporary employees to numerous quality-of-service problems. Temporary work dampens the local economy by lowering the rate of homeownership. And it leads to turnover and inefficiencies that have cost County taxpayers millions of dollars.

It's the wrong direction for our county. That's why a group of temporary employees has come together with community members and the members of SEIU Local 721 to do something about it.

The Service Employees International Union is 2 million working people and 50,000 retirees united to improve services and our communities throughout North America.

SEIU members are winning better wages, health care, and more secure jobs at home, while uniting their strength with their counterparts around the world to help ensure that workers, not just corporations and CEOs, benefit from today's global economy.

SEIU is the fastest-growing union in North America. Focused on uniting workers in three sectors to improve their lives and the services they provide, SEIU is:

- The largest health care union, with 900,000 members in the field, including nurses, LPNs, doctors, lab technicians, nursing home workers, home care workers
- The largest property services union, with 225,000 members in the building cleaning and security industries, including janitors, door men and women
- The second largest public services union, with 850,000 local and state government workers, public school employees, bus drivers, and child care providers for educational purposes only. Not an endorsement of unions.