

# We Are Committed to Unity, Strength, and Respect for Democracy in Our Union

April 2008

**SEIU MEMBERS** have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to change our country and change workers' lives. Together, SEIU local unions have developed breakthrough strategies not only to elect a new U.S. president and Congress, but to win:

- Affordable, quality healthcare;
- An economy that rewards work;
- Quality services with fair and reliable funding;
- Comprehensive immigration reform; and
- The freedom of all workers to form a union.

To achieve these goals, we have to work together to build on the choices we made at the 1996, 2000, and 2004 SEIU conventions that have made us the most successful workers' organization of our time and the leading advocacy group in North America.

Since 1996, we have increasingly acted collectively as national leaders, pooled our resources, developed new models of organizing to unite workers on a bigger scale, increased member participation, and **united more than a million more workers with us**—the most successful organizing effort in American history.

Together with the million workers already in our union, the strength of a million more has helped us maintain and improve standards in our industries for pay, healthcare, and retirement at a time when working conditions for many in our country have suffered.

The following are among many recent examples of the kinds of results that have stemmed from our decisions to act more and more like one organization and support one another in terms of resources, political strength, capital strategies, and bargaining:

#### **Uniting more than 35,000 workers in the largely nonunion South and Southwest, including...**

- 6,300 city employees in San Antonio who won a step pay plan that raises the average worker's pay 6.5 percent each year for the next four years.
- Commercial janitors in Houston, who went on strike for four weeks before winning a first contract that more than doubles their income by the end of the three-year contract and provides access to affordable health benefits.
- Hospital workers at six HCA hospitals in Florida who won a first contract that includes raises of up to 23 percent for nurses through 2011, as well as committees to ensure front-line caregivers have a voice in patient care.

**Building on our homecare strategy, we helped 75,000 childcare providers win their right to a union**, including 49,000 in Illinois who went on to win more than \$250 million in new state funding that delivers increased pay, new health insurance benefits, and training opportunities.

For the past two years, thousands of SEIU members and elected local union leaders have been engaged in ongoing committees, meetings, discussion, and debate to review what has worked and not worked and develop recommendations for our 2008 Convention. These recommendations will take us the next step toward building a strong and effective voice for working people in our core industries, our communities, and our country:

- A unionwide breakthrough strategy led by members with the focus and scale to unite working people to change lives;
- Changes to build a responsive union in which more workers lead, participate and decide; and
- Increased political strength to build a permanent working-families, political majority in our country to seize the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity before us for real change to restore the American Dream.

When organizations such as ours go through major changes as we have since 1996 to confront serious challenges that threaten our mission to win for working people, there may certainly be differences of opinion and individuals who are apprehensive about change or prefer the status quo.

Constructive discussion about how to strengthen our union is absolutely essential. But it also carries with it a very serious responsibility to respect decisions made by democratic majority, whether they have to do with strategy, resources, structure, or local union jurisdiction.

No local union leader, no matter what their individual objectives may be, should try to jeopardize the strategies developed and democratically approved.

The next four years give us a historic chance to rebuild workers' strength in America. If we continue to work together as one strong, democratic organization, there is no limit to what we can accomplish.

In Unity,

**SEIU Local Leaders representing more than 80% of all 1.9 million SEIU Members**

