

Twenty One

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by DEAN COATE
President



EMILY PAYNE

ON THE COVER

Local 21 joined thousands of union members and working families across the country for rallies in solidarity with workers where right-wing politicians and anti-union corporate agendas are working to take away benefits and collective bargaining rights.

Photo by Cody T. Williams



ALEX TOMLINSON

In August, members at the Golden Gate Bridge District wore stickers stating, "Golden Gate Labor Coalition: Fighting for Our Retirees and Our Healthcare," to draw attention to the employers' delays at the bargaining table and attempts to force pay cuts on non-represented workers and retirees.

Building Strong Leadership Takes Effort, Involvement

This issue of *Twenty One* features members who serve as real examples of the variety of leadership we have in Local 21.

When I look at those members, with all the activities and responsibilities they've

ment is a key precursor to and component of leadership. One needs to get more involved to build a foundation for leadership, and a leader must set an example for others by being involved and acting as an effective representative.

So, why take on all this work and responsibility?

We Are the Union

When members ask, "Why doesn't the union do this?" I remind them that while union staff are there to support the work of the union, they aren't the union. The members are the union.

If members want to make sure the union does the right thing and makes the right decisions, they need to get involved.

Leaders are Those Who Step Up

Members vote on the big decisions like contract ratifications and bylaw changes. Most routine decisions get made by our leaders, whether they are

"One learns to be a better leader through experience."

elected to our Executive Committee, chapter offices, Delegates, or some other leadership form.

Who are these leaders? They are those of us who are willing to get involved in union activities and who have been entrusted with the responsibility to act on behalf of the membership.

It is said that "leaders are made, not born," and that much of leadership is a matter of experience. One learns to be a better leader through experience, and experience helps develop leadership traits.

Get involved, get some experience, and get interested in the Union. It will help you develop leadership qualities which will not only help your fellow union members, but also help you in life.

by BARRY BROAD, SHANE GUSMAN
LEGISLATIVE ADVOCATES, Broad & Gusman, LLP



STOCKPHOTO

Ironic Twist to War Against Public Employees May Prove Beneficial

This year has been dominated by the war on public service. Government programs at all levels are under attack, along with the public employees who make those programs work. The weapon of choice is the ever dwindling pot of money available for public services. The primary aggressors are the Republican Party and its major funders.

The budget fight this year was the largest front for this war. Like previous years, we faced a significant deficit. Newly elected Governor Jerry Brown came in with an approach incorporating a combination of significant cuts, modest proposals to raise revenue by closing certain corporate tax loopholes, and an extension of existing taxes that were set to expire in July. Unfortunately, state Republicans withheld their votes and blocked any chance of budgetary progress.

The result was a budget comprised almost entirely of cuts and absent of real revenue increases, with a number of items directly effecting Local 21 members. The most noteworthy line items included the elimination and reformation of redevelopment agencies,

"The newly established...Redistricting Commission re-drew legislative districts in a way that appears to give Democrats and moderate Republicans a real shot at gaining enough seats in 2012"

and devastating cuts to the courts. In fact, almost every state funded service was slashed, and more reductions are anticipated if Fall revenue predictions aren't met.

Those attacking government and public employees have their sights set on the 2012 ballot. The poorly titled "Stop Special Interest Money Now Act" is a revision of the right-wing movement that has appeared in California and many other states over the last decade. If passed, the measure would prohibit unions from using voluntary payroll deducted money for political purposes.

The intent of the initiative is to severely limit the right and ability of unions to speak for their members in the political process, which would be disastrous for workers and a major boon for big corporations. It's unknown whether this will get on the ballot, but its backers are collecting enough funding to make it a legitimate threat.

In an ironic twist for the good, legislation passed by the very folks who attack public employees may accidentally help the state get back on track. Redistricting reform, which was traded to Republicans for passing a budget a few years ago, may turn out to be a tool to raise significant revenues, which hasn't happened since the passage of Prop 13 decades ago.

The newly established independent body, California Citizens Redistricting Commission, re-drew legislative districts in a way that appears to give Democrats and moderate Republicans a real shot at gaining enough seats in 2012 to have a two-thirds super majority in both houses of our state legislature. Lawsuits and a Republican-led attempt to repeal its own creation are expected, but this may be the thing that allows us to go effectively on the offensive for the first time in recent history.

Don't Let "Paycheck Deception" Petition Silence You!



influence of corporations. It's being disguised as an initiative to help protect workers' paychecks.

Don't be fooled! Don't sign!
The initiative:

- takes away your right to make a voluntary contribution to our union's political action fund
- takes away workers' right to pool our money

together, which gives us a stronger voice in political decisions that affect our jobs, families, and communities.

- allows corporations to make unlimited contributions to politicians, and is backed by billionaires and big business who want to control our state without opposition.

Don't sign the petition.

Tell your friends and family not to sign it either! If you see someone collecting signatures, call 877.440.9585.

"Someone was collecting signatures in front of my local grocery," said Tom Manley, Local 21 VP for Legislative & Political Action. "I called the 877 number to report this. An educator was sent out to tell shoppers about the true purpose of the petition and why they shouldn't sign it."

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rising stars why we volunteer

This Summer, our Union was honored with the San Francisco Labor Council's Rising Star award, recognizing our "extraordinary effort and participation in the November 2010 election campaign."

The award acknowledged the time, effort, and hard work more than 200 of our members dedicated to electing leaders and passing ballot measures which have a direct impact on our paychecks, pensions, and the resources available to do our jobs effectively.

It also signified Local 21's advancement in the political arena, and illustrated how we have risen to the level of many of our peer unions, with whom we hope we can better partner with in future election seasons.

This November, we're facing new battles at the ballot box and need even more volunteers to call voters, walk precincts, and more, to ensure we protect our jobs and rights.

Want to get involved? Contact Rachel Richman, Local 21's Political Director, at rrichman@ifpte21.org for more information.

ROLAND DITAN

Senior Personal Property Auditor, City & County of San Francisco, Treasurer & Tax Collector
Member since 1994

How do you volunteer with Local 21?



I volunteer in many capacities including phone banking and precinct walking during the past two election seasons to educate voters and remind them to vote on

Election Day; recruiting volunteers to participate in the Union's November 2010 election campaign; and attending marches and rallies to help build Local 21's public presence, and picket lines to support other workers' struggles. I also give my time to my chapter as an elected officer, contribute to the Union's Political Action Fund, and am active in our Political Action Committee which helps make political and endorsement decisions.

How did you get involved with the union?

There were some issues that needed to be addressed in our workplace, and the best way to get management's attention was to be active with Local 21.

Why do you volunteer?

It's impossible for Union staff to do all the activities that need to be done to protect the rights and interests of our members. The Union is made up of its members, and if we don't volunteer our time, we can't achieve all our goals.

What should members know about phone banks and other volunteer opportunities?

The more member turn-out we have at different events, whether it be phone banks or something else, the louder we get our message out to voters and build support for our cause and candidates.

CHRISTIANNE SELIG

Librarian, City of San Leandro Library
Member since 2008

What did you do as a precinct walker?

I walked a precinct in San Leandro for revenue Measure Z, and also recruited my husband to walk with us. We left flyers on porches and talked to residents. Most people we met were friendly and supportive. It was gratifying to meet people who understood the importance of maintaining city services, and I was thrilled when Measure Z passed, especially in this tough economy.

How did you first get involved with the Union?

I've been a member of one union or another most of my working life, so I know how important it is to participate. Having our Union Rep approach me got me focused on helping.



Why did you volunteer?

I am invested in San Leandro; I live and work here. I want this city to continue to have great libraries, fun recreation programs, a strong police force, and many other important services.

Also, as a public employee, I am concerned about the anti-union, anti-government tone in current public discourse. I hope that reminding our residents of all the city offers will help change the tone in some small way.

What should members know about committing a day to precinct walking?

I was nervous at first because I thought we might run into people who didn't support the measure or might be unfriendly, but I had a great experience. I got to know one of my coworkers better, met people who work in other city departments, and the time went by quickly. If we all give a little time, it will add up to a lot.

GARRY BIERINGER

Principle Administrative Analyst, City & County of San Francisco, Juvenile Probation
Member since 2007

What did you do as a volunteer and member of the Rapid Response Team (RRT)?

It's essential for labor to get 'smart' about responding to the lies and half-truths in the media about public employees and our 'generous' retirement benefits. The RRT was the perfect way to publicize our story and issues in a positive light, by flooding newspapers with letters to the editor and countering their news coverage.

How did you first get involved with the union in a volunteer capacity?



I first got involved when Mayor Newsom attempted to fire all 17,000 of us, which

was how teachers were treated back in the 1970's. We were laid off every year and re-hired a day before school began. I didn't like being treated in the same disrespectful way at the sunset of my career, as when I first began working. It made me realize that the Union is the only support we have. I was impressed with Local 21's leadership, so once the RRT was formed, I saw it as a perfect opportunity to funnel my energies into a positive activity.

Why do you volunteer?

A union is only as strong as its members, and it's up to each member to show our strength. Volunteering has allowed me to meet many colleagues throughout the city and share in our joint commitment to social change.

What should members know about being involved with the Rapid Response Team?

It's not a large time commitment, and it's an effective way to communicate your message. It's also fun to see your letter published. Given the frustration that public employees have over the national attack on our rights and benefits, it is a healthy way to release frustration. I make the union stronger each time I write a letter.

CAY DENISE MACKENZIE

Senior Emergency Services Planner, San Jose Fire Department, Office of Emergency Services
Member since 2010

What do you do as a member of the South Bay Political Action Committee?

I participate at Delegate Assemblies where a lot of the discussions focus on our political goals and strategies; attend South Bay Council meetings where one of the functions of the body is to interview political candidates and determine whether to provide a Local 21 endorsement; precinct walk; phone bank; and contribute to the Union's T.J. Anthony Political Action Fund.



Why do you volunteer?

As part of my commitment as an elected leader of the City Association of Management Personnel chapter, it is important to set an example for others in my chapter. Plus, I like to educate others — what I know is power, and in communicating my knowledge to others, it helps empower them.

What should members know about being involved with the Union's Political Activities?

There will be some form of time commitment, but there are many ways to volunteer. Some activities may not be your 'cup of tea,' but if you're willing, try stretching yourself. If not, ask for other options.

Message 'spin' has become the medium of persuasion, rather than fact-checking and thoughtful discourse about issues. It is one of the reasons the electorate lacks trust in government and labor, especially where the public pension debate is concerned. One of the primary reasons we must participate is because misinformation, or spin, is the mental food citizens are being fed en masse today by politicians, organizations, people of economic means with a political agenda, and much of the media.

We need to educate voters about how to hear and see spin, who or what benefits from it, and how to identify and question that which doesn't make sense. Empowering people in such ways will travel to the ballot box and beyond, and our voice and actions will have much more influence.

ELISA MARQUEZ

Case Manager, City of Oakland, Human Services, Adult and Aging Division
Member since 2005

How have you volunteered with Local 21?

I am a Co-chair of Local 21's annual Cesar Chavez event, and I've been a Contract Action Team member for two bargaining campaigns, a frequent phone banker for numerous campaigns, and I've attended numerous rallies.

Why have you committed to contribute to the T.J. Anthony Political Action Fund, even when Oakland employees have agreed to tough concessions and are being forced to make ends meet with less?

It's important for members to stay engaged, despite any set backs we might face. With the Political Action Fund, I can do an amount that works for me, even though we've made concessions for several years. I've seen firsthand that having a political action fund makes a big difference when it comes to making endorsements and having an effective political action committee.

Why do you volunteer and contribute to COPE?

The minimum we can do as individual members is to support the efforts of the Union. It takes money to back candidates and measures, and it's our duty to support that, not just with giving our time, but also with money.

What should members know about volunteering and being a Political Action Fund donor?

It's doable! No one is obligated to over extend themselves. You can commit to attend just one event or give just \$5 a month. It's ok to say no sometimes, but we all have to do what we can, when we can. The more involved we are, whether it's in negotiations or something else, it makes a difference when we're all present and active. Making it to a monthly membership meeting isn't enough if we want to make a difference.



Members Fight Wisconsin Style Attacks to Protect Services, Benefits

Earlier this year we saw one of the most egregious assaults on labor when Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker stripped public employees of their collective bargaining rights via the "Budget Repair Bill."

Although Wisconsin was not in dire financial straits, Walker tried to drum up a crisis and insisted that the state's deficit was caused by public employees' pay and benefits. His solution was to take away unionized employees' rights and enact a severe shift in benefits. In reality, Walker and his allies were to blame for Wisconsin's budget gap via tax giveaways, but were looking for a way to weaken worker protections.

The world's attention descended on Wisconsin as more than 100,000 union members gathered for protests. Democratic Senators also protested by fleeing to Illinois to delay a vote on Walker's bill, a tactic intended to promote debate and delay the rush passage of this bill.

Despite a nationwide campaign to recall a number of Wisconsin's Republican lawmakers and multiple lawsuits challenging the bill's legality, Walker's Budget Repair Bill went into effect on June 29, 2011.

Multiple states have tried to enact similar legislation repealing workers' rights

or benefits, or weakening unions' rights.

Numerous cities, counties, and special districts are taking steps to bypass collective bargaining and permanently cut wages and benefits.

CODY T. WILLIAMS

In the Bay Area, we've seen our share of attacks on our rights and benefits. Some public agencies are struggling to close budget gaps but overreach in their request for concessions, while others simply seek opportunities to curb employees' compensation and rights.

CITY & COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO

Last fall, our united campaign defeated an attack on public employees' health care and retirement. Realizing that another anti-public employee ballot measure was imminent, Local 21 and a coalition of city unions got together with the Mayor and other stakeholders to negotiate our own pension reform measure. Prop. C, the result of a fact-based, problem-solving approach, has broad consensus and will appear on the November 2011 ballot.

Jeff Adachi, the proponent of last year's attack, is returning to the ballot box with another measure aimed at workers' pensions. His measure is a product of political ambition, rather than an honest attempt to address pension sustainability. Soon after his ballot measure qualified, Adachi announced his candidacy for Mayor.

Prop. C will save the City nearly \$1 billion over the next ten years, and will be essential in strengthening our pension plan, minimizing layoffs, and protecting services. More important, unlike Adachi's measure, it was designed with labor at the table and takes our members' priorities into account.

"We have an interest in protecting the financial health of the City and helping with future pension liability," said Executive Director Bob Muscat. "We had to do something to keep the pension system sustainable, but also require that any changes are smart and equitable."

CONTRA COSTA COUNTY

Contra Costa members stood up to the Board of Supervisors to fight the County's imposition of its last proposals. They demanded they return to the table with real, cost-saving solutions that don't impact programs or undermine professional integrity.

After rallying at two hearings where imposition was scheduled, the County negotiator came back to Local 21 and for the first time in months, began to bargain in good faith. We reached an agreement soon after, that included fewer concessions than what the County tried to impose, along with important protections for our members.

"We understood the County's struggle but wanted to prevent additional cuts to our programs and services," said chapter President Sue Guest, "We knew we needed to make concessions, but needed to ensure that decisions were made thoughtfully."

CITY OF SAN JOSÉ

San José members are experiencing one of the most draconian attacks within Local 21. Our chapters have fought off unilateral imposition of proposals to take away vested pension benefits, on top of a 10% permanent pay cut that members agreed to. We also staved off Mayor Reed's attempt to declare a fiscal emergency, which would have enabled the City to take even more without our consent.

Local 21 and a coalition of city unions are bargaining over the proposed pension changes. Our leaders are fighting illegal, inequitable, and unilateral changes and are preparing to release a comprehensive and actuarially sound proposal that protects vested benefits, creates substantial savings, and avoids a drawn-out legal fight. We will know shortly whether the City is interested in compromise or confrontation.

CITY OF OAKLAND

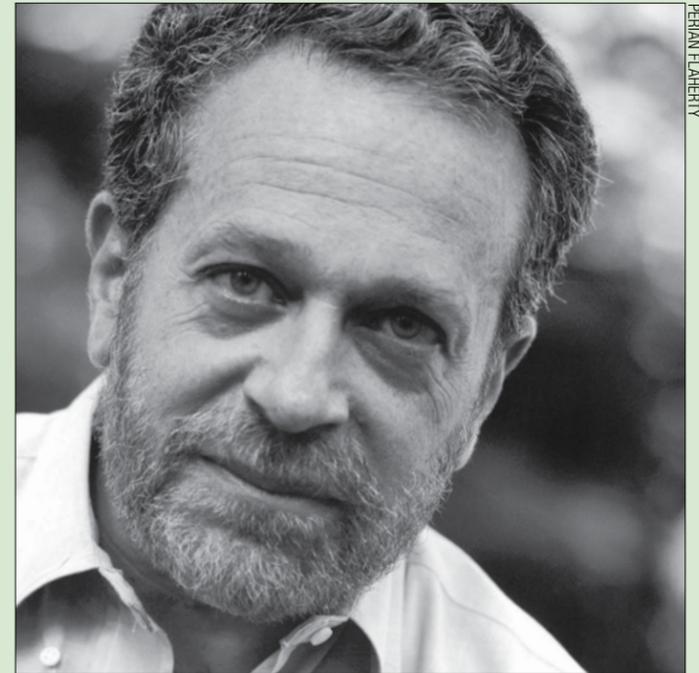
In Oakland, our members knew the city had a huge budget gap to close, but many felt city negotiators were overreaching in their ask for concessions. Our members agreed to concessions with a clause requiring the City to obtain an equal level of concessions from every other city union, including Police. The result was that for the first time Police were forced to step up and pay their fair share.

Robert Reich Speaks with Union about Assaults on Public Employees

Robert Reich is Chancellor's Professor of Public Policy at the University of California at Berkeley. He has served in three national administrations, most recently as Secretary of Labor under President Bill Clinton. He has written thirteen books including the bestsellers *The Work of Nations*, *Locked in the Cabinet*, *Supercapitalism*, and his most recent book, *Aftershock: The Next Economy and America's Future*. He also writes his own blog about the political economy at robertreich.org.

Reich has been an ardent critic of Republican attacks on public employees and working people. He has repeatedly highlighted how the GOP works to draw attention away from the deeds of institutions that profit from the dissolution of our retirement benefits and collective bargaining rights. He is a vocal supporter of unionization, and is widely considered one of the foremost American political economists of our time.

In light of the recent events in Wisconsin aimed at eliminating public employees' rights, and countless cash-strapped states and local public agencies seeking to balance their budgets on the backs of workers, we asked Reich about the recent attacks on public employees and what he sees as critical steps in the battle ahead.



PERIAN FLAHERTY

LOCAL 21: Many long time public employees have dedicated their lives to working for their local governments and communities, with the promise of eventually receiving a modest but secure retirement, and some protection for health care. What do you see as a response to the ongoing need to strengthen the public sector and services in our communities, in light of the barrage of attacks on public employees and their benefits?

ROBERT REICH: In hard times like these, political opportunists prey on public servants because they seem like easy targets. It's important for the women and men who serve this country to remember how vitally important their work is to their communities; indeed, at times like these such services are more desperately needed than ever.

It's also necessary to respond to the lies being told by the other side. Public professionals are not paid more than their counterparts in the private sector with similar levels of education.

Government cutbacks don't create more private-sector jobs. We need to continue to attract smart and committed people to the public sector.

Finally, we need to get word out that the distribution of income and wealth in America is now more lopsided than at any time in the last 80 years – giving the super rich more political power than at any time since the late 19th century. They've cut their effective tax rates, even as lower-income jobs disappear. The loss of revenues is a big reason why we're running such big deficits. The problem isn't public employees.

LOCAL 21: Since the economic collapse in 2008, US residents have shown their resilience and aptitude for getting through hard times. However, this recession is particularly deep, and looking back we can see that it was caused in large part by the actions of institutions and people seeking financial gain, with little regard for the consequences and wellbeing of

working people. Where do we go from here, and how should people be active and engaged in going forward?

ROBERT REICH: The working middle class – along with the jobless – need to be more politically active now than ever before. An election year is coming up, and people must be mobilized, energized, and organized to take on the regressive forces in our society who want to move us backward. Our greatest enemy is cynicism – the sense that nothing can be done, that our political efforts are fruitless. If we let cynicism take hold among us, the other side wins. They want us to give up. We must not give up the fight.



Atkin Knows Importance of Politics, Seeking Another Term on Emeryville Council

Local 21's political program is dedicated to getting members more involved in local politics and understanding the importance of electing labor-friendly leaders to office. Few members are as personally versed in this as Ruth Atkin, who has served on the Emeryville City Council since 1999 and is running for re-election this November.

Atkin, an Aging and Adult Senior Staff Assistant, manages Contra Costa County's Health Insurance Counseling and Advocacy Program, a free Medicare counseling program. Starting last January for the next 20 years, 10,000 people per day will turn 65 and age into Medicare, creating a huge need for services that inform beneficiaries and their families of their benefits and health care options.

A Local 21 member since 2009, Atkin sat on the Union's bargaining team during her chapter's first round of negotiations, and again earlier this year when the team successfully fought off imposition.

For equal rights, protections, empowerment

As a Council member and Emeryville resident, Atkin has been an ardent advocate for equal rights and worker protections. She introduced a living wage ordinance



COURTESY RUTH ATKIN

Atkin, Emeryville's Mayor in 2002, 2006, and 2010. The Council rotates who serves as Mayor.

for city employees and businesses that contract with the city, and got domestic partner benefits for city employees.

"The role of government is to protect and empower people," noted Atkin. "Having labor-friendly representatives in office can help protect worker safety, working conditions, and make things more fair and equitable."

She has also been involved in the creation of new parks, a citywide climate action plan, and improvements in ways to get around town without using a car.

If re-elected this November, Atkin is setting her sights on increasing Emeryville's family-friendly housing, parks, and open spaces, building new public facilities, and improving internal connectivity with bridges that cross railroad tracks and I-80.

Proud union member and public servant

"I deeply value my union membership and public service. I have been a public servant in some capacity since 1988 and think it is honorable. I'm privileged to serve as an elected official, and I am one of the few electeds who has been on both sides of the bargaining table," said Atkin. "I know from my role in Local 21 that there is strength in numbers. When government workers are under attack, it is essential to be organized."

Interested in supporting Atkin's campaign? Visit her blog at <http://ruthatkinincitycouncil.blogspot.com/> or email RuthAtkin2011@gmail.com to learn about ways to get involved.

around 21

Around 21 highlights Local 21 members' activities in and around the Bay Area. Send your union-related photos and captions to anjali@ifpte21.org.



BILL LEE

AEA members Corazon Pamintuan and Mellownie Salvador attend our annual South Bay BBQ.



ANJALI ASHRANI

East Bay MUD member Debra Skeaton, right, rallies with Kim Carter, Union Staff, at a "We Are One" event in July.



MARIE CHOI

Chris Candell stands with his fellow Oakland members at a Fair Budget rally.