

County Chapter Q & A with Chapter President Kelly Monge

What is the County Chapter?

The County Chapter is a division within Local 221, based on our employer, San Diego County. Local 221 has several chapters, including chapters for cities, Head Start, and schools. Local 221 is the umbrella under which all the chapters reside.

Why do we need a County Chapter?

We need a chapter because we have a common interest – we have very different jobs, but the same group, the Board of Supervisors, makes decisions on our contract and benefits. With a chapter, we have one entity specifically advocating for our needs as county employees.

What's the difference between the Chapter leadership and the Local 221 Executive Board?

Chapter Officers and our Leadership Council are the leaders for the County Chapter and we advise the Executive Board on issues affecting the county. The Local 221 Executive Board is comprised of members from across our union, some from the county and others from cities, schools, etc.

Will my dues increase?

The County Chapter has no intention of raising the dues of county members. However, our dues are also governed by the local and SEIU International.

What are the goals of the Chapter?

The main goal of the County Chapter is to bring members together to win better working conditions and a better contract. In these hard times, we've got to stay together to keep our heads above water. We've already seen the county implement layoffs and takeaways. We've got to fight for everything we have and the more united we are, the stronger we'll be.

See Q & A Continued...

Important Events for County Members

Event: County Chapter Meeting
Date: Wednesday, September 1, 2010
Time: 6:00 pm
Location: SEIU Local 221 Office*

Event: Contract Action Team (CAT) Meeting
Date: Tuesday, September 14, 2010
Time: 6:00 pm
Location: SEIU Local 221 Office*

Event: Contract Action Kickoff
Date: Saturday, September 18, 2010
Time: 9:00 am (BBQ following event)
Location: SEIU Local 221 Office*

*The SEIU Local 221 Office is located at:
4004 Kearny Mesa Road, San Diego, 92111

Hour of Power



Members reviewing the proposed bylaws at the County Chapter Bylaws Ratification Meeting.

The "Hour of Power" is how the County Chapter hopes to empower employees. The County Chapter is asking every county employee to give one hour of their time to help with the organizing effort.

County members came together to discuss and vote on the new County Chapter Bylaws.

"It was nice to be able to voice my opinion and hear other ideas and have them put into our bylaws," Steward Leah Stevers said.

The County Bylaws were formally accepted by SEIU Local 221 on June 29, 2010 at the Executive Board meeting.

Q & A Continued...

How can I get involved?

It really depends on what level of involvement you want. Some people have families and other things going on in their lives. I realize not everyone has the time to commit to be a leader. If you don't have a lot of time, I'd say come to one meeting and get informed about what's going on.

When are the meetings? Can anyone come to a meeting?

The County Chapter meetings are open to any county member. The first County Chapter meeting will take place Wednesday, September 1, 2010 at 6:00 p.m. at the SEIU Local 221 office.

Who should I contact if I have questions?

Members can contact me at countychapter@seiu221.org or contact the County Chapter Liaison Satomi Zeigler at 858-560-0151 or satomi.zeigler@seiu221.org.

Do you have any last thoughts?

I put a great deal of thought into deciding to take on the challenge of the Presidency of the County Chapter. There is no doubt that there is a lot of responsibility with this leadership position. But when it really came down to it, the main reason I got involved is because of my concerns about the upcoming contract. The usual concerns about increasing money and improving benefits are not the issue. The reality is that getting increases in either area is going to be difficult, and what could occur is a decrease in both. Another real concern is the impact on our retirement. These are tough times and they are getting tougher. We need to be realistic about our expectations. But most of all, everyone needs to recognize that we are in this together, and relying on a few to tow the line is not going to put us in a very strong position.

To contact the Chapter President, email countychapter@seiu221.org.

Union 101 Part 2

By Julayne Gath
County Member



Julayne Gath

Many of the basic rights and benefits that are sometimes taken for granted were not kindly handed to workers by employers. It took the hard work and dedication of thousands of union men and women who struggled bravely to win these rights. They did all of this by uniting for the common good. The lesson of history is that good things happen when working people unite.

Look what happened when we worked together for the good of all of us. WE put a term limit initiative on the ballot. WE walked the precincts. WE talked to the voters and WE won!!! Working families are the American team. America is not about the elected and connected. It's about us. The power of a union is us, its members. In the county, there are at least two members of the Board of Supervisors who recognize the power of a union. On Primary Election Day 2010, Ron Roberts and Bill Horn heard the message that WE delivered. Can there be a better example of the power of our membership?

Another stellar San Diego example of the power of our union occurred in 1987. San Diego County had long held that county workers were salaried employees and therefore, not entitled to the protections of the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA). WE asked only that those that make the laws respect the laws. SEIU filed suit against the county under

FLSA and won. As a result of that victory, County workers are now paid time and a half when they work overtime. Lawsuits against the county are not cheap but together WE held the county accountable. It's about working together for the common good. One employee standing alone against the county could not afford to sue the county but together our dues enforced a federal law.

Now the drum beat in the press and in the county is deafening. They would have us believe that public employees' salaries are so inflated that the economy collapsed under their weight. They would have us believe that public employees' healthcare benefits bankrupted California. They would have us believe that public employees' hard fought pensions threaten the very fabric of America. Clearly, it's on. WE are going to have to stand together and fight for quality public services. WE are going to have to take to it the streets, the places of worship, the town halls, the beaches, the voting box, and the bargaining table. However, history has taught us well. The power of a union is its members. JFK once challenged a generation to "ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country." What will you be doing for your union on election day? What will you be doing to support your bargaining team? What will you be doing to protect quality public services? WE are stronger together. WE are our union.