

NO on 75: Defeat the Governor's War on Labor

Martin J. Bennett, Executive Director of New Economy, Working Solutions and Co-Chair of the Living Wage Coalition of Sonoma County

This initiative is simply another step in a well-funded effort by corporate interests and right-wing extremists to advance their hidden agenda in California.

Gov. Schwarzenegger and business organizations have initiated a high stakes electoral battle that could fundamentally degrade California's political landscape. If passed in November, Proposition 75 would effectively silence the voice of unions representing teachers, classified employees, police officers, and firefighters in the political process.

spending dues monies for political purposes. Unions would end up putting more time into bureaucratic red tape than into their core activities.

The measure would unfairly require that public employee unions obtain annual written permission from members prior to

Prop. 75 applies only to public sector unions and imposes no such restrictions on corporations. According to the Center for Responsive Politics, business already outspends labor in national politics by a staggering 24-1 margin-without the written permission of shareholders. California voters soundly rejected a comparable initia-

tive, Proposition 226, in 1998.

The author of Proposition 75 is Lewis Uhler, a former John Birch Society official whose "hard right ideology has taken him to the fringes of American conservatism," according to the Sacramento Bee.

(Continued on page 2)

No on 74, 75 and 76: Protect Workers' Voices

Ben Boyce, Living Wage Coalition Coordinator

Allies: We need your help to resist the attempt by the Governor, his corporate backers and right-wing forces to crush the power of unions in California. The target is public sector unions, who represent nurses, teachers, firefighters, police and administrative staff. The backers of this special election know that the union coffers are drained from last year's presidential election, and they are seizing this opportunity to try to pull off a power play to fundamentally restructure the political dynamics of the state.

The Living Wage Coalition has formally endorsed a 'No' vote on propositions 74, 75 and 76. These are the measures designed to break the power of the public sector unions, which is the intent of the special election.

measure, which is being presented to the public as a protection for union member's dues, when it is in fact promoted by well-known right-wing figures that are committed to destroying the union movement.

cinct walk teams every Saturday between now and the election on November 8th.

Prop. 74 burdens the teacher's unions, and punishes them for opposing proposed education cuts by requiring a five year probationary period, rather than the current two year period (which is the national norm).

Here's how you can help:

#1) Be a Precinct Captain and walk your own precinct with a customized voter contact list provided by Alliance for a Better California (ABC). This voter list is focusing on those 'occasional' voters, who will be the determining factor in this election.

Call Roger Foote at 544-1075 and show up at the Carpenter's Hall, 1706 Corby Ave. in Santa Rosa at 9:00 am. Breakfast will be provided, and trainers will give a brief tutorial on precinct walking. The group will come back at 1:00 PM.

Prop. 76 would give the governor unchecked power over the budgetary process, guaranteeing that the minority party would have their way over the majority of the people's elected representatives.

#3) Phone Bank: Join the phone banking teams at the Carpenter's Hall Monday - Thursday from 5:30-8:00 PM. ABC will provide dinner. ■

Prop. 75 is the most pernicious of them all, a deceptive measure which would tie up the public employees unions and prevent them from having a voice in the political system. If passed, it would make the current 24/1 corporate to union political spending ratio closer to 24/0, giving the corporate sector an open field to dominate the political arena. Our union allies would be gravely harmed by this ill-intentioned

You take on a precinct by calling ABC rep Roger Foote at 544-1075 or email rfoote@sbcglobal.net. You can do the average precinct, contacting just the targeted voters, in 4-6 hours. It will make a difference.

ABC plans on maintaining the momentum from the special election to put in place a permanent operation that will help progressive issues in 2006 and again in 2008.

#2) Precinct Walk: Join the ABC Saturday precinct walks. Trainers and experienced precinct walkers will be leading pre-

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Yes on 79: Cheaper Drugs More Californians Can Count On

The big drug companies have flooded the airwaves with commercials since August to try to confuse voters about what's at stake in the debate over two competing prescription drug proposals on the Nov. 8 ballot.

But there shouldn't be any confusion about which measure will do more. Prop. 79 gives California the power to negotiate and enforce drug discounts for an estimated 8 to 10 million Californians who struggle to afford the drugs they need to stay healthy.

Prop. 78, written and backed by the pharmaceutical industry and their unprecedented \$80 million campaign, would do little to rein in high drug prices because it relies on drug companies to voluntarily lower their prices.

Prop. 79 is supported by AARP California, Consumers Union, League of Women Voters of California and over 150 other consumers, senior, health, and community groups. While these groups don't have millions to pay for ads on television, they all agree that Prop. 79 is the best choice.

Fortunately, Californians have a better choice. Prop 79 builds on the success that California has achieved for the past 15 years to reduce costs for prescription drug purchased for Medi-Cal. Since California buys \$4 billion worth of medication each year it uses that massive purchasing power to negotiate discounts of 50 % and more. If a drug company refuses to meet the asking price, the state can shift business away from that company and buy more from others that offer acceptable discounts. Over the past ten years, this negotiating strategy has saved taxpayers \$5 billion.

Prop 79 empowers California to use this same successful mechanism to negotiate discounts for Californians who must now pay out-of-pocket for prescription drugs. This includes both low and moderate income uninsured or underinsured, those with high deductible insurance plans, seniors who have gaps in their Medicare Part D drug coverage, and people with chronic conditions with high health care costs.

California has over 6 million residents who don't have any health insurance. Many live

Yes On M !!



State Senate Candidate Pat Wiggins Endorses Measure M

Yes On M, GE-Free Sonoma County
Press release, October 3rd 2005

Former 7th District Assemblywoman Patricia Wiggins of Santa Rosa has endorsed Measure M, the proposed 10-year moratorium on genetically engineered crops in Sonoma County. **"We need this initiative to protect our rich heritage of organic and sustainable farming"**, said Wiggins. "These commodified, engineered seeds are a threat to our agricultural economy. Until we develop mature regulations like those in Europe, we need to protect our industries from these irresponsible practices." ■

below the poverty level but don't qualify for Medi-Cal because they don't have any dependent children. For these seniors and other low income adults, Prop. 79's discounts could make a real difference in helping them to make ends meet. ■

No on 75 *(From page 1)*

It's no surprise that the governor recently endorsed Prop. 75. He is closely aligned with the California Chamber of Commerce and other corporate interests promoting the ballot initiative. Schwarzenegger also announced that he will run for reelection. The same business organizations backing Prop. 75 will undoubtedly be funding Schwarzenegger's reelection campaign next year.

Unions point out the hypocrisy of the governor who proclaimed during the 2003 recall, "I will go to Sacramento and clean house. I don't have to take money from anybody, I have plenty of money." Yet according to the Los Angeles Times, Schwarzenegger has raised \$39 million since January from the largest real estate, finance, entertainment, hi-tech and health care companies in the state.

In the past month alone 26 donors have contributed at least \$100,000 to his campaign and at the same time the governor was signing or vetoing hundreds of bills impacting these special interests. Recently the governor signed nine of ten bills

backed by the California Farm Bureau, and days later he was rewarded with a \$100,000 contribution from this organization which represents agribusiness and large corporate farmers.

The governor has stated, "I love teachers and nurses, but hate their unions."

It's obvious why: Public service workers and their unions are the most persistent critics of the governor's cuts to education, health care, and retirement benefits. When the governor tried to cut money to schools the teachers protested, when the governor tried to reduce hospital staffing ratios the nurses fought him, and when the governor tried to eliminate death benefits for slain police officers and firefighters killed in the line of duty, cops and firefighters protested.

Moreover, the governor has opposed the legislative agenda promoted by California labor in Sacramento to protect the living standards and labor rights of all Californians. He opposed a ballot initiative last fall requiring large employers to provide health care coverage; he also vetoed legislation to raise the minimum wage, reduce the costs of prescription drugs, and limit

the offshoring of jobs. He has cut by up to 70 percent permanent disability benefits for workers injured on the job.

Schwarzenegger recently proposed, and then withdrew, a most unpopular plan to privatize the pensions of public employees. Make no mistake: Supporters of Prop. 75 want to drastically curtail public services, eliminate unions, and reduce the wages and benefits of public employees.

This initiative is simply another step in a well-funded effort by corporate interests and right-wing extremists to advance their hidden agenda in California. By defeating Proposition 75 Californians will prevent the erosion of labor's political power and will block further cuts to education, health care and retirement security. ■

Martin J. Bennett is Executive Director of New Economy, Working Solutions and Co-Chair of the Living Wage Coalition.

Editors: Ben Boyce and Barbara Giordano
Layout: Portia Sinnott/MS+
Contributors: Martin Bennett, Ben Boyce
Barbara Giordano, Bonnie Petty & Sabrina Ross ■

Coalition Brings Accountability to Railroad Square Project

North Bay Progressive, Bonnie L. Petty, November 2005

Accountable Development. Sounds like an oxymoron, doesn't it? For Sonoma County residents who have witnessed the county's phenomenal growth over the last few decades, it seems that developers, bankers and local government officials have been accountable only to each other. Rarely has anyone been accountable to local residents for minimizing or mitigating any of the negative impacts that a project may have on the surrounding area. Usually community members are locked out of the planning process, with their only opportunity for input relegated to an all-too-brief "public comments" period occurring far too late in the process to have any effect. But a recently formed coalition of community groups wants to change all that.

Accountable Development Coalition- Changing the Dialogue

At a September 14th public forum held at SRJC, about 70 people listened as the Accountable Development Coalition began changing the dialogue on major infrastructure development in Sonoma County, specifically as it applies to the Railroad Square project in Santa Rosa. The coalition boasts representatives from over 20 labor, environmental, housing, and community based organizations attending the monthly meetings. Of those, 12 organizations form the core membership group.

The project, overseen by the SMART (Sonoma-Marin Area Rail Transit) board of directors, aims to turn its 5.5 acres of Railroad Square property into the first of 14 depots along the proposed rail transit system connecting the two counties. Much of the funding for the Railroad Square project will come from Santa Rosa's redevelopment funds.

Following several well-attended public forums, it became evident that this project could easily go the way most such projects do-with dozens of groups making their demands on what the project should-or shouldn't-include, with no one getting what they needed and everyone, subsequently, opposed to the project. Marty Bennett, Executive Director of New Economy Working Solutions, and a leader in the Accountable Development Coalition, explains, our county is "facing three major

crises: income inequality (where 36 percent of jobs do not pay self-sufficient wages); affordable housing (where fewer than 8 percent of residents can afford the median-priced home); and smart growth issues; accountable development can address all three to build a political consensus on growth issues."

The SMART board members also realize that their project requires broad support from the community in order to get both the Railroad Square project built, as well as to support passage of a needed sales tax measure in the future for the train itself. To gain the necessary public support, the Accountable Development Coalition believes the board needs to address mass transit, smart growth, and equity issues together. The coalition is proposing that the development of the first SMART train station in Santa Rosa include: prequalification for construction, local hire, living wage for SMART contractors, affordable housing, multi-modal transit-oriented design and green building standards.

To the SMART board's credit, their vision, from the beginning, included green building elements and they have embraced the concept of "transit-oriented development" or TOD, as the model for their Railroad Square project. TOD project designs focus on melding all the necessary components of an economically viable transit system with the needs of the local community by designing transit areas that serve as both connectors within the communities and as inviting public spaces for the members of those communities. Key to those designs are mixed-use structure design, bicycle/pedestrian-friendly pathways, and the creation of public-use spaces such as parks and community centers.

Using Public Money for the Public Good

In Sonoma County, and across the country, the Living Wage movement is evolving into the Accountable Development movement. Both are based on the basic principle that publicly funded projects should not contribute to the impoverishment of our communities. "It's a logical extension of the Living Wage movement," Bennett ex-



SMART Board members Bill Scott, Supervisor Mike Kerns and Mike Healy Railroad Square Forum September 14, 2005.

plains, and as concern over the growing gap between the rich and poor increases, he claims, "taxpayers can use this opportunity to shape public policy and to demand that public money be spent in a way that has measurable outcomes for the benefit of the community, such as good jobs, more affordable housing, and a cleaner, healthier environment for everyone to enjoy." As citizens, we have the power to shape the public discourse and to determine who benefits from such massive expenditures of public money.

What's Next?

The SMART board included much of the coalition's language in the initial "request for qualifications" (RFQ) that began the process of selecting possible developers for the Railroad Square project. Once the "short list" is completed, those developers will submit their proposals. The coalition members are optimistic that in the next phase-Request for Proposals (RFP) process-their remaining concerns will be addressed. "The board is clearly behind [green building design]," says Sabrina Ross of the Housing Advocacy Group, and she feels good about how the discussions have been going with regard to housing and labor issues.

But for the Accountable Development Coalition this is just the beginning. "The SMART project represents a major infrastructure investment in our community," says Bennett. "We see it as an engine; a touchstone for future projects." Is it possible to have development that is "by the people" and "for the people" of our communities? Accountable development is happening in a number of cities and the Sonoma County coalition is determined to make it happen here, too. ■
Bonnie Petty is a member of SEIU Local 707 and a delegate to the North Bay Labor Council.

Workers Rights are Human Rights

Ben Boyce, Living Wage Coalition Coordinator, Press Democrat, June 16, 2005

Right here in Sonoma County, there is a silent war going on out of view of the general public. Community supporters of labor rights have witnessed heartbreaking real-life dramas in which workers' aspirations for a living wage, decent benefits, and respect at work have been smashed by illegal, immoral tactics whose perpetrators go largely unpunished.

The SEIU UHW workers at the **Sonoma Healthcare Center** have been attempting to get a first contract after a three year struggle, only to be subjected to a vicious, systematic elimination of the union leadership.

The UFW has had to launch a national boycott against Gallo after exhausting all other remedies in an unsuccessful two year campaign to get a new contract for the Sonoma Gallo workers.

The Bush Administration National Labor Relations Board, which is generally hostile to labor rights, was compelled to levy a \$100,000 fine against WG Investment Group, owners of the **Petaluma Sheraton**, organized by UNITE HERE 2850, for blatant violations of the neutrality agreement signed with the City of Petaluma.

The healthcare workers at **Memorial Hospital** were forced to abort their recent union drive in the face of a sophisticated 'astro-turf' strategy, in which the hospital's anti-union consultants sponsored employee front groups claiming to represent the rank and file.

Empire Waste refuses to bargain in good faith with the sanitation workers represented by Operating Engineers Local 3, failing to conclude a first contract after over a year of delaying tactics, even after being directed by the Petaluma City Council to settle.

This year marks the 70th anniversary of the passage of the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA), the landmark legislation that guarantees the right of American workers to join a union, free of interference. There is little to celebrate, however, because this basic right has been essentially stripped from the American populace through a sustained attack by the corporate sector

over the last twenty-five years.

The right of workers to freedom of association, the right to organize unions and bargain collectively, is a civil right that is recognized internationally. The 1948 *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* clearly states: "Everyone has the right to form and join trade unions for the protection of his interests."

The basic human right to organize with others in defense of our economic interests flows directly from the spiritual axiom of the inherent worth and dignity of the person. Therefore we are entitled to participate in important decisions affecting our lives, such as the terms and conditions of our livelihood. These critical negotiations can only be carried out, in the real world, through collective bargaining. The vast power differential between a single individual and a large corporation means that the only practical alternatives are employer fiat or collective bargaining.

When workers attempt to organize a union in America, they routinely run into a buzz saw of threats, intimidation, and coercive tactics orchestrated by highly paid union-busting consultants. This is a pernicious, billion-dollar a year industry whose sole purpose is to deny a fundamental human right.

Human Rights Watch, an internationally respected human rights organization, released a major report in 2000 that condemned the current state of workers' rights in the U.S.: "Loophole-ridden laws, paralyzing delays, and feeble enforcement have led to a culture of impunity in many areas of U.S. labor law and practice. Legal obstacles tilt the playing field so steeply against workers' freedom of association that the United States is in violation of international human rights standards for workers."

Labor law is broken, and as a result every year the percentage of Americans who enjoy union benefits and protections decreases. To address this systemic social injustice, The Employee Free Choice Act (EFCA) has been introduced in Congress, sponsored by Senator Edward Kennedy (D-MA) and Representative George Miller (D-CA). The EFCA will restore the original intent of the NLRA by clearing away the

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thicket of legal impediments to union recognition and providing meaningful penalties for violations of labor law.

The bill has three primary components: **Democratic Majority Sign-Up** (also known as card-check), which requires the employer to recognize and bargain with the union when a majority of employees sign a union authorization.

First Contract Mediation and Arbitration, which permits either party to request mediation if agreement has not been reached in 90 days.

Stronger Penalties for Labor Law Violations, including swift injunctive relief for unlawful firings, treble back pay, and civil penalties of up to \$20,000 per violation.

Restoring the civil right of workers to organize will lead to higher living standards, a healthier economy and sustain a critical political counterweight to unchecked corporate power. ■

Upcoming Meetings

Living Wage Coalition
11/15, 12/20, 1/17

LWC - Petaluma
11/7, 12/5, 1/2

Accountable Development Coalition
11/14, 12/19, 1/16

Locations on Page 8.



Memorial Hospital Crisis Deepens

Ben Boyce, Living Wage Coalition Coordinator
North Bay Progressive, March 2005

Two previous organizing campaigns at Memorial Hospital, one in the mid-1980's and one in the late 1990's, were defeated with the help of an anti-union consultancy firm, the Burke Group, headquartered in Malibu. The Burke Group specializes in countering organizing campaigns by health care workers. According to IRS filings, the Burke Group received \$2.6 million in previous counter-organizing contracts with Catholic health systems.

Typical counter-organizing tactics include mandatory meetings during work time to show anti-union videos and distribute literature discouraging participation in organizing efforts, one-on-one meetings with employees and their supervisors to counsel against a union vote, and selective discipline of known union supporters. Labor law is rarely enforced in the U.S., even when there are clear violations of the truncated protections provided under a dysfunctional NLRB system, which has led to a proliferation of anti-union consultancy firms that have managed to steadily erode the right to organize to the point where most union drives are ultimately defeated or neutralized.

The key issues for the employees seeking union representation are empowerment in the workplace; a voice in job security, staffing, and patient care issues; and unified representation of worker's interests in maintaining wage and benefit packages.

Memorial spokeswoman Mary Borelli stated, "We don't feel that we need another union in here because we believe having a direct relationship with our workforce is better."

Steve Sedawi, SEIU UHW representative commented: "Other health care systems, including Kaiser and Catholic Health Care West, have a productive relationship with their employees' unions. Employees work with management to improve the quality of patient care. It's unfortunate that Santa Rosa Memorial resembles WalMart in their reaction to unions."

Rocio Allen, a technician at Memorial, expressed his concerns, "Patient care is my main priority, and I want to work with my co-workers as a union to improve patient care. I feel disappointed with the hospital and their reaction." ■

It is widely recognized that labor law in the U.S. is broken, and that the NLRB process is now primarily used as a vehicle to frustrate and crush union drives. We will not see Memorial as acting morally just because you hold to the letter of a defective legal regime.



Rep. Lynn Woolsey with Memorial Staff including Sebastopol City Councilperson Linda Kelly, Labor Rights Forum, June 18, 2005

Open Letter to the CEO of Memorial Hospital

Mr. George Perez,

October 13th, 2005

The Living Wage Coalition would like to thank you for meeting with Tony White and myself on September 28th. We appreciate your taking time out of your busy schedule to meet with community members who are concerned about the crisis at Memorial Hospital.

Although the tone of the meeting was positive, for the most part, there are still unresolved substantive issues that will need to be addressed if the crisis at Memorial is to be defused. Although we did agree that choosing union representation is a basic civil right, where we part ways is that you maintain that the workers are better off having a 'direct' relationship with the management, unmediated by union representation. As I expressed in the meeting, the position of the Living Wage Coalition is that, all things being equal, we support unionization as a proven route to improved wages and benefits, and as having intrinsic social value by encouraging solidarity. You do not share this vision and see your role as educating the workers about the problems and pitfalls of unions so that they can make what you see as the best choice, i.e. a union-free workplace.

What I did find disappointing about our meeting was your unwillingness to consider mutual ground rules for conducting a union election that would create a fair process for employees and a collaborative relationship with the union. Your stance seems to be that you think that you can beat the union and that you will not step back from using every tool in the Burke Group anti-union playbook. The collaborative process that has been used to conduct union campaigns at the Catholic Healthcare West system helped avoid the kind of scorched earth campaign that will only damage the reputation of Memorial Hospital and the good name of the Sisters of St. Joseph.

You have pledged to make sure that the managers under your direction follow the letter of the NLRB law. That is not the same as acting justly. It is widely recognized that labor law in the U.S. is broken and that the NLRB process is now primarily used as a vehicle to frustrate and crush union drives. We will not see you as acting morally just because you hold to the letter of a defective legal regime and use its arcane provisions as a cover for running an unfair anti-union campaign with impunity.

As I said in our meeting, the choice is yours. The employees of Memorial Hospital will ultimately choose collective representation, as the trend lines in the healthcare field play out over time. The only real question is how much of the reputational (and financial) capital of Memorial Hospital and the Sisters of St. Joseph you will expend getting to that point. We urge you to consider adopting the CHW guidelines for free and fair elections so that the community is spared a long and bitter battle that will benefit no one. ■

Ben Boyce, Living Wage Coalition Coordinator



The National Movement for the Living Wage and Accountable Development Comes to Petaluma

Talk by Marty Bennett, Saturday, November 12, 10 am - 12 pm

The League of Women Voters and the American Association of University Women are co-sponsoring a talk by Marty Bennett, instructor in history at Santa Rosa JC and Executive Director of New Economy Working Solutions (NEWS), on Saturday, November 12th, from 10 am to 12 pm in Petaluma.

Professor Bennett will discuss what is a Living Wage for Sonoma County and the particulars of the proposed Living Wage ordinance currently before the Petaluma City Council. The lecture will examine the costs and fiscal impacts of the Living Wage ordinance and how it will transform the Petaluma redevelopment process. And outline the ongoing campaign to organize low wage workers in the neighborhoods surrounding the redevelopment district, who will benefit from the ordinance.

The local measure will be set in the context of the national Living Wage and Accountable Development movements. Finally, we will propose the policy tool of the Community Impact Report as a requirement for large commercial development and big boxes, to permit a more adequate assessment of the real costs of planned developments.

The county League of Women Voters has already endorsed the Living Wage measure, so this will be an opportunity to become more deeply informed on this important public policy issue.

The AAUW-LWV joint meeting will be at the home of Sandy Benson, 14 Chrisdumar Lane, Petaluma, 763-1629, rwnatbenson@comcast.net. The address can be found just south of Skillman Lane off of Magnolia Ave. ■

Cotati City Council Considers Adopting a Jobs-Housing Linkage Program Wed. October 26, 7 pm

The *Sonoma County Workforce Housing Linkage Study*, conducted in 2002 by Economic & Planning Systems for local governments here, found that job growth outpaced housing production in Sonoma County by 50 % between 1990 and 2000. This means that only half the homes needed were built. During this same period, the median price of a home skyrocketed from approximately \$300,000 in 1990 to over \$550,000 in 2005.

In order to support healthy communities, Cotati's jobs-housing ordinance could provide commercial developers with an array of options for participating in the City's affordable housing program. Developers can choose to construct workforce housing on-site or at another location, dedicate land, pay a workforce housing linkage fee, or identify other alternatives such as providing an employer-sponsored mortgage assistance program. ■ *Sabrina Ross, Legislative Advocate and Organizer, Sonoma County Housing Advocacy Group, 707 758-4101*

Sebastopol Weighs Limits on Big Stores

Paul Payne, Press Democrat, August 21, 2005



Sebastopol is considering new rules for "big box" retail development that would require special reporting on issues such as worker pay and the availability of affordable housing before a project could be considered for approval.

The so-called community-impact report would give decision-makers a tool for reviewing a proposal's social and economic effects they typically would not have under existing regulation. While no big-box stores have come to Sebastopol yet, the city wants to have negotiating power over things like employee benefits and housing if one comes along.

"What I'm most concerned about is that in the snowball's chance of a large development coming in, we could be hit with a housing crisis," City Councilman Craig Litwin said.

Councilwoman Sarah Gurney Glade said community-impact reports will "tell us if a project will take us where we want to go."

And Councilman Sam Pierce called the

goals of the report "critically important."

If it adopts the regulation, Sebastopol would join a short list of cities nationwide that have taken the novel approach, said Marty Bennett, a Santa Rosa Junior College instructor and chairman of the research and education group New Economy, Working Solutions, which is pushing for the reporting.

Studies show wages in the North Bay are not keeping pace with housing and other costs, and local government needs to better scrutinize commercial construction, Bennett said. More than 60 percent of all new jobs in the region over the next three years will pay less than \$12 an hour, creating a large class of people living at or near the poverty line, he said. "It's imperative we all join together regionally to solve this problem," Bennett said.

Like environmental impact reports, community-impact reports would be paid for by developers. They would be required for projects of a certain

size, generally over 30,000 square feet, and could be triggered in proposals involving any type of city subsidy. In addition to jobs and housing, the report could analyze effects on "town character" and tax revenue. In most cases, public hearings would be held to get citizen input. "It's information a policy-maker needs," Bennett said. ■

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The Coalition is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit; Contributions are tax deductible to the full extent allowable by law.

Homecare Providers Capture Their Dollar

Barbara Giordano, Living Wage Coalition Member



The long struggle of the Sonoma County IHSS (In-Home Support Services) homecare workers to capture their withheld dollar culminated in victory on October 14th.

Peter Tiernan of SEIU Local 707 reports that the union's bargaining team and County representatives reached agreement on the matter of wages for homecare providers. The IHSS workers petitioned months ago to have the additional dollar raise that had been won by bargaining between the legislature and the Governor last year. A county chief reportedly embargoed the dollar in a contingency fund.

The union and the County came to terms, and the workers will go up to \$10.00 an hour as of December 1st, 2005, followed by the initially promised \$10.50 an hour beginning June 1st, 2006. The bargaining

team has expressed its satisfaction with this offer, however modest; it remains for the homecare providers to ratify the agreement.

Mr. Tiernan observed that, apart from Supervisor Paul Kelly, all the county supervisors have shown themselves to be supportive of the providers' needs.

The Living Wage Coalition commends the wise actions of the responsible supervisors. That message should be a notable part of the upcoming festivity on November 14 at 10:30 am at 2280 Northpoint Parkway. This will be the third annual Recognition Reception for Homecare Providers. The featured speaker will be Assemblywoman Noreen Evans and the theme will be mutual congratulations. ■

Victory for Labor Rights Petaluma Council Awards Trash Contract to Labor-Friendly Greenwaste Inc.

Ben Boyce, Living Wage Coalition
North Bay Progressive October 2005

The City of Petaluma has finally signed a contract for municipal sanitation services with San Jose based Greenwaste Inc., after a tumultuous three year bidding process. The previous contractor, Empire Waste Management, had been working on a six months extension after the initial ten year contract had expired last spring. Empire Waste's tenure had been marked by a bitter and protracted anti-union campaign, designed to keep the Operating Engineers Local 3 from organizing the Sonoma County unit.

The Operating Engineers had received NLRB recognition after a contentious organizing drive, which they claim was fraught with constant intimidation, harassment and firing of union supporters. Ironically, the intransigence of the managers of Empire Waste led to the loss of their worker's jobs, as the city officials came to the conclusion that Empire Waste was unable to provide a stable labor situation, and eliminated them from the bidding. Greenwaste has stated their willingness to negotiate with the Operating engineers Local 3. Union representative Greg Gunheim stated that "Greenwaste has a much more receptive attitude towards working with the union, and we hope to have a constructive relationship going forward." ■

Farm Workers and Supporters Toast New UFW Gallo Contract, September 14, 2005

Hundreds of vineyard workers and supporters joined United Farm Workers President Arturo Rodriguez on the steps of San Francisco City Hall, three months to the day after the boycott of Gallo wine was kicked off at the very same location.

This time they poured wine from Gallo of Sonoma bottles and toasted a new UFW contract with the winemaker that was overwhelmingly ratified by vineyard workers.

Unionized waiters, members of Unite-Here Local 2, served the wine.

Many of the same people gathered on June 14, 2005 to launch the UFW's first major nationwide boycott in more than 20 years. The company, the leading U.S. wine exporter, is one of the world's biggest wine producers. The new agreement covers all 310 Gallo farm workers in Sonoma County. ■



Living Wage Coalition of Sonoma County

Please consider becoming a member today. Use the enclosed envelope or visit www.livingwagesonoma.org

95402
Santa Rosa, CA
PO Box 427

The Sonoma Healthcare Center: The Real Story

Ben Boyce, Living Wage Coalition Coordinator, The Sonoma Sun, April 14th 2005

There is a gross injustice being perpetrated here in the valley and few residents know about it. The Ensign Corporation, who bought the Sonoma Healthcare Center (SHC) a few years ago, has been waging a dirty war against their primarily Latino and Filipino workforce, who dared to demand a voice in their workplace by voting to join a union.

Over the course of the last 2 1/2 years, a number of workers have paid a heavy price for trying to assert the right of free association. The managers of the SHC manufactured false charges against several key union leaders following a decisive vote to join SEIU UHW, leading to their dismissal on trumped up personnel issues.

Now perhaps you can understand why the workers and their union representatives are skeptical about Ensign's claim that the company had no part in the Department of Health (DHS) investigations now underway. These DHS inquiries don't occur spontaneously. Someone has to file the charges, and it

is surely not an accident that three of the five members on the worker bargaining committee are now facing potentially career ending DHS investigations, as Ensign claims all the while to be bargaining in good faith. No doubt, with clever attorneys like Mr. Stapley at their disposal, they have covered their tracks so that they can claim plausible deniability.

Now that Ensign has been forced to sit down at the bargaining table, they are trying to run out the clock, as they pursue the ugly tactic of taking out the union leadership, until they can get to August of this year, when they can run a decertification campaign on the remaining workers, who the management intends will then be sufficiently intimidated to give up their hope for a better life.

Ensign is a rogue corporation whose business practices were condemned in a City Council resolution two years ago. They should be called to account, and compelled to bargain in good faith. ■

LWC Meetings

General Meeting

Third Tuesday of every month
6:30 - 8 pm, SEIU Local 707
600 B St. at 10th St., Santa Rosa

Petaluma Chapter

First Wednesday of the month
7- 9 pm, Bank of the West Building
20 Petaluma Blvd., Petaluma

Accountable Development Coalition

Third Monday of the month
6:30 - 8 pm, SEIU Local 707
600 B St. at 10th St., Santa Rosa
sabrina.ross@gmail.com

LWC: 707 545-7349 x 220
NEWS: 707 545-7349 x 221