

MEMBERS BUILD SUPPORT FOR SECURE CHOICE

Working to offer retirement dignity and security for millions

Local 1000 members are volunteering to be part of a campaign to build support for retirement security, including California's Secure Choice program, which would offer options to more than six million California workers whose employers do not offer a retirement plan.

At a July 1 training session, more than 20 member activists learned about the retirement crisis and best practices for communicating about these issues with fellow state employees and community members.

"We need to explain to as many people as possible how our economy and income inequality are connected to the inability of millions of workers to save for retirement," said Theresa Taylor, a Franchise Tax Board employee and a member of Local 1000's Retirement Security Committee. "Even though, as Local 1000 members, we have a secure retirement through CalPERS, all of us have friends and family who have little or no retirement savings. "I want to make sure the stability and security we've worked so hard to earn will be there for our families when we need it most."

Taylor, who is a candidate for a seat on the CalPERS Board of Administration, has received Local 1000's endorsement. In addition to keeping CalPERS strong and secure, Taylor strongly supports expanding the opportunities for workers in the private sector, including the Secure Choice program.

Secure Choice, which was created in 2012 by SB 1234, is designed to provide safe and secure retirement savings options for the millions of California workers who do not have a pension or 401(k) through their jobs. The California Secure Choice Retirement Savings Investment Board is in the early stages of designing a system to implement Secure Choice.

Real-life retirement challenges

Member volunteer Charlene Leathers-Sibblis, an Employment Development Department employee from Stockton, shared how her husband and her older brother have each found themselves nearing retirement



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— Theresa Taylor
Franchise Tax Board and CalPERS candidate.

age after a lifetime of work, with little or no savings, an all-too-common illustration of the challenges that face middle-class working families.

"Two years ago my brother became seriously ill at a time when he had no medical insurance," Leathers-Sibblis said. "It broke my heart to learn that whatever money he had set aside went to pay medical bills. He turns 62 in September. He has no retirement, no savings and a limited ability to work.

"My husband is a chef who has spent his life working in restaurants and catering services and has never worked for an employer who offered a retirement plan," said Leathers-Sibblis. "He is currently self-employed and owns a deli but his retirement does not look good."

"We need to make it easy and safe for people to save money for retirement, one paycheck at a time, throughout their working life."



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— Charlene Leathers-Sibblis
Employment Development Department

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UNION UPDATE

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FIGHTING FOR A DIVERSE STATE WORKFORCE

Local 1000 presses legislature for flexibility in transfers to improve upward mobility and diversity

The state of California needs to improve enforcement of anti-discrimination laws, remove bureaucratic roadblocks that slow the upward mobility of workers and make other changes to help diversify the state's workforce, according to testimony at a legislative hearing from Local 1000 and the allied State Employees Civil Rights Coalition.

"California has the strongest anti-discrimination laws in the nation ... yet, our laws are only as strong as their implementation," said Local 1000 President Yvonne R. Walker. "California has plenty of room for improvement when it comes to implementing those laws and supporting a diverse workforce."

President Walker testified July 2 at a special joint legislative hearing titled "Examining the State's Commitment to Equal Employment Opportunity and Diversity in the State Civil Service." It was a joint hearing of the Senate Public Employment and Retirement Committee, and the Assembly Public Employees, Retirement and Social Security Committee.

Walker joined Caroline Cabias and Tyrone Netters of the State Employee Civil Rights Coalition to give a worker's perspective on issues relating to anti-discrimination, encouraging workplace diversity and upward mobility of historically underrepresented minorities.

Other testimony focused on a recent state Senate report finding that budget cuts and poor leadership hampered the Department of Fair Employment and Housing in its mission to investigate discrimination claims.

Promoting equal opportunity

Walker and other speakers highlighted the state's failure to effectively comply with AB 124, a 2006 law designed to promote diversity in the state civil service. The law requires the state to report on the diversity of its 200,000-member workforce, mandates that departments create and implement upward mobility programs, and requires departments to develop and maintain equal employment opportunity programs.

"These reports have been produced inconsistently. In order to get a sense of the diversity of civil service workforce, we must insist that these reports be delivered on time," Walker said. "Departments must be held accountable on the issue of equal opportunity."

President Walker also pointed out that CalHR's new, stricter interpretation of State Personnel Board Rule 250, which governs transfers, has prevented state employees, particularly underrepresented minorities, from making lateral transfers to advance their careers.

The hearing was jointly chaired by Senator Norma Torres (D-Pomona) and Assemblymember Rob Bonta (D-Alameda).

"SEIU and the employee civil rights coalition play an important role in helping California retain a diverse and efficient workforce that reflects the diverse state that we serve," Bonta said.

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SEIU Local 1000 President, Yvonne R. Walker

