

November 2009

The Specialist Returns for Unit 11 Members

Our members are the eyes and ears of the union. But an organization can only be as strong as it's members, so it is essential to have a strong bargaining unit.

I am very excited about the resurrection of the Specialist newsletter after an absence of several years.

We are a varied group that consists of many classifications in the engineering and scientific fields. We have members working in Caltrans, Fish and Game, Food and Agriculture. This publication will highlight the work being done by the Engineering and Scientific Technicians, SEIU Local 1000, Unit 11.

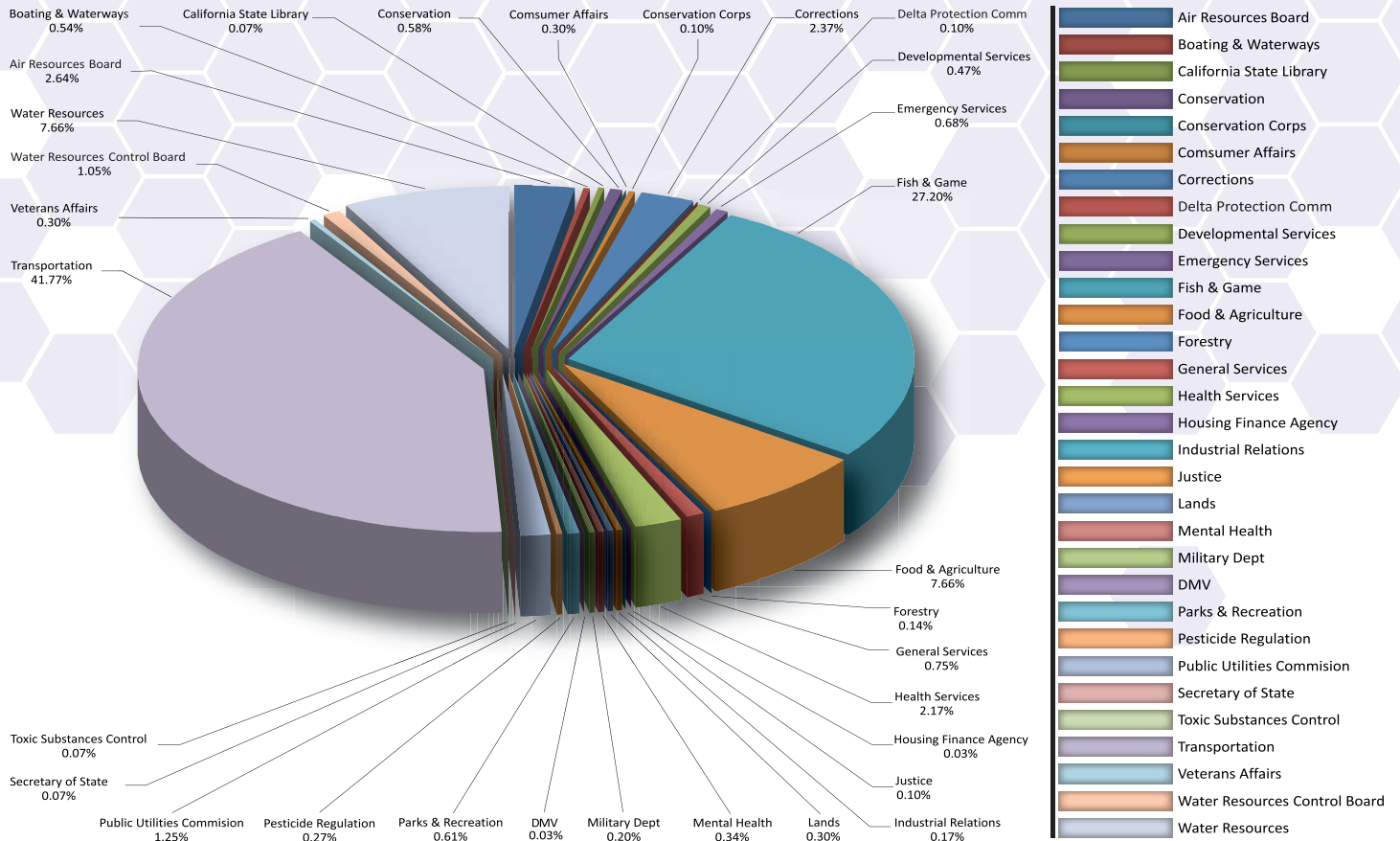
In our unit we are faced with many issues concerning our jobs. Contracting out of jobs, possible layoffs, loss of Unit 11 jobs to other bargaining units, just to name a few. The Unit 11 bargaining team is committed to making sure that your issues are well represented at both the bargaining table and within your department and/or worksite.

The best way for us to serve you is by your communication to us and a commitment by you to help us to help you. Please be involved in your union and help to make SEIU Local 1000 the strongest state employee union in California.



James "Brad" Willis
Fish and Wildlife Technician
Mojave River State Fish Hatchery
Chair - Local 1000, Bargaining Unit 11

Bargaining Unit 11 at a Glance



Members working to stop A&E Outsourcing

Unit 11 members are taking on the state, demanding a cost analysis between state employees and private firms before the award of an outsourced architectural and engineering contract. The method used now is runaway spending with contracts going to the firms who are at the top of the major political donor list.

"If we can achieve the transparency in outsourcing as in Mike Eng's bill, AB 756, the public could see exactly where and how their hard earned tax dollars are spent. The public has a right to know if they are getting quality services for their money. If legislators realize the enormous cost, and the public puts pressure on them, changes will be made," said Kevin Hopkins, an MREA Specialist in Valencia. "Right now, there's no system of checks and balances. The Governors' recent veto of this bill shows he has a lot to hide from the taxpayers."



"I didn't see the impact at first," Hopkins said. "But then I found the state was continuing awarding contracts while the state was in an economic crisis. There have been \$1 billion in A & E contracts awarded since June 2008. Paying contractors all this money while we're getting furloughed three days a month—it's not right."

Hopkins says contractors brought in under Prop. 35 are doing the same work as our members at double and triple the cost. But contractors only go so far due to their lack of experience and knowledge required for state and federally funded projects. That means our members are brought in to train consultants to perform our job functions.

Local 1000 is currently challenging a \$40 million dollar private vendor contract where only 10 percent of the agreement is for engineering services. Prop. 35 is only valid if the entire contract is for architectural and engineering services.

"It's hard to challenge a straight Prop. 35 contract," said George Cornell, an MREA Specialist in Sacramento. "But these types of contracts impact so many departments."

Cornell says Caltrans, the Department of Water Resources, the Air Resources Board and the Department of General Services all feel the effects of the A&E contracts.

"Right now, there's no system of checks and balances."

-Kevin Hopkins, MREA Specialist

In 2000, voters approved Proposition 35. It allowed the state to choose where contracts go and opened the door for private entities to bid on architectural and engineering services without regard to existing legal restrictions applying to the procurement of services.

This is essentially pitting public engineers against private engineers, and the results have been staggering.

Documents compiled by Hopkins indicate more than \$3 million in government waste during a five-year period. That is just in his work unit. He believes many departments are suffering similar or even greater losses as a result of outsourcing state functions to the private sector.

"It's hard to challenge a straight Prop. 35 contract."

-George Cornell, MREA Specialist

Hopkins hopes a victory will build a strong foundation for members to continue the fight.

"We're at square one in getting the state to look at the real issues on these contracts," he said.

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**Have any ideas for
The Specialist?**

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Unit 11 questions
answered?**

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THE SPECIALIST

BARGAINING UNIT 11: ENGINEERING & SCIENTIFIC TECHNICIANS

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The newsletter for Local 1000 Unit 11 Members

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Unit 11 members working to limit spread of H1N1

The Center for Disease Control indicates almost all of the influenza viruses currently identified are the 2009 H1N1, also known as the Swine Flu.

Which has Ray Sante up to his elbows in boxes. But it's all part of his job.

"It's been pretty hectic," Sante said. "We started out very mild and eventually it grew. Specimens have been coming in at times at a rate of 300 a day."

Ray is a lab technician at the state Virus Rickettsial Lab in Richmond.

Inside the lab are hundreds of specimens from all over the state, coming from people who may have caught the Swine Flu. They



At the height of the Swine Flu scare, hundreds of samples were arriving daily at the Viral Rickettsial Lab in Richmond.

end up in Ray's hands. He's the first step in protecting the public from what we already know about H1N1, and what we may learn down the road.

"We think this hasn't peaked yet," Sante said.

Which is the greatest fear for technicians in the state

lab. Sante believes the H1N1 has the potential to become as big at the Spanish Flu pandemic of 1918, which led to the death of millions of people worldwide.

"The Spanish Flu first came in very mild at the beginning of that year, which is what we have right now with H1N1," Sante said. "And then it became very severe during the flu season and caused many of the deaths at the time."

Ray says the Swine Flu rush has died down, but only slightly. Specimens continue to come in averaging about 100 each day. But he and everybody else in the lab knows this is only the beginning, especially with the new flu season kicking off this month.

"It unfortunately never left," he said. "Now we're waiting for a peak again."

Lab technicians at the Virus lab continue to ship out Swine Flu testing kits to doctors and clinics across the state. It may be awhile before the rush of testing kits backs down.

And as many specimens as Ray handles, his wife has one edict.

"Don't bring your work home with you," she said.

But for a clinic that's handled some of the world's most deadly diseases, Sante says employees continue to brace for the worst.