

*Please forward widely to SEIU members, locals, labor and community email lists, blogs, et cetera.*

# Open Letter to SEIU Convention Delegates

*By SEIU Member Activists for Reform Today (SMART)*

Brothers and Sisters,

If you think SEIU is doing well, you do not need to read any further. If you think the past decade or so has seen SEIU looking more and more like "Serving Employers Instead of Us" then we need to talk.

With the global rise of workers during the past year, in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Syria, Russia, India, China, Greece, Spain, Britain, Wisconsin...what is SEIU doing? The answer is pretty much the same failed strategies and tactics that have produced a sharp decline in the percentage of unionized workers in the USA, from the peak levels of about 35 percent in the 1950s to the current weakness of less than 12 percent.

In the business world, CEOs and leaders who are responsible for failure are not rewarded with continued employment. Why is it that unions seem to endlessly keep the same failed leaders, election after election?

Did you know that other unions, for example, the Teamsters, are actually more democratic and more member-controlled than SEIU? The membership of the Teamsters directly elects their international president and officers. SEIU does not. **We need to change this.**

Did you know the 2008 SEIU Convention voted to impose a FINE upon all SEIU local unions which fail to collect a set amount of VOLUNTARY political fund contributions ("COPE" funds)? **This is obscene and possibly illegal and we need to repeal it.**

Did you know that about HALF of all our union dues payments go to the International Union office in Washington, D.C.? Only about half of our dues stay at our local to pay for our staff at our union hall, and all the day-in-and-day-out expenses of representation for us. The last 3 Conventions have each voted to give MORE of our union dues to the International Union. **This is wrong and we need to reverse the trend.**

Did you know our current SEIU constitution allows the international president to negotiate contracts with employers, WITHOUT the involvement or consent of the affected union members? **This is anti-union and must be stopped.**

Did you know the SEIU constitution allows the international president to fire all the elected leaders of any local union and place it under trusteeship not only for the expected reason of financial malfeasance? That's right. A local can be placed under trusteeship for frivolous reasons

and trumped up charges, for expressing views that are contrary to the views of the international president! We saw this in 2009 when United Healthcare Workers – West was put into trusteeship. This type of trusteeship is a travesty and an insult to the concept of a union as a tool for the expression of the views and needs of its MEMBERS. **We have to change this.**

Did you know SEIU Convention delegates cannot introduce any resolutions from the floor of the convention unless there is "unanimous consent" of all the delegates to allow a new resolution to be discussed? **This is grossly undemocratic and we need to change it.**

Did you know the only other way ordinary members of our union can get a resolution considered at our Convention is if a local union endorses the resolution (or proposed amendment) and submits it to the international union? **Did you know the deadline for that, for the 2012 Convention, was April 30, 2012?**

What are we going to do about it?

SMART supports a broad range of democratic reforms for SEIU. These are posted at our website at <http://reformseiu.com/>. If you can get your local to support any of these proposals, we urge you to do so. There is simply no other way that delegates will be ALLOWED to discuss any of these ideas as regular Convention business, and with any possibility of voting up or down.

Formed in 2008, SMART is a caucus working to build a permanent, militant, democratic reform movement within our union and beyond. We know it takes years of organizing to be successful. We have no illusions about how much we can accomplish in 2012. We know the Convention is one of the best opportunities we all have to network, to organize, to join together with members of similar views. We know SEIU is the second largest union in the US, and that it ain't going away and that it could be a much better vehicle for our collective goals, but only if we fight to make the changes that are necessary. If you agree, please contact SMART at [ReformSEIU@googlegroups.com](mailto:ReformSEIU@googlegroups.com) and let's talk.

Yours, for a Union that Works!  
SMART

For more about the Convention, here are links to the Program Schedule for the 2012 International Convention along with the PDF Convention Call flyer:

Program Schedule:

<http://www.seiu.org/a/convention/>

Convention Call (pdf)

<http://www.seiu.org/Covention%20Call%20Delgates%20Final%20021412.pdf>