

## AFSCME Confronts New SCOTUS Threat at Leadership Summit

Council 36 convened a day-long Local Leadership Summit on June 10 in San Pedro, to highlight effective power-building strategies in the face of a major new United States Supreme Court threat to unions. This threat, **Janus v. AFSCME**, could overturn the landmark case, **Abood v. Detroit Board of Education**, which since the 1970s has required Agency Fee Payers (bargaining unit members who opt out of becoming full union members) to pay their fair share for representation that public employee unions are required to provide them.

Most experts expect *Janus v. AFSCME* to be decided in 2018 and predict that *Abood* will be overturned by the predominantly conservative justices on the Supreme Court. Unions will be severely weakened in their capacity to protect their members, and workers will feel the impact in diminished political power.

As bleak as things are, *AFSCME never quits* – which was the lesson of the Summit: Prepare properly and keep organizing for power and we will



From left: Tim DelCambre, Diana Corral, Rodney Fowler, Elissa McBride and Vivian Yoshioka

overcome the severest blows.

Summit speakers included the new **Secretary-Treasurer of AFSCME's International Union, Elissa McBride**, who led a panel discussion on membership organizing victories with Local Leaders **Diana Corral (Local 2076/OC Eligibility Workers)**, **Rodney Fowler (Local 127/City of San Diego)**, **Timothy DelCambre (Local 3634/MTA Supervisors)** and **Vivian Yoshioka (Local 575/Superior Court**

**Clerks)**.

In addition, **Danny Homan, President of Council 61 in Iowa** talked about the challenges of staying afloat in a "right to work" state, in which one-third of Council 61 voted for Trump and labor laws are being aggressively dismantled.

**AFSCME Deputy Legal Counsel Teague Paterson** flew in from Washington, DC, to advise on specific actions Locals should be taking now.

## Demanding What They Deserve: Sanitation Districts Employees



AFSCME members picket for a fair contract shortly after unionizing.

**H**ot on the heels of their election to join AFSCME, several hundred environmental scientists, civil engineers, energy recovery workers, supervisors and professionals employed by the **Los Angeles County Sanitation Districts** staged a protest outside their employer's Whittier headquarters recently. Marching in broad circles and holding signs, their shouts and chants reverberated through the administrative building.

Contract negotiations have stalled over a Management proposal to reduce the employees' take-home pay by

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## LAUSD's Birmingham High Workers Vote to Unionize

**A** group of more than 100 employees at **Birmingham Community Charter High School**, one of the largest Los Angeles Unified School District schools in the San Fernando Valley with 3,300 students, has voted to unionize with AFSCME. Previously unrepresented, this diverse employee unit of "classified" staff – campus groundskeepers, school lifeguards and nurses, security officers, custodians, special education paraprofessionals and others – felt increasingly vulnerable after Birmingham had converted to an independent charter school several years ago.

The teachers had remained unionized with UTLA through Birmingham's conversion, but the other employees had not – and they wanted to do something about it. Determined to protect their jobs and livelihoods, they got together. They saw the writing on the wall clearer than ever when some of the custodial work was suddenly outsourced. At the same time, a new senior administrator position was being created, at a six-figure salary.

"We took a risk almost 8 years ago to stay on with a

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## Museum of Tolerance Workers Join AFSCME

A unit of about 40 formerly unrepresented employees at the nonprofit **Museum of Tolerance**, a cultural icon on the Westside of Los Angeles whose curriculum teaches social justice, righteous resistance and lessons from the Holocaust, have voted in a decisive majority to join Council 36 affiliate, **AFSCME Local 800**.

The tour guides, Youth Education Project Assistants, ticket counter cashiers, bookstore and gift store employees and others are proud of the museum's underlying mission. But they have also long felt a "disconnect" when it came to Management's treatment of its

own frontline workforce – many of whom have college degrees and previous work experience but are paid the minimum wage.

Another concern came in January, when the museum's founder and CEO, **Rabbi Marvin Hier**, delivered a benediction at Trump's presidential inauguration. Some workers felt the CEO, who has made additional appearances with Trump since, was tacitly supporting someone who had campaigned on a platform of hatred – thereby undermining the mission of the museum.

"The election results are an exciting validation of our

organizing efforts," said **Jossi Cha**, a museum tour guide who assisted in the AFSCME affiliation campaign.

"We are very proud to have done what the Museum of Tolerance teaches people every day: To stand up for what is right!"



Jocelyn "Jossi" Cha helped to organize her co-workers at the Museum of Tolerance

## AFSCME Celebrates June 7 Election Winners

LA's Next Member of Congress is AFSCME Brother Jimmy Gomez. **State Assemblyman Jimmy Gomez** won the 34th Congressional District seat, in a hotly contested race to represent a largely Latino district, which stretches from downtown Los Angeles to Boyle Heights and incorporates Highland Park, Eagle Rock and Koreatown. Gomez was a staff representative at AFSCME in years past and has been a soldier fighting on behalf of working families in public office. Council 36 provided financial support to reelect Gomez, as well as boots on the ground to walk precincts and canvass voters door to door.

In local races, additionally, Council 36's two Compton Locals won an important political victory with the reelection of AFSCME-endorsed **Mayoral incumbent, Aja Brown**, who beat her opponent, former Mayor Omar Bradley. In addition, Tana McCoy, a candidate for City Council, was elected with AFSCME's support. A third AFSCME-supported candidate, incumbent **Treasurer Douglas Sanders** was also reelected. **AFSCME Locals 2325 (Compton**



Aja Brown



Jimmy Gomez

**Management Employees) and 3947 (Compton Employees)** phone banked and walked precincts for their slate. Local 2325 also funded a direct mail campaign.

## LAUSD's Birmingham Workers Unionize

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school that converted to a charter, and it slowly became something that we hadn't signed on for," **Roberto Izarraras**, one of the organizers of the unionization effort, said. "Many of our jobs were at risk of being outsourced to agencies... We sought to put an end to this unfair treatment and did something about it."

In an overwhelming majority, the employees voted to join a Union. They feel empowered for the first time in years: "We searched high and low" for the right union match," Izarraras said. "In the end, joining AFSCME was the right move for us."



From left to right: Among Birmingham's union organizers: Oscar Melgar, Roberto Izarraras and Manuel Barrientos

## Demanding What They Deserve: Sanitation Districts Employees

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7% – despite the fact that Management freely admits the Districts' budget is in the black.

Management is euphemistically calling the pay cut a "soft landing" for the employees. The employees are not buying it. Management negotiators have "sliced and diced" the pay cut into a complex pension and COLA formula, apparently to disguise its net effect, they say. They are committed to hold the line for a fair contract.

Every year, the Districts win public accolades for the quality services that the agency provides to taxpayers. Proposing this 7% pay cut, the employees say, is no way for the Districts to show appreciation for their instrumental role in delivering those services. More job actions may be planned to reinforce this point to Management.