Just six months ago, Local 21 was in the process of bargaining for more than 70% of our members from various jurisdictions at one time. And although the wage settlement numbers (4% in CCC; San Jose and San Francisco in the 3’s) indicate that we’re doing better on the economic front, it’s not getting easier for unions.

And with Supreme Court decision Harris V Quinn in late June—which struck a blow, though not a serious one—to the movement—it’s clear that we need to continue to rise to the challenge and the pressures that we face in today’s political environment.

It’s been a good bargaining season for Local 21, and San Francisco and San Jose are two examples.

Following weeks of negotiations and five days of formal arbitration in April and early May, a compromise agreement was reached with CCSF. The salary increase package calls for three raises over the next three years that will total from 8.25% to 9.25%, with the exact amount within the range to be determined by the consumer price index in the third year.

From the South Bay to Hayward...

**A season of victories for Local 21 members**

(Continued on Page 8)
Last month, in the Supreme Court decision *Harris v Quinn*, labor dodged a bullet, avoiding the loss of fair-share fees by the narrowest of margins – in the form of one elderly, black-robed justice. And the loss of fair-share fees would, at the least, have produced serious complications for public employee unions, which currently represent the most appreciable sign of life in the labor movement.

If, like most Americans, you espouse the principles of freedom, opportunity, and equality resting on the bedrock of a large, strong, and prosperous middle class, the time has come to put your money where your mouth is.

What do we mean by this? By way of explanation, consider the unfortunate Citizens United ruling a few years ago, which reiterated that “in politics, money is speech.” Currently, the only remaining significant and consistent financial support for preserving the middle class and defending the interests of working people has come from organized labor. By paying union dues and fair-share fees, Americans have helped preserve some measure of economic fairness and equity, and, by extension, our democracy.

However, *Harris v Quinn* helped reveal the tenuousness of our current situation. Labor is currently weakened to the point that the loss of the vote of one elderly justice could endanger the whole system. We need to speak out while we still can in support of the only remaining substantial defender of the middle class and the American way of life. And, in politics, if money is speech, then we need to put our money where our mouth is.

We can do this by contributing to our union PACs; by contributing to pro-union, pro-middle class candidates; and by supporting important pro-Democratic organizations (from the ACLU, to Move On, to the NAACP, to NARAL, etc., choose your flavor), which also help oppose the erosion of our democracy and the undermining of our rights.

The point is, we need to put our money where our mouth is, and we need to do it now, because, if we wait too much longer to support and strengthen pro-Democratic forces and organizations, there may not be anything left to support.
On July 1, longtime Local 21 Field Services Director Bob Britton retired after 16 years of service to the local (along with many more years working in the labor movement). Before he left, Bob took some time to answer the following questions and offered some insight on what makes our membership unique, as well as his take on the future of unions in general.

TWENTY-ONE: Many people working in the labor movement take various paths in their journey to get there. What path led you to your calling?

BB: I had always been interested in unions. In high school I wrote an article for my father’s Teamster newsletter on so-called “right to work” laws. My first union was a Teamster Local when I took a part-time job in high school loading milk trucks. My first full time job was at Stanford, where I joined the fledgling United Stanford Employees. We petitioned for recognition, collective bargaining and won an NLRB election, becoming SEIU Local 680. I was active as a Steward, Chief Steward, Executive Committee member and eventually President of the Local.

While we were interviewing for a new Executive Director, I ran the union during the day and worked nights at Stanford. I knew I wanted to do union work full-time professionally, and I asked anyone who would listen, “How do I get there?” I represented members who had been fired and successfully won their reinstatement. I learned to do my own arbitrations. I led a safety walkout of my co-workers and successfully helped present our case at an evidentiary hearing at the Office of the Labor Commissioner. As President of the Local, I chaired the negotiating team and learned a bit of collective bargaining. I participated in two strikes.

That was all valuable experience and gave me “street cred” which led to my first union representative job at SEIU Local 715.

What are some key memories you take with you as you retire?

While representing workers at the City of Palo Alto, I led one of the first pay equity campaigns in the country for “comparable worth,” negotiating huge pay equity raises for predominately female classifications. At that time, advanced degree jobs such as Librarian were paid less than predominately male jobs requiring only a driver’s license. That has always been a mark of pride for my career.

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Another key memory happened after I was arrested for passing out union literature to members in Superior Court in San Jose, KCBS Radio interviewed me and asked, “Why did the Deputy Sheriff strip search you and inspect your anal cavity?” I had anticipated the question and deadpanned, “I guess they were looking for more leaflets.” I’m not always successful, but I try to interject humor into union work.

What makes the membership of Local 21 unique?
As we always say Local 21 members are smart and highly educated, but in the past 16 years working here, I have noted again and again that our members “get it.” They realize their middle class status is threatened; that income disparity is growing deeper every year; and that only through collective action and political involvement is there a chance to take back a “piece of the pie” for the 99%.

While other unions are struggling (and public sector unions are now the hardest hit), Local 21 is seeing greater success than ever. In my 16 years with Local 21, we have continued to grow the membership and improve on our work. We now enjoy services the local could only dream of when I came to work here. We have our own Research Department, Communications Specialist, Political Director, Legal Assistant and more. We’ve managed to at least tame the negative press and create our own press. Our videos in Contra Costa County, Oakland, and San Francisco spotlight our members’ work and their struggles. They show our members as part of the community, not separate from it.

What advice would you give those who are considering pursuing a career with a union?
Expect hard work, long hours and tremendous satisfaction.

If you could make some predictions about unions in this country, or the labor movement in general, what would they be?
While the labor movement has been under attack from the political right, locally we have seen some of the harshest attacks coming from politicians who call themselves Democrats—such as Mayor Reed in San Jose and the current Hayward City Council. What those Democrats forget is that it’s the unions that elected them. It’s the unions that have the people power. If they attack us, we should replace them, and we have the power to do it.

I don’t think anyone can predict the future, but income disparity in the United States has reached record levels. Our country ranks 43rd worldwide in terms of income equality. The African nation of Cameroon has less income disparity than the U.S. This cannot last. The political right uses the bugaboo word “socialist” when describing unions, but really we are part the market economy. Such income disparity as we see today, in which even professionals struggle to remain in the middle class, cannot last. I predict that unions across the board will see resurgence as workers from all sectors of the economy find that only by coming together will they have leverage to stop our country’s decline to that of a third world economy.

(Continued on next page)
Bob Britton  (Continued from Page 4)

Your community and your faith are important to you. How has your passion outside the work benefitted your career?

One of the tenets of my faith is the worth and dignity of each human being. All people have an equal claim to life, liberty and justice. It’s by coming together that we make good on that claim. It was Frederick Douglas, who wrote:

*The limits of tyrants are prescribed by the endurance of those whom they oppress. Power concedes nothing without a demand; it never did and it never will.*

When the struggle seems unwinnable, I remember that it was Martin Luther King, Jr. when quoting the theologian, Theodore Parker, who said:

*The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice.*

And lastly, any big plans for your retirement you’d like to share?

I’d like to sleep past 5 am.

The Lost Edge of San Jose

In late June, Local 21’s South Bay Office premiered its first video, “Lost Edge: Restoring San Jose’s Competitive Advantage” to great success. Members Andre Morrow, Cindy Rebhan, John Mukhar and Maribel Aguilar share their stories and detail the challenges they and their coworkers face as the need for their services grows. Click below to view this moving video.

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**LEGISLATIVE WATCH**

By SHANE A. GUSMAN

Broad & Gusman LLP

The Legislature is enjoying its now annual summer recess thanks to Prop 25 and a majority vote budget. Gone are the days of holdout minority party votes and long, hot summer months with no budget. This year’s fiscal plan was adopted on time and even restored some of the cuts from years past. The courts got a little more money, public transit received a boost in funding from new cap and trade rules, and local governments got an increase for things like street repair, housing, and law enforcement.

Pensions remain a hot topic with anti-public employee legislators, though nothing of substance has moved through this year thankfully. All eyes are on Stockton where the bankruptcy judge is considering whether CalPERS should be treated like any other creditor, thereby giving the court the ability to reduce or eliminate pension payments as any other debt. A wrong decision on that issue could be disastrous.

Meanwhile, unions here have been pushing to make progress on issues that have been percolating for some time now. Assembly Member Lorena Gonzalez has been moving legislation to require employers to provide their employees with accrued sick leave. Her bill, AB 1522, does not require what is in most union contracts, but nonetheless is a great first step toward restoring a little humanity in the workplace. Assembly Member Roger Hernandez, the Assembly Labor Committee Chairman, is trying to address another vexing issue, the growing use of temporary workers to escape account-ability. His bill, AB 1897, provides that both the temporary agency and the host employer would be jointly liable for serious labor law violations. Both of these bills are universally opposed by business groups but have continued to move through the process with all of our collective efforts.

Finally, we have two newly elected leaders in the Assembly and Senate. Assembly Speaker Toni Atkins of San Diego took over from former Speaker John Perez in May. Senator Kevin De Leon of Los Angeles was elected leader of the Senate in June. He will officially take the reins from Senator Darrell Steinberg sometime before the end of session. This change of leadership is significant because for the first time in decades both leaders will be from one region in the state.
Local 21 members have had a busy summer! From the June elections to the Delegate Assembly, from retirement parties to contract victories to shows of multi-union strength, the summer months have been anything but lazy this year!
On the eve of her July 1 retirement, San Francisco Vice-President Mary Marzotto reflected on her most memorable moments at Local 21.

“In 2010 I was recruited by union President Dean Coate to run for SF Vice-President. He convinced me that time commitment wasn’t that much. Later, when I complained about his nonstop committee assignments, he confessed that he was looking for someone smart enough to do the job and dumb enough to take it. Serving as the chair of the last two bargaining teams has been a lot of work and a lot of fun. We avoided a number of proposed take-aways, and this year ended up with one of the best union contracts in the region.

Are there one or two key victories/special moments from your tenure that you’ll remember?
I think one of the most significant victories was the defeat of Proposition B in 2010. This was the first Jeff Adachi proposition that would have significantly increased the cost of pension and health care benefits for our members, especially those with families. It was essentially a declaration of war on all public employee unions. What it did was energize all the unions to work together, to organize our members to make phone calls, walk precincts, distribute door hangers and get out the vote to defeat this measure.

The following year this coalition of public employees unions put forth our own, more modest, pension reform measure, Proposition C, and in the same election defeated another draconian Adachi measure, Proposition D. These successful campaigns enabled us to build a strong coalition with other unions and maximized our own participation in the political arena.

What makes Local 21 members unique?
Local 21 members are dedicated public servants who love the work they do. They are the unsung heroes who are the engine that makes government work. Our members have made intelligent decisions – like making wage concessions during the recession, paying more to sustain their pensions and health care and putting the needs of the community ahead of their own self interest. But they also understand the role of the union in protecting our wages and benefits. They may not be the first ones to pick up a picket sign but they are willing to join together and fight for what is right and what they deserve.

Local 21 members are razor sharp in analyzing budgets, spending and deficits. They understand that our victories are not measured by what we’ve won or lost but by whether what we’ve done has grown the union and made it stronger.

Local 21 is starting to teach people how to recruit, train and engage new leaders—and when you do that, people do respond. A self-interest can grow to more of a community interest. The passing of the baton is important, so we must continue to engage new members.

What plans do you have for your retirement?
I hope to continue doing some of the same things I’m doing now – advocating for workers rights, volunteering with community organizations, and working on political campaigns. I’d like to take some classes, catch up on reading, pursue my sewing and jewelry making hobbies, skype more with my son and grandson and spend more time with my family and friends. My dog has also been waiting for me to take her on some long beach walks.
A season of victories

(Continued from Page 1)

This will begin to make up for several years where city employees fell behind and experienced a decline in their standard of living and purchasing power.

After years of concessions, our three San Jose chapters accepted a one-year MOU with a 3% wage hike. The three chapters—AEA, AMSP and CAMP—decided against full MOU bargaining and agreed to a rollover of existing MOU and side letters. The 3% is a decent starting point to begin restoring lost wages, but inflation and increases to retiree healthcare contributions will lessen the impact for our members. We also successfully added a side letter that calls for a compensation study, allowing us to address high vacancies and seriously below-market pay for a small group of classifications. We hope to be in a better position for next spring's bargaining after November's San Jose Mayor and City Council election.

Local 21 members stepped up like never before in the June primaries—more than 125 members volunteered 500 hours. We elected our first City Councilmember in Hayward—quite a victory! With two seats up for grabs, labor-backed Sara Lamnin ran less than 100 votes behind incumbent anti-labor Councilman Marv Peixoto. Our second candidate, Rocky Fernandez came in third, running about 500 votes shy of getting elected.

We're very proud of our Hayward membership; half of them volunteered, and members from SF and Oakland phone banked and walked door to door. The Hayward Chapter leadership each recruited between 2-11 volunteers and some of them volunteered as many as 14 times. We made more than 25,000 phone calls and knocked on 7,000 doors. While we identified 5,000 supporters, many were infrequent labor voters who posed a special challenge to turn out.

Summer reading list

Click below for articles of interest from the past few months.

California Screaming
(The New Yorker, July 7)

Today's Big Business Can Learn From the Past to Expand the Middle Class (The Left Hook, July 22)

After ‘Harris v. Quinn’: The State of Our Unions
(The Nation, July 2)

Golden Gate district can afford to treat ferry workers fairly (Marin Independent Journal, July 28)