



# TEXAS STATE EMPLOYEES UNION UPDATE



VOL. 40/NO.1

COMMUNICATIONS WORKERS OF AMERICA, LOCAL 6186 / AFL-CIO

FEBRUARY 2021

# TSEU MEMBERS ARE READY!

**MEANWHILE, AS COVID-19 RAGES ON**

**WILL THE STATE KEEP WORKERS SAFE AND RECOGNIZE OUR SACRIFICES???**



THE MESSAGE TO OUR OFFICIALS IN THE CAPITOL!

**APRIL 7<sup>TH</sup> WEDNESDAY 2021**

**TSEU'S STATE EMPLOYEE LOBBY DAY CAR CARAVAN AND DAY OF ACTION!**

**STOP ATTACKS ON UNIONS!**

**NEW ATTACKS ON OUR UNION RIGHTS!**



**PLUS... TAKE ACTION FOR A REAL PAY RAISE**  
TSEU'S PAY RAISE POSTCARD CAMPAIGN GOES ONLINE!

[www.cwa-tseu.org](http://www.cwa-tseu.org)

# A MESSAGE FROM TSEU PRESIDENT JUDY LUGO:

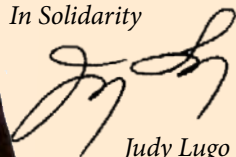
The 87<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislative Session started as of January 12<sup>th</sup>; but this year, the session will happen in the midst of a pandemic. Hundreds of bills have already been filed, Legislators are operating under new rules to protect themselves and the public from COVID-19, and the budget fight is downright nasty with a billion dollar shortfall. Now, more than ever, it's important to get involved in our legislative process. COPE, Organizing Committees, and Caucuses are leading the fight for our jobs, our benefits, and for the services we provide.

In past legislative sessions, TSEU members made our presence physically known at the capitol! Whether it was showing up in an agency caucus 'mini' Lobby Days, catching a 'BIG' Lobby Day Bus; sending a post card or making a call to a state rep. or senator; coming to the capitol to testify for or against legislation or meeting elected officials and staff in their capitol offices; union members are a force in the Texas Legislature. This session things will be vastly different.

Mini Lobby Days will be digital for the first time in TSEU history. We are going to utilize social media and conduct multiple mobilizations to get attention on our issues and make our voices heard. We are going to conduct statewide car caravans on April 7<sup>th</sup>, instead of the 'big' Capitol Lobby Day. We are going to additionally move our traditional mobilizations to a digital format and train our members in digital agitation. You can be sure that our elected leaders will be reminded of 'who we are' and know that thousands of state and university employees and retirees are holding them accountable.

While times are a changing, TSEU is adapting and continuing to fight and win in this 87<sup>th</sup> Legislative Session. I ask you to change with us and help 2021 be a year to remember!

In Solidarity



Judy Lugo  
TSEU President



MAKING OUR VOICES HEARD

## Navigating the political MINEFIELD



Getting Elected Leaders to PRIORITIZE State Employees

Despite the need for additional staffing, pay and justice on the job, state employees will have to compete for attention and make our voices heard in 2021. Other legislative priorities are taking attention away from the state employee crisis. The 2021 legislative problems that seem to be the most urgent include:

POSSIBLE LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

- Tackling the state's current two-year budget — and writing the next one — will be the largest items on the Legislature's plate, though lawmakers received better-than-expected news when Texas Comptroller Glenn Hegar unveiled the biennial revenue estimate.
- Redrawing the state's political maps, which is often a polarizing and draining process for lawmakers.
- Lawmakers will also have to respond to COVID-19 and address other policy issues that have been focal points throughout the pandemic, such as public education funding and health care.
- In 2019, the Legislature overhauled the state's school finance system, infusing \$6.5 billion more into public schools and roughly \$5.1 billion property tax cuts for the wealthiest Texans. State leaders have already said the Legislature will remain committed to continuing to fund those massive investments, regardless of the tough economic forecast.
- Police funding and reforms following the death of George Floyd, a black man who was killed in Minneapolis police custody, are expected to play a central role during the session.

**What this means?** Winning support for State employee and retiree issues, while difficult, needs to be our priority in 2021. We can't wait for legislators to "Do the Right Thing". Some lawmakers will hide behind the same tired excuses to avoid investing in state services, employees, and retirees. Our stagnant pay has led turnover rates among all state agencies to reach an eye-popping 20.3%, the highest level since at least 1990. All ERS retirees and many TRS retirees have not seen a pension increase since 2001. That's 20 years of falling behind the cost of living! **The need for elected officials to invest in and support quality state services, employees, and retirees is clear. COVID-19 has shown that we are essential to keep our state running!**

### IMPORTANT TSEU EXECUTIVE BOARD

### REGION VII - CONFIRMATION ELECTION

Ballots will be mailed to all TSEU members in good standing in Region VII for the confirmation election of Freddy Greer who was appointed by the TSEU Executive Board to the previously unfilled seat. If you do not receive a ballot in the mail, please contact Barbara Fetonte at [bfetonte@gmail.com](mailto:bfetonte@gmail.com) or 512-497-1432 to request a new ballot. Barbara is also available for any general questions you may have regarding this election. Other members of the election committee are: Danny Fetonte, Mike Gross, and Paula Everett.

MARCH 1, 2021 Ballots mailed APRIL 19, 2021 Ballot Deadline



# Don't tell us it's not raining!

## PAY RAISE

A \$6,000 pay raise is needed in order to restoring pay to its '87 purchasing power

THE MESSAGE TO THE STATE LEGISLATURE IS SIMPLE: **RAINY DAY FUNDING** in required to pay state employees what we need and deserve along with stopping record high turnover in our state agencies and universities!

### State employees have historically been overlooked for pay raises in the last several legislatures

The last actual 'real' pay increase was the \$100/month that was given out over fiscal years 2013 and 2014. During the current legislative session, the state must prioritize and PAY state employees! We can't go another two years without a pay raise!

- **2013:** Legislature implements a pay raise for state agency employees. It however is a meager 1% or \$50 per month in 2013 and 2% or \$50 per month in 2014, not even keeping pace with rising inflation.
- **2015:** As a part of the ERS pension funding deal, lawmakers provide a 2.5% raise, but state employees don't see any of it in their checks because of the increased employee contribution to the pension fund, which went from 2.6% to 6.9% to 9.5%.
- **2017:** The final budget did not include a pay raise for state and university employees; despite the all-out effort made by TSEU members throughout the entire legislative process. Information comes to light that over 6,000 state employees and nearly 30,000 children of state employees receive low-income assistance.
- **2019:** Texas House proposes an across-the-board pay raise for state agency employees of 3%. It however was matched by a Senate budget that offered only a 1% increase in State Employee Compensation. Before the session wrapped all state employee pay raises were eliminated from the 2019 Texas budget.

### Low pay drives high turnover and limits our ability to provide quality state services

Stopping turnover should be a top priority of the Texas Legislature. State employees are the driving force behind critical services to all Texans especially to some of the most vulnerable. To ensure that Texas is able to provide high quality services to its citizens, the legislature needs to appropriate a real across-the-board pay raise for state employees and university workers.

- **U.S. Dept of Labor Statistics:** In 2013 (the date of the last public employee pay increase) \$1.00 was worth approximately \$1.11 in 2020. It would take an 11% pay increase to give state employees the same spending power they had in 2015.
- **U.S. Census data:** In 2013 (the date of the last pay increase) the median household income for a family in Texas was \$56,509. In 2019 it was \$67,444. This represents an increase of \$10,935.00
- **According to the Texas Comptroller:** A loss of knowledge, however, is occurring with newer employees – those employed five years or less. In fiscal year 2019, 50.3% of the agency's turnover came from this group. New employees require extensive time and effort to train before being able to function independently. A high turnover of new employees places a strain on business operations.
- **In a State Auditor's Office survey of 67 agencies:** Employees seeking better pay elsewhere was the top reason for turnover.

<https://actionnetwork.org/letters/state-workers-need-a-pay-raise>

## Send a 'Virtual' Pay Raise Post Card

Hundreds of TSEU members and allies have sent 354 emails to elected leaders demanding a \$6000 across-the-board pay raise NOW!

The pandemic has changed so many things about our lives and our union work, but it cannot break our solidarity with one another. While we are apart, we have changed tactics to meet the moment in a number of different ways, from moving meetings online, holding our first virtual convention, and signing members up through our website. Our pay raise postcard campaign is changing with the times too. We are now asking members to send a letter to their state representative and state senator using the link listed above the

story title in lieu of passing cards around offices. Our long time activists know that the work isn't done when you mail your postcard, or when you send an email - we need our members to share this link **WIDELY**. The thank you screen gives you options to email, tweet, or share the campaign on facebook. These embedded features will make our lives easier, but the most powerful calls to action happen directly. If you haven't already, consider sending a quick private message, text, or have a one on one conversation with a co-worker you



know should send the letter. Organizing is asking, and we need to work together to make sure every state worker and ally gets asked to send a letter - and if you take the next step to ask them to join the union while you're at it, even better! By taking action together, we can make sure the legislature hears:

**STATE EMPLOYEES NEED A PAY RAISE NOW!**



# State employees need agency and elected leaders to **STEP UP!**

Where we stand in **the COVID-19 fight** and common-sense solutions for the Texas Legislature to keep state workers safe AND acknowledge our sacrifices and commitments during this crisis!



**S**tate employees have forever been at the mercy of the Texas Legislature for workplace protections. In 2021, COVID-19 makes ignoring the needs of TSEU members a health hazard! Texas has been implementing an uneven approach to its employees' safety and compassion for some workers, while forced exposure and complete disregard toward CDC recommendations and local governmental ordinances for others. The result of this inequality is increased exposure to COVID-19 for thousands of State and University employees.

- **2021 begins with alarms:** In January, a spike in new cases and hospitalizations pushed these measures to their highest levels during the pandemic, surpassing surges in 2020.
- **White House COVID Report, from 11-2020:** Texas is seeing an "unsustainable increase in hospitalizations" from the virus and "statewide mitigation must increase," according to a White House Coronavirus Task Force report dated Nov. 22. Among the task force's recommendations: *Officials in Texas should significantly reduce capacity in indoor spaces, including those that are privately owned. And state leaders should further increase the number of people being tested for the virus.*

## TSEU calls on the Texas Legislature to mandate the following:

- No further openings of State Offices or Universities should occur until the CDC recommended "Downward trajectory (or near-zero incidence) of documented cases over a 14-day period" is achieved.
  - State facilities should train one individual in Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) to provide training, answer questions, and administer on-site management of their COVID-19 prevention and response activities.
  - The State of Texas must make public the number of infections, and deaths of state employees broken down by region, agency/university, and location, to assess risk.
  - Official guidelines need to be established for quarantine of a state workers after exposure to individuals with COVID. Guidelines also need to be established to close infected offices for 24 hours to properly disinfect after confirmed case of COVID. These guidelines should be public and posted in facilities and universities.
- HAZARD DUTY PAY must be given to ALL state workers while COVID protocols are in place to stabilize the workforce and prevent additional turnover.**

## Immunizations are here, but workers are still at risk!

COVID-19 infections are spreading rapidly in Texas and nationwide. The report ranked Texas 34th among the states for cases per capita and found that more than three-quarters of Texas counties were experiencing moderate or high levels of viral transmission.

While immunizations are being given to some workers in State Supported Living Centers and Hospitals, thousands of State Employees are being forced to expose themselves daily to keep critical services

running. Texas has also not indicated any timeline to roll-out the vaccine to the remainder of exposed State Employees.

- **According to the Texas Tribune:** More than 877,000 Texans have received a COVID-19 vaccine since they first began arriving in Texas nearly four weeks ago, and that number is expected to increase by at least 50,000 more per day, according to Gov. Greg Abbott. Despite this, no plans have been made public to immunize the thousands of state workers who interact with the public daily.

## **IMPORTANT** TSEU EXECUTIVE BOARD **REGION VI - SPECIAL ELECTION**

TSEU members **Gwen Thomas and Ilesa Daniels** are this year's candidates for TSEU Executive Board Region VI Representative. Ballots will be mailed to all TSEU members in good standing in Region VI. This region is located in Southeast Texas; major cities include: Houston, Prairie View, Galveston, Richmond, Rosenberg and Conroe.

We urge all members in Region VI to participate in this Special Election. If you do not receive a ballot in the mail, please contact Barbara Fetonte at [bfetonte@gmail.com](mailto:bfetonte@gmail.com) or 512-497-1432 to request a replacement ballot. Barbara is also available for any general questions you may have regarding this election.

Other members of the election committee are: Danny Fetonte, Mike Gross, and Paula Everett.

### CANDIDATES:

- GWEN THOMAS
- ILESA DANIELS

### ELECTION TIMELINE:

- **MARCH 1, 2021**  
Ballots in the mail to Region VI members
- **APRIL 19, 2021**  
Ballot Deadline



# Agency worker **TURNOVER** EXCEEDING RECORD RATES!

The true cost of **STATE EMPLOYEE TURNOVER**, how low salaries play a part in the problem and what needs to happen NOW!

**A**gain, according to the State Auditor's annual report on state employee turnover, Texas broke its record for highest turnover rate across all state agencies. This follows years of elected leaders choosing to keep our pay stagnant and uncompetitive with other public sector jobs.

The average turnover for all state agencies is 20.3%! This impacts the remaining workforce and costs taxpayers millions. With the constant need to hire and train new employees, state agencies and universities have even more obstacles to overcome to perform their purpose and function for all Texans. By retaining employees, Texas can develop a more experienced workforce providing quality services that our communities need. High turnover rates result in low morale and overworked employees with increased workloads, which further increases the turnover rate in a vicious cycle. Texas can't afford to ignore this reality.

## **FACT: Lower paid workers have higher turnover** →

*In fiscal year 2020, 37.6 percent of classified regular full-time employees earned less than \$40,000 annually. Employees in that salary grouping made up the majority (59.3 percent) of full-time employee turnover.*

### **INCREASE IN POPULATION 2008-2019**

There are now  
4.61 million  
more Texans

### **DECREASE IN WORKERS 2008-2019**

There are now  
3900 fewer  
state workers

## **Staff Reductions increase turnover**

A fast growing population has created a higher demand for state services. Over the years, the Texas Legislature has not funded staffing levels to keep pace with population growth. Adequate staffing is necessary to meet the needs of our most vulnerable citizens and to keep the state running. The decline in the state's workforce coupled with increasing population has also resulted in unmanageable caseloads for current employees and increasing turnover rates.

## **Solutions to the turnover crisis**

Pay for the vast majority of State workers has been stagnant for years, even though productivity and workloads are always escalating. Our State Workforce is working harder, being more productive, and is even more educated than ever! Despite this, an ever-increasing sentiment in the State Capitol seems to be that "State Employees are not a Priority". This is a solvable problem. We Organize!

### **ONE**

*increase wages  
across-the-board  
to keep state jobs  
competitive with  
private sector*

### **TWO**

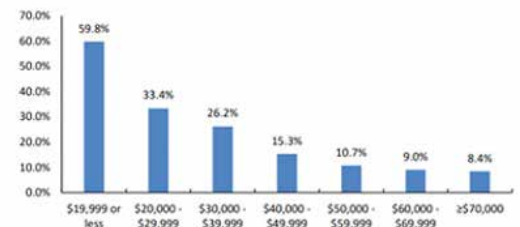
*keep up with the  
needs of a growing  
population by  
increasing agency  
staffing levels*

### **THREE**

*protect our  
pension benefits  
from cuts and  
keep our health  
care affordable*

Job Classification Series	Average Headcount	Percent of Total Average Headcount	Separations	Percent of Total Separations	Turnover Rate
Juvenile Correctional Officer <sup>a b</sup>	1,039.75	0.7%	618	2.2%	59.4%
Food Service Worker	646.75	0.4%	337	1.2%	52.1%
Direct Support Professional <sup>a</sup>	6,442.25	4.3%	3,053	10.9%	47.4%
Psychiatric Nursing Assistant <sup>a</sup>	2,960.25	2.0%	1,179	4.2%	39.8%
Correctional Officer <sup>a</sup>	23,752.25	15.9%	7,973	28.6%	33.6%
Engineering Aide <sup>a</sup>	215.75	0.1%	71	0.3%	32.9%
Custodian <sup>a</sup>	854.25	0.6%	259	0.9%	30.3%
Vehicle Driver <sup>a</sup>	233.50	0.2%	69	0.2%	29.6%
Security Officer	666.00	0.4%	165	0.6%	24.8%
Licensed Vocational Nurse <sup>a</sup>	1,072.00	0.7%	262	0.9%	24.4%
Trooper Trainee/Probationary Trooper	127.00	0.1%	30	0.1%	23.6%
Child Protective Services Specialist <sup>a</sup>	6,661.50	4.4%	1,552	5.6%	23.3%

Turnover Rates Among State Employees By Salary<sup>a</sup>  
Fiscal Year 2020



## **GWEN THOMAS – FOR REGION VI**



*My name is, Gwen Thomas, and I am your current Region VI Executive Board Member. In order to continue to be a voice on the front line for all hardworking Texas employees; I am running for re-election. As a fellow state worker, I strive to bring attention along with resolutions to*

*the disparities around the state against us. As one team, we can all ban together in solidarity for an even stronger fight against rising injustices in our workforce. I am asking for your vote so that we can continue this fight.*

## **ILESA DANIELS – FOR REGION VI**



*I am a 30 year veteran of the State. I have worked these years for HHSC. I have been a proud member of TSEU during much of this time. I am seeking election to TSEU Region 6 Executive board because I believe in the work my union does. I have been active for years attending*

*Caucus Meetings, Mini Lobby Day, Lobby Day, General Assembly, COPE meetings. I am also seeking this position to bring about Change. I have past ERS Board experience that I feel qualifies me for this position. Thanks for your time and consideration. I look forward to this election.*



# Mini-Lobby Days and our 'big' State Employee Lobby Day take on a new look this year

COVID-19 may force changes to major mobilization events but it won't diminish our voice or the need for change in our jobs and the services we provide!

**W**ith COVID-19 numbers still high throughout Texas, this Legislative session will look a little different than those in the past. With adaptation, TSEU can make our voices heard AND have a positive impact on legislation impacting state employees, retirees and services we provide. Out of concern for the health and safety of our members, TSEU mini-Lobby Days and certain aspects of our 'big' Lobby Day will be conducted entirely virtual.

## Sample Caucus Mini-Lobby Day schedule:

- 9:00AM Sign on to zoom; Brief training session
- 10:00-10:30AM Legislative office meeting
- 10:45-11:15AM Legislative office meeting
- 11:30-12:00PM Legislative office meeting
- 12:00PM-12:30PM Lunch
- 12:30PM Sign on to zoom; regroup for afternoon
- 1:00PM-1:30PM Legislative office meeting
- 1:45-2:15PM Legislative office meeting
- 2:30-3:00PM Legislative office meeting
- 3:00-3:30PM Debrief

## • TSEU AGENCY/UNIVERSITY/RETIREE CAUCUS 'MINI' LOBBY DAYS

### Shining light on specific solutions

TSEU caucuses bring together members from major agencies and universities, and retired members, within TSEU. The caucuses coordinate organizing strategy and work on issues specific to the caucus. These issues are refined and finalized by member delegates from those agencies during General Assembly. Most caucuses organize a Mini Lobby Day at some point in the legislative session. These lobbying efforts help to shine a light on issues that are specific to one agency or group of members. They also give TSEU members some experience and help build for our main State Employee Lobby Day.

While we would all enjoy wandering the halls of the Capitol building (and would be in 'normal' years), COVID has made our lobbying efforts entirely virtual this year. These virtual meeting will allow TSEU members to have the same informative interactions with Legislators and their staff as we have had in previous sessions, without the concerns of travel and public exposure.

#### RSVP FOR YOUR CAUCUS'S MINI LOBBY DAY!

Listed below, you will find a listing with all currently scheduled TSEU Caucus mini-Lobby Days along with the date they are taking place AND an RSVP address. To attend a mini-lobby day, you must be a TSEU member (sign up through the TSEU website or using the membership form found in this UPDATE). Go to the TSEU website for respective caucus's legislative goals.

## • TSEU CAUCUS MINI-LOBBY DAY DETAILS AND GOALS STATEMENT

**CAUCUS:**  
**Texas Juvenile Justice Department**

**MINI LOBBY DAY DATE:**  
**Tuesday, February 16<sup>TH</sup>**

**TO ATTEND MINI LOBBY DAY, RSVP TO:**  
**arau@cwa-tseu.org**

The TJJD caucus is gearing up for the legislative session. We are members who work in the TJJD facilities, offices, and halfway houses across Texas. Together, we advocate for justice on the job, fair pay, full staffing, affordable healthcare, and the right to a dignified retirement through our inclusion in LECOSRF. We also work to grow the union in our workplaces.

**CAUCUS:**  
**Dept of Family and Protective Services**

**MINI LOBBY DAY DATE:**  
**Tuesday, February 23<sup>RD</sup>**

**TO ATTEND MINI LOBBY DAY, RSVP TO:**  
**sstokes@cwa-tseu.org**

We, the proud TSEU members working in Family & Protective Services, are banding together even stronger during this pandemic. We are displaying there is strength in numbers. We continue to grow as a union and have made significant changes to our workplaces. Together, we will advocate for justice on the job, fair pay, full staffing, affordable healthcare, and the right to a dignified retirement!

**CAUCUS:**  
**State Hospitals and SSLC's**

**MINI LOBBY DAY DATE:**  
**Thursday, February 25<sup>TH</sup>**

**TO ATTEND MINI LOBBY DAY, RSVP TO:**  
**rday@cwa-tseu.org**

We are TSEU members that work for the Facilities Division of HHSC. We are building a strong union in our facilities and are fighting for: a raise for all state and university employees, stopping closure or privatization of any of our facilities and fair treatment and justice on the job. Another objective we have added since the pandemic is sufficient Covid-19 protection for all our employees.

**CAUCUS:**  
**Human Services**

**MINI LOBBY DAY DATE:**  
**Tuesday, March 2<sup>ND</sup>**

**TO ATTEND MINI LOBBY DAY, RSVP TO:**  
**jmontemayor@cwa-tseu.org**

We are TSEU members who work in the Health and Human Services Commission and the Old Department of Aging and Disability Services and (DSHS non-state hospitals). We are building a strong union in our workplaces to fight for: better pay and benefits to attract and retain quality staff; increased staffing levels; stopping privatization. In 2020 we added COVID protections and 'justice on the job' to our list of objectives for this legislative session.



## • STATE EMPLOYEE LOBBY DAY - WEDNESDAY, APRIL 7

# Lobby Day Caravans! No Bus-No Fuss

Lobby Day is our chance to take a stand for the future of Texas and for our jobs.

It is a critical part of our ongoing fight for economic and social justice for state workers and all Texans. On Wednesday, April 7<sup>th</sup>, TSEU is calling for a massive show of strength to tell the legislature that we will fight to restore funding for public services, to protect state employee benefits and to win a real across-the-board raise. Everything is at stake: our jobs, our pensions, our health care, our pay and the services we provide. **We need you to be a part of this day of action!**

Like many aspects of our lives these days, the COVID-19 pandemic has changed the way we would normally put on Lobby Day. We are replacing our Lobby Day march with organized car caravans in cities around the state (for now: Austin, Houston, Dallas, San Antonio, and El Paso). We will 'parade/cara-

van' through state office complexes and other key areas to call attention to our issues. Instead of a huge rally on the steps of the capitol, we will hold digital press conferences to alert and inform the media. And, since we can't go door-to-door through the capitol to the offices of our elected officials, we will be meeting with our legislators virtually over Zoom.

## BUY A LOBBY DAY TICKET - GET A LOBBY DAY T-SHIRT! <https://cwa-tseu.org/lobby-day-2021/>

Go to the TSEU website for more details and link to purchase your Lobby Day ticket on EventBrite. Buy a ticket and get a Lobby Day '21 t-shirt, but supplies are limited so act now to make sure you get yours!



## • GEOGRAPHIC 'MINI' LOBBY DAYS

# Getting in front of our own 'local' elected leaders

Since during our 'big' Lobby Day and Caucus mini-Lobby Days we don't always get a chance to lobby our 'own' elected leaders, throughout the last three weeks of April, TSEU members will be participating in dedicated lobby weeks based on specific regions of Texas. Members will have multiple opportunities to take place in these week-long lobbying efforts. Like our Mini-lobby days, lobbying will be done virtually over Zoom. By April, we hope you will have taken place in either your caucus mini-lobby day or our 'Big' Lobby Day on April 7<sup>th</sup> - at those events, we will have information on how to get plugged into your specific geographic lobbying week; otherwise, please contact TSEU Legislative Director Tyler Sheldon at [tsheldon@cwa-tseu.org](mailto:tsheldon@cwa-tseu.org) to reserve your spot on a regional lobby team!

## GEOGRAPHIC/REGIONAL LOBBY DAY SCHEDULE

- WEEK OF APRIL 12-16: North Texas members
- WEEK OF APRIL 19-23: South and West Texas
- WEEK OF APRIL 26-30: Central and East Texas

### CAUCUS:

## The Retiree Organizing Committee (ROC)

### MINI LOBBY DAY DATE:

**Thursday, March 4<sup>TH</sup>**

### TO ATTEND MINI LOBBY DAY, RSVP TO:

**[amoir@cwa-tseu.org](mailto:amoir@cwa-tseu.org)**

We have been fighting for a Cost of Living Adjustment to our pensions since 2001! It's desperately needed for the safety and well-being of all state retirees! We need an immediate cash infusion into both the Employees Retirement System, and Teacher Retirement System. Both ERS and TRS need a 6% increase in their budgets to get our pensions back to full funding and to provide a much needed COLA!

### CAUCUS:

## State Universities and Health Science Centers

### MINI LOBBY DAY DATE:

**Tuesday, March 9<sup>TH</sup>**

### TO ATTEND MINI LOBBY DAY, RSVP TO:

**[aweems@cwa-tseu.org](mailto:aweems@cwa-tseu.org)**

As university workers and students, we are the experts on higher education in Texas. Our members have led the fight to protect workers and students during the pandemic, and it's more important now than ever to build our collective power! If you are staff, faculty, or a graduate or undergraduate student worker, please join us in calling on legislators to fund higher education, re-regulate tuition and pay, and fund our pensions.

### CAUCUS:

## The Texas Workforce Commission

### MINI LOBBY DAY DATE:

**Thursday, March 11<sup>TH</sup>**

### TO ATTEND MINI LOBBY DAY, RSVP TO:

**[aweems@cwa-tseu.org](mailto:aweems@cwa-tseu.org)**

We are TSEU members who served unemployed Texans at the TWC. We are building a strong union in our workplaces to fight for: better pay and benefits to attract and retain quality staff; increased staffing levels; a career ladder; stopping privatization. In 2020 we added COVID protections and 'justice on the job' to our list of objectives during this Legislative Session.

### CAUCUS:

## TDCJ-Parole Division

### MINI LOBBY DAY DATE:

**Tuesday, March 16<sup>TH</sup>**

### TO ATTEND MINI LOBBY DAY, RSVP TO:

**[mgoodwin@cwa-tseu.org](mailto:mgoodwin@cwa-tseu.org)**

We are TSEU members who work in TDCJ Parole Division. We are parole officers, clerical staff, re-entry and substance abuse counselors, and other administrative staff. We are building a strong union in our agency to fight for better pay and benefits to attract and retain quality staff and maintain workable caseload standards.

# Why YOU SHOULD CARE about the Employees Retirement System

**AND VOTE** in the upcoming Board of Trustees election!

**Our retirement benefits are NOT guaranteed!** The Texas State Employees Union has fought several attempts to end our 'defined benefit pension plan' and switch to a 'defined contribution 401k plan'. Our Texas Comptroller recently said, "Texas needs to change its pension system, and possibly its funding structure, not only to "honor the commitment to our employees," but also so "we don't leave future generations with a large tax bill."

This 2021 session is already seeing attempts to split the system into 2 different funds. Pensions for some and 401k's for others. We need an ERS board member to be able to actively advocate for continuing our defined benefit pension plan!

**Representation on the board is important.** Over the seventy-year history of these systems, most trustees have been high-ranking officials or upper management. It makes a difference when front-line state employees bring their experience and perspective to these boards, and TSEU has worked since 1989 to successfully elect ERS trustees who will stand up for front-line employees!

## The Employees Retirement System - BY THE NUMBERS

- 250,000+ - The combined number of state agency employees and retirees whose pension plan is controlled by the Employees Retirement System. *It also runs the health care plan for all employees, dependents, and retirees of state agencies and of the universities outside the UT and A&M systems.*
- 6 - The total number of members on the board.
- 3 - The number of members directly elected by active employees and retirees. One of these positions comes up for election every other year. This year, 2021, is an election year. *The other three positions are appointed by the Governor, the Speaker of the Texas House, and the Chief Justice of the Texas Supreme Court.*



After the successful election in 2015 of long-time TSEU activist Ilesa Daniels to the ERS Board of Trustees (now the Board Chair), we now have the sad task of replacing her after six productive years of service on the Board.

**On behalf of the members and staff of TSEU, we salute and thank Ilesa for her hard work!**

## ERS Board of Trustees Election ELECT NEIKA CLARK!

Play an active role in helping elect fellow TSEU member Neika Clark to the ERS Board of Trustees this spring. We have the power in our numbers and influence among co-workers at our jobs; our union turned out the vote in 2015 for Ilesa, and we can do it again! Sign the election work sign-up form and find more information on the home page of the TSEU website under 'ERS Board of Trustees Election'.

### Message from retiring TSEU ERS Board Member Ilesa Daniels . . .

*"The ERS Board makes important decisions about our healthcare benefits and our pension plan. We need Board members that will work to ensure the stability of the plan and not go along with shifting costs to employees and retirees. I have been honored to represent the interests of frontline state employees on the Board and am now passing the baton to my Union Sister Ms. Neika Clark.*

# Neika CLARK FOR EMPLOYEES RETIREMENT SYSTEM BOARD OF TRUSTEES

## Taking a Stand for our Pensions and Health Care!

- **KEEPING OUR ERS FUNDS STRONG:** Neika will push for increased state contributions to our health care plans and pension fund and support continued responsible investing to strengthen our pension fund.
- **FIGHTING FOR WHAT WE DESERVE:** She will oppose attempts to convert our pension plan to a 401(k) style plan and new high-deductible, consumer-driven health plans that undermine our benefits.
- **RETIREE COST OF LIVING RAISE:** Neika believes state employees should retire with dignity. That means cost of living increases that keep up with the rising cost of living. ERS retirees have not seen a COLA since 2001. That's WAY too long!
- **LISTENING TO THE NEEDS OF WORKERS:** Accessible to employees with ERS-related issues, Neika will be THE voice of front-line employees on the Board.



### BACKGROUND

Currently working as a Training Specialist with Community Care Services and Eligibility  
22 total years as a state employee  
TSEU member and activist for more than 20 years

### ENDORSEMENTS

TSEU, CWA 6186  
ILESAS DANIELS,  
Current ERS Board Chair  
YOLY GRIEGO,  
Former ERS Board member





# TEXAS STATE EMPLOYEES UNION / CWA

1700 South 1<sup>st</sup> Street, Austin, Texas 78704 (512) 448-4225

T.I.N. No. 15102561097-001



SECTION A: AGENCY USE ONLY			
AGENCY NAME	AGENCY#	UNIT#	FIRST ACTIVE DUTY DATE

SECTION B: EMPLOYEE INFORMATION		
SOCIAL SECURITY #	NAME (LAST, FIRST, MI)	
EMPLOYEE ID #	E-MAIL ADDRESS (SUITABLE FOR RECEIVING TSEU CORRESPONDENCE)	
HOME STREET ADDRESS	CITY / STATE / ZIP	
HOME PHONE (      )	WORK PHONE (      )	CELL PHONE (      )
AGENCY / UNIV.	FACILITY / LOCATION	
PROG / DEPT / UNIT	JOB TITLE	WORK HOURS



N     UPG     RR    ORG: \_\_\_\_\_

SECTION C: MEMBERSHIP AND AUTHORIZATION	
<p>Membership dues and effective date of payroll deduction: the 1<sup>st</sup> day of _____, 20__</p> <p style="text-align: center;">(MONTH)</p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> \$17.00 salary below \$20,000    <input type="checkbox"/> \$21.00 salary \$20,000-\$25,000    <input type="checkbox"/> \$25.00 salary \$25,000-\$30,000  <input type="checkbox"/> \$28.00 salary \$30,000-\$40,000    <input type="checkbox"/> \$30.00 salary \$40,000-\$50,000    <input type="checkbox"/> \$32.00 salary over \$50,000  <input type="checkbox"/> \$13.00 part time    <input type="checkbox"/> other - \$ _____ </p> <p><b>AUTHORIZATION:</b> I authorize the monthly deduction from my salary or wages for membership dues to TSEU. I understand that I may revoke this authorization at any time by written notice.</p>	
EMPLOYEE SIGNATURE	DATE
I agree to comply with the rules adopted by the Comptroller concerning deductions for membership dues.	



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KEEPING OUR UNION **UNBREAKABLE**

# State employees' right to join a union are under attack - **ACT NOW!**

**T**SEU has repeatedly defended the right of state employees to join their union at the Texas state legislature, and defeated laws that would make joining a union even more difficult. Since our opponents failed to pass laws that would weaken our union, they are now changing tactics, and seeking to make it more difficult for state employees to join their union through bureaucratic rule changes.

**LAST UPDATE:** We urged TSEU members and allies to write a letter to Rob Coleman, Director of the Fiscal Management Division and Texas Comptroller Glenn Hegar stating their opposition to this undemocratic rule change that will make it more difficult for state employees to join their union - and over 500 members and allies took action to send 1000+ emails stating their opposition to this rule change.

This attack is retaliation for a series of victories TSEU has had in the Texas legislature defending the right of state employees to have the freedom to pay union dues from their paychecks.

We didn't just win a virtual public hearing with the Comptroller, we also won a new deadline to submit public comment on these bureaucratic changes to union dues collection. The comptroller has extended the deadline for receipt of written comments until Tuesday, February 23<sup>rd</sup>.

**Log your testimony into a virtual public hearing with the Texas Comptroller! Go to: [actionnetwork.org/letters/submit-public-comment-to-the-state-comptroller-about-union-rule-changes](http://actionnetwork.org/letters/submit-public-comment-to-the-state-comptroller-about-union-rule-changes)**

THE COMMITTEE ON POLITICAL EDUCATION

**I want to build our political power by joining COPE!**



I authorize TSEU to draft my account monthly for the amount that I have indicated and to forward these funds to CWA COPE.

**HELP MAKE SURE OUR UNION IS UNBREAKABLE!**  
*If dues deduction from my salary/wages becomes prohibited by law, I hereby authorize TSEU to commence and continue deducting monthly TSEU dues from the bank or credit union account identified here, in the same monthly dues amount as then on file with TSEU.*

INITIAL

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ SOCIAL SECURITY # \_\_\_\_\_

MAILING ADDRESS (STREET/PO BOX, CITY, STATE, ZIP) \_\_\_\_\_

(\_\_\_\_\_) HOME PHONE \_\_\_\_\_ (\_\_\_\_\_) WORK PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

EMAIL \_\_\_\_\_ AGENCY, UNIVERSITY, ORGANIZATION \_\_\_\_\_

MONTHLY DEDUCTION (CHECK ONE):  
COPE CLUB [ ] \$5.00 [ ] \$10.00 [ ] \$20.00 [ ] \$30.00 [ ] OTHER AMOUNT [ ]  
[ ] I'm using this form to make my union UNBREAKABLE

BANK NAME \_\_\_\_\_ BANK ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

ROUTING # \_\_\_\_\_ ACCOUNT # \_\_\_\_\_

DRAFT FROM (CHECK ONE) [ ] CHECKING [ ] SAVINGS DRAFT BEGINS MONTH OF \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_\_\_

*This authorization is voluntarily made based on my specific understanding that the signing of this authorization card and the making of contributions to CWA COPE PC are not conditions of membership in the union nor of employment with the company that I may refuse to do so without fear of reprisal.*

SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_



# TSEU Political Action: 2020-2021

**LOOKING BACK** on election '20 **AND AHEAD** to the 87<sup>th</sup> Legislature

## Mobilizing for election 2020 VICTORY under challenging circumstances

In the midst a global pandemic TSEU members adapted and mobilized during the 2020 elections. Across the state TSEU members participated in phone and text banks to support 12 incumbents and 10 challengers that were screened and endorsed by TSEU COPE members earlier in the year. This election cycle was incredibly challenging. With the presidential election boosting turnout and the COVID-19 pandemic limiting direct voter contact, anti-state employee candidates targeted the gains made by TSEU and allies in the 2018 election. With our hard work, 11 of the 12 targeted incumbents were re-elected. This one loss was made up for by Ann Johnson's victory in HD 134.

## New Speaker of the House elected - New rules in the Senate enacted

We enter the 87<sup>th</sup> legislature with the same breakdown in the house as last session with 67 Democrats and 87 Republicans. Rep. Dade Phelan from Beaumont has been elected the Speaker of the House. Rep. Phelan was one of a handful of republicans endorsed by the AFL-CIO and has a long history of reaching across the aisle. Texas Republican Chair Allen West has gone as far as calling Rep. Phelan a party traitor. Although the 87<sup>th</sup> session has just begun, we are hopeful the new House leadership will not pursue anti-worker legislation and will instead make strides to strengthen our state employees and retirees.

On the senate side, TSEU worked tirelessly to elect longtime TSEU member and ally Representative Roland Gutierrez to the State Senate in SD19. After a hard fought primary, runoff and general election, we succeeded! Senator Gutierrez' election provided the democrats with enough votes to block legislation from going to the floor under the 3/5ths rule. However, the Senate immediately voted to change this rule to 2/5ths, setting the new threshold at 18 votes to bring a bill to the floor of the Senate.



Senator Gutierrez (center, red tie) meets with San Antonio area COPE members during the 2020 Election cycle.

## Adapting to COVID-19 regulations at the Capitol

With the pandemic still in full force across the state, the legislature has adopted some new rules for this session. The House and Senate will still require testimony to be given in person. The Senate will require same day COVID testing of all individuals wishing to enter the senate chamber or participate in hearings. The House will not require testing but will require masks to be worn.

## Holding elected leaders accountable to their promises

Despite the unprecedented health risks, this session will be one of the most impactful in recent history. The Employee Retirement System is in dire need of funding. Last session, the legislature brought TRS back to actuary soundness and made a promise that ERS would be funded next session. We intend to hold the legislature to this promise. The pandemic has also shown that all state employees are frontline responders and we will be pushing for much deserved pay raises.

Regardless of the difficulty, TSEU will continue our history of representing state employees, retirees and the services they provide during the 87<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislature. We must and will adapt, overcome and ORGANIZE!

## Join COPE and start supporting those who will support state employees!

State employees and state services are under constant attack, and COPE is one way to build the political power to fight back. Politics affects our lives every day. Budget cuts, privatization, and our own salaries and health care are all controlled by the Texas Legislature and other elected officials. Money counts in politics. Candidates must win elections before they can help make laws. Grass-roots volunteer work is very important in winning elections, and so are other forms of campaigning that cost money for a candidate. Wealthy corporations and individuals give lots of money to get their friends elected. We need more of our friends in elected offices. As state employees, we can not afford large individual contributions. But we can make our voice heard by pooling many small contributions so they have a large impact. CWA-COPE allows us to gain a stronger voice in the political process.

## TSEU EXECUTIVE BOARD

Judy Lugo (HHSC, El Paso, retired) President  
 Joe Montemayor (TSEU Austin/DFW) Vice President  
 Joanne Day (DSHS, Austin) Secretary  
 Samm Almaguer (TWC, Houston) Treasurer  
 Albert Zepeda (HHSC Brownsville) Region 1  
 Arthur Valdez (DSHS-Retired, San Antonio) Reg. 2  
 Yvette Sherman (FPS-Retired, San Angelo) Reg. 3  
 Micah Haley (TDCJ-Retired, Dallas) Region 4  
 Yolanda White (HHSC, Lufkin) Region 5  
 Gwen Logan (OAG, Rosenberg) Region 6  
 Debra Coleman (DADS-Retired, Brenham) Reg. 7  
 Anne Lewis (UT-Austin) Region 8

## TSEU STAFF AND OFFICES

### CENTRAL TEXAS

512.448-4225

1700 South 1<sup>st</sup> St

Austin, TX 78704

Joe Montemayor, Organizing Coordinator  
 Ron Day, Lead Organizer  
 Alex Moir, Organizer  
 Sol Weiner, Organizer  
 Aviv Rau, Organizer  
 Amanda Cavazos Weems, Organizer  
 Tyler Sheldon, Legislative Director  
 Margaret Allen, Office Manager  
 John Behr, IT  
 Rachel Telles, Membership Office  
 Chris Knapp, Publications

### SOUTH TEXAS

210.354-2900

1412 El Paso St

San Antonio, TX 78207

Joe Montemayor, Organizing Coordinator  
 Amanda Cavazos Weems, Organizer  
 Sol Weiner, Organizer

### SOUTHEAST

713.661-9030

9247 South Main

Houston, TX 77025

Myko Gedutis, Lead Organizer  
 Steven Stokes, Organizer  
 Gloria Jeffery, Organizer

### NORTH TEXAS

214.942-4305

737 S. RL Thornton Frwy, Ste B

Dallas, TX 75203

Joe Montemayor, Organizing Coordinator  
 Michele Goodwin, Organizer  
 Francisco Santillan, Organizer

### WEST TEXAS

806.741-0044

2002 Avenue J

Lubbock, TX 79405

Aviv Rau, Organizer  
 Alex Moir, Organizer  
 Francisco Santillan, Organizer

Find us online at: [www.cwa-tseu.org](http://www.cwa-tseu.org)  
 OR [facebook.com/CWA.TSEU](https://facebook.com/CWA.TSEU)



# TEXAS STATE EMPLOYEES UNION

Communications Workers of America  
1700 South 1<sup>st</sup> Street  
Austin, TX 78704

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While TSEU members have had significant victories, legislators still failed to act on important issues. This can be discouraging, but TSEU members press on because we know if we don't win now, we will come back stronger and more even determined! This year, with increased COVID restrictions, we must fight harder and be even more vigilant!

**The stronger our voice, the bigger our victories**  
**Membership Form INSIDE!**  
Join and get active in your union - already a member, sign-up a co-worker!

**MARK YOUR CALENDAR FEBRUARY 20<sup>TH</sup> AND 21<sup>ST</sup>**

## TSEU planning first ever Digital Agitation training

In addition to our usual issues—pay raises, funding our pensions, and stopping privatization—the COVID-19 pandemic has presented new fights and challenges for state employees. We must work together to adapt the strategies that have built our Union over the past 40 years.

On February 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup>, TSEU will host our first ever **Digital Agitation training**. This meeting will be the first of many opportunities for TSEU members to gather and learn from one another about how to build our union power both off-line AND ONLINE. The training portion has much to offer both seasoned and burgeoning activists including: basic Zoom etiquette; how to testify at online hearings; putting pressure on elected officials; and emerging strategies for targeting unelected officials such as university regents and administrators.

**If you have any questions or to RSVP contact:**  
[jmontemayor@cwa-tseu.org](mailto:jmontemayor@cwa-tseu.org)

