



Resolution 119A
SEIU International Convention
SEIU Supports Good Union Jobs For Persons with Disabilities

ADOPTED
June 4, 2008

Whereas, the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) recognizes that the ability of individuals to contribute to their communities through productive work for which they are paid a living wage is a basic human right, and this basic human right should never be denied based on gender, race, religious belief, sexual orientation, or physical or mental disability; and

Whereas, as part of its organizing goal SEIU has been working with members of the disability community to bring members of this community into our union; and

Whereas, according to 2000 U.S. census data only 55.8% of adults with disabilities in the U.S. are currently afforded the dignity of employment; and

Whereas, persons with disabilities who are employed are often placed in segregated work settings, paid less than the minimum wage, and denied access to promotion; and

Whereas, persons with disabilities often place their public health benefits at risk when accepting employment ⁽¹⁾; and

Whereas, the loss of health benefits when losing employment can lead to increased hardship and more severe disabling conditions due to lack of access to medical services; and

Whereas, access to employment for persons with disabilities is often limited by misguided assumptions and lowered expectations of the value and productivity that persons with disabilities bring to the workplace, in spite of repeated, recent studies showing that workers with disabilities are just as productive and valued by their employers as their non-disabled co-workers.⁽²⁾; and

Whereas, numerous artificial barriers to employment of persons with disabilities persist as the result of public policy and labor management agreements that end up excluding disabled workers from the marketplace. These barriers include public and private health care benefits policy at the state and federal level; civil service testing and hiring procedures; job classification requirements; federal Social Security Disability Insurance and Supplemental Security Income benefits policy and work incentive rules that don't work ⁽³⁾ and few understand; and Whereas, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) are laws that were enacted to give equal access to the workplace to people with disabilities but employers often fail to meet existing requirements under the ADA and FMLA, and many union rank and file members and stewards are unaware of how to inform and protect members' rights under the ADA and FMLA.

Therefore be it resolved:

SEIU will take an ongoing leadership role to contribute to policy change that removes artificial barriers to the employment of persons with disabilities and emphasizes the abilities and innovations of people with disabilities who engage in any paid work.

SEIU will work in partnership with other groups to develop initiatives and policy that support employment of persons with disabilities in good union jobs with access to benefits.

SEIU will support health care policy such that no individuals lose insurance when they lose a job, change jobs, or lose existing insurance when they get a job.

SEIU staff and membership will be given the information they need to work with employers with respect to health benefits, COBRA health continuation protections, HIPPA, and pre-existing condition exclusionary policies and protections.

SEIU will develop and provide training and training materials for staff, stewards and members on:

- Federal laws on inclusive employment and relevant state initiatives
- Americans with Disabilities Act and reasonable accommodations
- Family Medical Leave Act
- Information on protecting and retaining access to benefits for persons with disabilities who are employed and/or self-employed

SEIU through its publications, websites, and other communications with staff members, employers and policy partners will address cultural barriers and misinformation that limit the acceptance of persons with disabilities in the workforce. These will include highlighting:

- The positive contributions made by disabled workers who are SEIU members
- Innovative initiatives and best practices that support the employment of persons with disabilities in good union jobs with access to benefits.

SEIU will work with employers to create more flexible job descriptions and work rules that facilitate the employment of persons with disabilities. SEIU will create and share contract language that facilitates employment of persons with disabilities.

SEIU locals will reject contract language that would create unnecessary barriers and de facto systemic exclusions that limit the employment of persons with disabilities.

SEIU will support the establishment and operation of worker with disabilities caucuses or committees at the levels of chapters, locals, the International, and Change To Win.

(1) For example, a 2001 Urban Institute study found that 20.1% of non-working adults with disabilities cited "fear of losing health insurance or Medicaid" as a reason for not looking for work.

(2) (De Paul University, Exploring the Bottom Line: A Study of the Costs and Benefits of Workers with Disabilities, 2008)

(3) For example, the Social Security Administration reports that in 2003 and 2004 just 0.5% of SSDI beneficiaries had a change in cash benefit because of employment