

DATE: April 16, 2010
TO: International Executive Board
FROM: Andy Stern
SUBJECT: Some Final Thoughts

To all of you, my friends, partners, and the leaders of the Executive Board, I wanted to add to the comments I made over the last two days, about SEIU's and my future.

When John Sweeney announced he was leaving in 1995, I felt he had three final responsibilities.

First, to offer his recommendation on succession;

Second, to allow for the Board to make the final decision without coercion and in the least divisive way possible

Third, to make a smooth personal transition.

And I hope to do just that.

After a great amount of my own thought, hearing opinions from many of you, and holding them up against my own criteria—I recommend that Anna Burger not only temporarily—but then permanently—become the 10th President and first woman to lead our union.

For me the issue of succession has 4 key characteristics.

- 1. Competency** - the next President needs both national experience and the ability to do a much more sophisticated and complicated job than the one I found in 1996. Running an institution with as much financial, legal, organizational, political, and strategic responsibilities is an unending challenge, and cannot be underestimated in importance.
- 2. Continuity** - SEIU needs a leader who will be true to carrying on our members' decisions to win Justice for All, and continue critical relationships inside and outside of our union. One of our key strengths is the relationships we have with the Obama Administration, Cabinet Members, Governors, other union leaders and allies nationally. For our private and public employers it is an ingredient in their calculations on how to deal with our members. It offers incentives to meet, partner with us for mutual gain, and a warning that they can be held accountable when they act contrary to the greater good.
- 3. Unity** - SEIU does not ever need a drawn-out leadership fight if it can be avoided and that is certainly important now. For me, the critical issue in any election is about whom best can lead this union as President - not for the leaders or staff - but for the members whom we are privileged to represent. While people may say things in the heat of a campaign, I know that SEIU leaders will unite, putting the interests of the members first, once the decision has been made. That's what it means to be a real leader in SEIU.
- 4. Diversity** - It is time to end the streak of 9 white male Presidents. Anna started as a rank and file member of SEIU who, in our finest tradition, rose through the union to become International Secretary-Treasurer. She is the only person who has held and succeeded in every single major responsibility of a local union—steward, member organizer, executive board member, local staff and Local Union President, as well as at the state and national level—State Council Director, Division Director, Assistant to John Sweeney and his campaign manager for presidency of the AFL-CIO, Executive Vice-President for the East, International Secretary-Treasurer, and Chair of Change to Win.

Anna has led organizing drives such as the Beverly campaign in Pennsylvania, turned our political program into an engine of growth, led the organizing growth of the Public Division, the affiliation vote for 1199P, and negotiated the affiliation of SEIU 1199, now UHE.

Anna has handled the toughest assignments the union has confronted; the trusteeship of 32BJ, leading the planning and execution of the last 4 International Conventions, chairing in 2008 the coordinated bargaining committee dealing with a most contentious issue, recently using her skills to help save 15,000 jobs in Puerto Rico while developing our member engagement program and the Institute for Change.

Anna has strong relationships with the Obama Administration, Governors, allies, and is already a public presence and spokesperson for our union in this country, and will keep the SEIU message and image in the media and top levels of government.

Anna, like anyone, will need your support, have her own challenges and style, but she has earned the opportunity to be President. Her election is the best advice I can offer.

I know and respect that others have different opinions, but given my choice to retire—the decision now is not mine but yours and I will respect and support whatever decision is made.

It is essential and everyone's responsibility though, to maintain the highest level of unity possible during this transition. As I have remarked repeatedly, this is a critical moment for our members and our institution's future, and no election is worth damaging this great union.

Our members expect and deserve better, and our enemies would like nothing more than to see SEIU devolve into an internal battle.

In terms of timing—this announcement will be followed in the future by my official letter of retirement. That will trigger the Secretary-Treasurer assuming the Presidency during the decision-making process. The delay of my announcement and the setting of an International Executive Board Meeting within a 30 day period will allow for a thoughtful decision.

I have asked Bob Weinberg and Norm Gleichman to be the Election Officers.

I respectfully request that no new Board members be added during this period, no IEB members change local union membership, and that no staff of the International Union on the International Executive Board votes in the election so that we ensure that this is a decision made with the highest level of integrity possible.

Finally, in terms of my transition, we are working on how I can make an orderly transition and consult in areas like immigration, organizing, and fiscal reform where I might be of some assistance.

We have been a great team, made hard choices, and taken bold action.

Our countries are a better place because of it.

I could never imagine a better group of people to work with and lead this union.

I hope we can work together in some way in the future, but know our fight for justice will never end.

It is hard to imagine what the future may bring, but I know my decision after 14 years as President is the right choice for me.

Keep the lights shining on our mission of building a just and humane society.

This union is a gift. Treasure it. Respect it, and build it stronger.

Its future is now in your hands.

Keep making change and leading the way.

Because if not us then who, and if not now then when?

I love you all!

Andy Stern
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