California SEIU executive director resigns following arrest for grand theft and tax fraud

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The executive director of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) California, Alma Hernandez, was arrested last Friday on corruption charges including grand theft and tax fraud. Hernandez and her husband Jose Moscoso were charged with under-reporting their income by $1.4 million between 2014 and 2018.

While working on a political action committee for a Democratic State Senate candidate in 2014, Hernandez allegedly paid $11,700 to her husband for services he did not provide. In addition, Moscoso is alleged to have concealed the number of employees in his air duct-cleaning business, failing to report $300,000 in wages.

California Attorney General Rob Bonta said Hernandez had embezzled money from an SEIU California-sponsored political action committee when she was the treasurer of the Working Families for Solorio for Senate 2014 PAC.

According to the complaint, Hernandez and Moscoso also filed false joint income tax returns and underreported $1,427,874 of income between 2014 and 2018, leaving them owing $143,483 in unpaid income taxes.

Hernandez has been charged with two counts of grand theft, one count of perjury and five counts of filing a false income tax return with intent to evade. Both Hernandez and Moscoso are being charged with aggravated white-collar crime.

Hernandez and her husband appeared in Sacramento Superior Court before being booked into the Sacramento County Main Jail. She was denied bail and her next hearing is scheduled for November 9.

The SEIU in California is the state's largest union, with over 700,000 members, including social workers, janitors and doctors. Hernandez led the union for 11 years before she was forced to resign last week.

Alma Hernandez's salary was estimated at $239,950 in 2019, according to Unionfacts.com. During her tenure as executive director of SEIU California she presided over years of attacks on union members' wages and living standards.

In 2017, a contract was approved which increased salaries by only 11.5 percent, less than the state's initial offer of 11.84 percent. When the state's cost-of-living increases were factored in, the net salary increase amounted to only 0.5 percent.

While nurses and hospital staff protested and fought for safe working conditions during the pandemic, the SEIU sought to isolate and betray every manifestation of resistance, no matter how small. In Antioch, more than 350 workers at Sutter Health Hospital were told to end their five-day strike after a contract was approved by the SEIU. That was only days before an October 10 strike authorization vote covering 24,000 Kaiser Permanente nurses and staff members passed by 96 percent.

The union is a major financier of the Democratic Party in California. This year, the SEIU opposed the recall of Governor Gavin Newsom, donating more than $6 million to his campaign.

The arrest of Hernandez comes at a time of turmoil within the SEIU. The board of directors of SEIU Local 1000, the largest SEIU local in the state, with some 96,000 members, met last weekend to consider stripping the local's elected president of most of his powers.

SEIU Local 1000 board members met at the California Democratic Party headquarters in Sacramento to discuss the leadership of President Richard Brown.

Brown was elected president of the local on June 30, having campaigned as a dissident opponent of the state

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SEIU bureaucracy. He pledged to cut union dues in half and refused to support Newsom in the recall election, despite being a registered Democrat.

Brown was accused by Local 1000 board members of delaying the selection of representatives to bargain with the state and meeting with “right-to-work leaders.”

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