

# OPINION

## Free choice for SEIU too

Re "Labor's real fight," Opinion, Feb. 1, and "Bay Area health union seeks vote on members," Feb. 3

I find it ironic that the Service Employees International Union is opposing the request of the petition signers to be represented by a different union. Sounds as if the SEIU, one of the biggest proponents of the Employee Free Choice Act, isn't willing to extend free choice to its own union members when those members want to secede from the SEIU.

If the Employee Free Choice Act is such a benefit to the working person, then the SEIU should be eager to abide by the same principles it demands business and employees abide by. If not, then this act should not be passed by Congress.

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## Bay Area health union seeks vote on members

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California's labor battle over who will represent tens of thousands of hospital workers will apparently be determined in voting booths at dozens of hospitals and nursing homes around the state.

The National Union of Healthcare Workers, formed last week by the ousted leaders of United Healthcare Workers West, on Monday asked state officials to conduct elections at 64 healthcare facilities where it says a majority of employees currently represented by Oakland-based UHW want to join the new group.

"Now that a majority of my co-workers has signed a petition to be represented by NUHW, we hope ... UHW will

walk away and leave us alone," said Shayne Silva, a psychiatric technician and shop steward at Alta Bates Summit Medical Center, at a teleconference.

The Service Employees International Union last week removed the leaders of UHW after they refused to sign over 65,000 of their members to a new local that will be formed to represent home health aides across California. SEIU President Andy Stern installed two of his executive vice presidents, Dave Regan and Elisao Medina as trustees.

"This is absolute irresponsibility and recklessness, and we are going to fight them every step of the way," Regan said.

Stern and Sal Rosselli, who until last week was president of UHW, have been in an ugly public dispute over organizing and

negotiation tactics that has been unfolding over months.

Stern has said he wants to consolidate local unions into larger, stronger groups that have more sway with employers and politicians. But Rosselli accused Stern of a power grab, saying he sought to replace locally elected union officials with loyal appointees.

Rosselli, who calls the 5-day-old group "New UHW," said he had not intended to file for recognition so quickly, but was concerned that UHW was pushing to close contracts with employers to keep out the new union. Workers under contract cannot be wooed away until it expires. He said the petitions effectively end bargaining between the employers and UHW-SEIU.

"We're notifying these employers to prevent them from closing contracts," Rosselli said. "SEIU no longer represents the workers. They're no longer authorized to bargain for these workers, because they don't have majority support."

Regan disagreed. He said the petitions do not have any effect on contract negotiations, which he said continue on their normal course. He scoffed at NUHW's contention that he should recognize their representation and abandon work sites where a majority had signed NUHW cards.

"If Sal Rosselli believes we are going to stand back and watch his rump organization weaken the members of UHW, he is beyond mistaken," Regan said.

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