

UNITE HERE Philadelphia: Just the Facts

Prior to the UNITE HERE merger in 2004, there were three organizations in Philadelphia:

1. **HERE Local 274** – representing 4,000 hotel and private sector food service workers.
2. **HERE Local 634** – representing 2,200 Philadelphia school cafeteria workers.
3. **UNITE Philadelphia Joint Board** – representing 1,900 clothing, textile, and laundry workers.

By December 2005, these three organizations had affiliated together, forming the “UNITE HERE Philadelphia Joint Board”, with over 8,000 members. Lynne Fox was the Manager of this joint organization. Each local, however, retained its own separate identity within the joint board.

In late 2008, some leaders from the former UNITE began trying to split up UNITE HERE. They are trying to claim not just the former UNITE members (i.e. 1,900 in Philadelphia), but all the membership of their merged organizations (i.e. over 8,000 in Philadelphia).

In February, 2009, the members at the newly organized **Harrah’s Chester Downs** casino chose to leave the Joint Board and instead join Local 54, UNITE HERE (out of Atlantic City). The employer recognized their decision, and works exclusively with Local 54.

On March 6, 2009, the leadership of Local 634 voted unanimously to leave the Joint Board and become a direct affiliate of UNITE HERE. The **Philadelphia School District** recognized their decision and works exclusively with Local 634. The PA Labor Relations Board dismissed the Joint Board’s claims. In retaliation, SEIU made its raid formal in July by submitting a PLRB petition requesting an election.

The attached 2008 LM2 form filed by the Philadelphia Joint Board reports that at end of 2008, the Philadelphia Joint Board had only 3,417 members, with 1,842 of these coming from Harrah’s and the School District. Remove them and **less than 1,600 members** were left in the Philadelphia Joint Board as of March 6. (Local 274 has always filed a separate LM2 form.)

On March 7, 2009, the Phila. Joint Board took an **illegal vote to secede** from UNITE HERE, with a vote of 21-8. Of the 21 votes to secede, 14 were cast by Lynne Fox’s paid staff (who then resigned her position in Unite Here). The vote was illegal, nonbinding, and subject to ongoing court proceedings.¹

On March 13, 2009, the UNITE HERE Philadelphia Joint Board **ceased to exist**, because its charter was revoked by the General Executive Board. At this time, all of its members and locals became direct affiliates of UNITE HERE, and all of the PJB’s assets, including its real estate and bank holdings, became direct assets of UNITE HERE International Union.

On March 24, the former Joint Board leaders attempted to create a **new SEIU affiliate**, called, “Workers United Philadelphia Joint Board”. They are raiding the former UNITE HERE members and attempting to get them to leave their union and join SEIU.

During March and April, the PJB held various “drive-by elections” in several Local 274 shops, but they **never held an open membership meeting as required by bylaws**. Unite Here held an investigatory hearing on May 18 in response to members’ concerns about voter fraud. In early July, John Wilhelm appointed Warren Heyman as Trustee to oversee Local 274, with Antony Dugdale as Deputy Trustee.

¹ *Gillis, et al. v. Wilhelm, et al. and Raynor v. Wilhem, et al.*, 09 Civ. 1116 (GBD) and 09 Civ. 1374 (GBD), U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York.