

# The St. Paul Union Advocate

123rd Year, No. 2, Issue 5429

For union homes in Ramsey, Dakota, Washington and Chisago counties

August 2019

## Do Something!



### United Way Action Day

Do you remember the excitement you felt about school shopping? Buying new clothes and supplies for a new school year? Not every student has that memory.

To make sure all students have the supplies they need when school starts this fall, Greater Twin Cities United Way plans to fill 40,000 backpacks during its annual Action Day volunteer event Aug. 8 at Xcel Energy Center.

Union members and retirees are needed to pitch in, and the St. Paul Labor Studies Resource Center is recruiting helping hands!

To register yourself and your co-workers, family members or children (ages 8 and up) for a volunteer shift, call Lynne Larkin-Wright at 651-222-3787, extension 116, or Colleen Nocerini at extension 115.

## St. Paul to Kuwait

### Union leaders bring taste of home to Minnesota Guard troops overseas

By Michael Moore

Union Advocate editor

Joe Fowler and Trinidad Uribe III flipped steaks at the grill. Don Mullin hauled ice to keep the beverages cold. Tom McCarthy kept a buffet line stocked with pasta salad, corn on the cob and other sides.

The four union leaders helped host a barbecue Saturday, May 25, but it wasn't your typical holiday-weekend cookout.

Fowler, McCarthy, Mullin and Uribe were part of a volunteer team, recruited

by local nonprofit Serving Our Troops, that traveled from St. Paul to Kuwait over Memorial Day weekend and served steak dinners to troops and civilians stationed at Camp Arifjan, including more than 600 soldiers from the Minnesota National Guard.

At the same time, the Minnesota soldiers' families and friends gathered at RiverCentre in St. Paul for a catered lunch – with the same menu, served by local volunteers – and a brief program

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Building Trades leaders (L to R, standing) Tom McCarthy, Trinidad Uribe, Joe Fowler and Don Mullin took a photo with ex-Viking Steve Hutchinson at Camp Arifjan.

photo courtesy Michael Murray Photography

## STRIKING IN PRIME TIME



Sahro Sharif, one of dozens of Amazon warehouse workers who joined a Prime Day strike in Shakopee July 15, addressed supporters during a rally near the picket line.

Union Advocate photo

### Shakopee warehouse workers' historic strike draws worldwide attention

By Michael Moore

Union Advocate editor

Hibaq Mohamed reminds herself not to drink too much water while she works in the packaging department of Amazon's MSP1 warehouse in Shakopee.

Even on hot, humid days, when managers make a point of encouraging workers to hydrate,

Mohamed remains at her workstation, intentionally parched. Too many times, she's seen the walk to and from the restroom cost co-workers their jobs.

"The bathroom is far away," Mohamed said. "It's a huge building. There's no time."

Outside MSP1 last month, on a muggy picket line swollen with solidarity, Mohamed and

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 6)

### Regional Labor Federation to join Labor Day parade at State Fair

It has become one of the largest union gatherings on Labor Day in Minnesota, and the St. Paul Regional Labor Federation will do it again this year, sponsoring a marching unit in the Minnesota State Fair's parade through the fairgrounds Sept. 2.

All union members and retirees are invited to join the marching unit with their families. Free tickets to the fair are available to parade participants who RSVP in advance.

Union members are encouraged to wear their union garb and carry their union banners.

"As union members, this is our day to be loud and proud," Regional Labor Federation President Bobby Kasper said. "Let's show the community who we are, the work we do and the things we stand for. Let's make an impact!"

The federation's parade unit will line up at 1 p.m. across the street from the fairgrounds entrance on Como Avenue, near Gate 25. The parade, which snakes through the fairgrounds at a distance of roughly 14 blocks, begins at 2 p.m.

RSVP is required by Monday, Aug. 26, to Lynne Larkin-Wright at 651-222-3787, ext. 116.





## Go Figure

**\$14.5 million**

Average compensation of S&amp;P 500 companies' CEOs in 2018.

**287 to 1**

Those CEOs made 287 times more than the median employee at their companies last year.

**\$5.2 million**

Increase in the average S&amp;P 500 CEO's pay in the past decade.

**\$7,858**

Increase in the average U.S. worker's pay the past decade.

Source: AFL-CIO Executive Paywatch



## Labor Voices: Tom Erickson

**An open letter of thanks to the local labor movement**

On behalf of our over 12,000 members, thank you for your support of the Teamsters Local 120 Murphy Warehouse and Lakeville Motor express bargaining units. The outpouring of financial donations, social media outreach and in-person presence on the picket lines was overwhelming. It exceeded anything I have seen in my over 35 years as a union member.

We have all heard the saying "united we stand, divided we beg." But it's humbling to truly realize the power we have as a labor movement when we come together for a just cause. With your backing, our members stood strong and sent a message to every employer in the region that the labor movement will unite to fight injustice wherever we find it.

The Murphy Warehouse strike ended with an agreement that offsets every penny of in-network health care cost increases and every penny of premium increases with wages. On top of that, it delivers the biggest raises in the history of the contract. Rights protected, voices heard and our members won.

In January 2019, the former Lakeville Motor Express employees won a \$1.25-million-dollar settlement in the "alter-ego" case against the cohort of executives and shell companies involved in the Lakeville closure. The settlement also states if the payments are not made on time, the amount will increase to \$2.4 million. Rights protected, voices heard and our members won.

**"Teamsters never forget, and your support won't be forgotten by our local."**

— Tom Erickson



Teamsters never forget, and your support won't be forgotten by our local. You can count on our local and our members to rally for you the way that you rallied for our Murphy Warehouse and Lakeville Motor Express workers.

These campaigns were about sending a message that corporate greed will be met with Union strength. And it worked. These employers mistakenly thought they could take on our local, but they couldn't beat a united labor movement. Your assistance helped deliver a great contract and settlement for our members and laid a roadmap for winning contract campaigns through labor solidarity.

Thank you for your support, your strength and your resolve for justice.

In Solidarity,  
Teamsters Local 120

— Tom Erickson is president and principal officer of Teamsters Local 120.

## Labor History Spotlight

**Revisiting labor's victory in the St. Paul charter battle of 1929**By **Iric Nathanson**Special to *The Union Advocate*

The Union Advocate was outraged. Special interests were about to take over St. Paul City Hall, the labor paper warned its readers. "They want to make government function as an agent of the profit hunting interests regardless of human welfare," declared a front-page editorial on Sept. 12, 1929.

The Advocate's outrage was aimed at a plan to establish a city manager for

St. Paul, an appointed bureaucrat with broad authority to oversee the operation in municipal government. The plan was drafted by a blue ribbon committee, composed of members of the St. Paul Charter Commission and headed by James Otis, a partner in one of the city's most prestigious law firms. Other committee members were all from St. Paul's business establishment. They had spent the past year drafting the far-reaching plan without any

input from labor. Now, the plan was scheduled to come before voters in a citywide referendum Nov. 6.

Under the proposal, the City Council would be composed of 10 at-large members, each elected to four-year terms. Council members would have overlapping terms, with half elected every two years. The mayor would be elected every two years and would be a voting member of the council.

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 12)

**Letters**

- Send letters to: 353 W. 7th St., Suite 201, St. Paul, MN 55102
- Fax them to 651-293-1989
- Email them to: [mmoore@stpaulunions.org](mailto:mmoore@stpaulunions.org)

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Editor's Note: "Voices" is a forum for opinions from across the labor movement. It appears regularly in *The Advocate*. We encourage readers to respond to our columnists' opinions. To write a letter to the editor, see the upper-right-hand corner of this page. To inquire about contributing to "Voices," call 651-222-3787, extension 112. This column does not reflect the position of the St. Paul Regional Labor Federation or its assemblies.



## Carpenters host 'Girls Who Build'

Know a girl who likes getting creative, building things or working with her hands? Encourage her to attend "Girls Who Build" on Saturday, Aug. 17. It's an opportunity for girls between the ages of 7 and 16 to gain hands-on experience in a variety of skilled-trade activities.

The event, hosted by the North Central States Regional Council of Carpenters at the union's training center in St. Paul, is designed to build girls' skills, confidence and understanding of the construction industry, which offers good-paying career opportunities for men and women alike.

Women who are members of the Carpenters union will guide participants through the event, helping them build their own take-home keepsake and answering any questions girls may have about working in construction.

"Girls Who Build" is co-sponsored by the Girl Connect initiative of local nonprofit Girls Are Powerful.

The event will run from 2 to 6 p.m. at the Carpenters' training center, 710 Olive St., St. Paul. Registration fee is \$15 and includes a pizza dinner. Register online at [www.girlsarepowerful.org](http://www.girlsarepowerful.org).

## Solidarity on a stick

The Minnesota State Fair runs Aug. 22 to Sept. 2, and the Minnesota AFL-CIO Labor Pavilion will offer a daily lineup of family-friendly, labor programming all 12 days of the great Minnesota get-together.

Stop by the pavilion, at the corner of Dan Patch and Cooper, for live music, demonstrations, giveaways and to meet the working people who make up our labor movement.

A complete schedule of events will be posted at [mnafclcio.org](http://mnafclcio.org).

## Freedom Library tackles housing justice

The East Side Freedom Library in St. Paul will host a community conversation about housing justice Aug. 13 at 7 p.m. "Housing Justice: What It Is and How To Achieve It" comes after a series of events – films, panel discussions, presentations – exploring the issue not as an abstract idea, but as it relates to the neighborhood.

"We believe that when renters, homeowners, home buyers, community and labor activists, realtors, and homeless persons come together, we can put together the pieces of the puzzle that will reveal answers," organizers said in promotional materials for the event.

The ESFL is located at 1105 Greenbrier St. Learn more about the library at [eastsidefreedomlibrary.org](http://eastsidefreedomlibrary.org).



Scenes from Local 417's open house July 11, clockwise from top-left: Business Manager Trinidad Uribe and Shoreview Mayor Sandy Martin cut the ribbon on the union's new training center, as (L to R) Business Agent Craig Bistodeau, Training Director Brad Hopping, Minnesota Pipe Trades Association President David Ybarra and Sen. Jason Isaacson, whose district includes the facility, looked on; the National Fire Sprinkler Association's burn trailer demonstrated the importance of union Sprinkler Fitters' work; Pipe Trades leaders paused for a photo with St. Paul Building and Construction Trades Council Executive Secretary Don Mullin (L), St. Paul Regional Labor Federation President Bobby Kasper (third from right) and Minneapolis Regional Labor Federation President Chelsie Glaubitz Gabiou; Uribe addressed members, labor leaders and lawmakers who attended the open house.

Union Advocate photos

## New training center gives Sprinkler Fitters Local 417 room to grow

By Michael Moore  
Union Advocate editor

Sprinkler Fitters Local 417 cut the ribbon on a new, state-of-the-art training center and union hall in Shoreview last month, celebrating with an open house attended by active and retired members, labor leaders and elected officials.

The 27,200-square-foot facility is nearly twice the size of Local 417's previous home in Minneapolis. The union invested over \$2 million to purchase and remodel the Shoreview property, which formerly housed a transmission shop and an independent school.

"It really was ideal," Training Director Brad Hopping said. "We needed classroom space, and we needed shop space. This site had both."

Local 417's old training space felt increasingly cramped as the union's roster of apprentices expanded in recent years. The shop, in particular, was bursting at the seams, Hopping said.

"We're a hands-on trade," he added. "People who come to our apprenticeship don't want to sit in a classroom; they want to get their hands dirty."

Apprentices will have plenty of room to do just that in the new facility. It boasts modules designed to teach multiple skills: pipe threading and grooving; soldering, brazing and welding; installation and repair of dry valve, pre-action valve and specialty systems; fire pump testing and installation; backflow prevention and more.

Trinidad Uribe III, Local 417's business manager, said the fire protection industry has "changed dramatically" over the last decade. Developers are using new technology and materials on job sites, and the pace of work is speeding up.

The new facility, Uribe said, will equip the union's 76 apprentices with the skills they need to thrive on the job site – and give journey-level workers a place to keep their skills up to date.

"Our members reinvest in training as part of our wage package," Uribe said. "They know the positive effects of investing in training. It's what sets us apart from our competition."

"We feel we're the best-trained Sprinkler Fitters in the country, and that is because our members have made a commitment to being the best."

That's not just parochial boasting. Minnesota ranks among the best states in the country when it comes to sprinkler-related fire saves.

The importance of Sprinkler Fitters' work took center stage after the ribbon-cutting ceremony, when Local 417 invited the National Fire Sprinkler Association to hold a burn-trailer demonstration.

Under the watchful eye of Shoreview firefighters, the NFSA representatives sparked fires on both sides of a two-room trailer, with each room furnished like a small living room. One room, equipped with fire sprinklers, remained salvageable after several minutes. The other room contained only charred furniture remains.

"Everyone comes to a union shop like this as apprentices, looking for a high-paying job, looking for security for their family, looking for benefits, looking for a bright future," the NFSA's Tim Butler, former fire chief in St. Paul, said. "Everyone who comes to Local 417 is going to realize that bright future, but they're also going to walk out of here a lifesaver."

"Every single person that puts a fire sprinkler in a building today is saving lives and property."





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## Airport server takes seat on Metropolitan Airports Commission

Airport workers continue to have a voice on the governing body that oversees Minneapolis-St. Paul International and six smaller airports after Gov. Tim Walz appointed Yodit Bizen, a server at MSP, to the Metropolitan Airports Commission June 28.

Bizen, who resides in Apple Valley, has been a member of UNITE HERE Local 17, the Twin Cities-based hospitality workers' union, since taking a job at the airport in 2001. Local 17 represents over 1,200 workers at MSP Airport. "Thanks to Governor Walz for the opportunity," Bizen said. "I am looking forward to working with the other commissioners. Also, thank you to my union, UNITE HERE Local 17, for supporting me."

Airport workers first won a voice on the MAC in 2015, when then-Gov. Mark Dayton appointed Ibrahim Mohamed to the commission. Mohamed drove passenger carts in MSP for Air Serv, a Delta Air Lines contractor whose workers, at the time, were seeking to organize a union with the Service Employees International Union.

Bizen's appointment to the MAC was timely as well.

Two weeks prior to Walz's announcement, airline catering workers who prepare, pack, and deliver food and beverages served onboard Delta flights – Bizen's fellow UNITE HERE members – voted overwhelmingly to authorize a strike. A campaign to raise the airport minimum wage to \$15 is also gaining strength.

Local 17 Secretary Treasurer Sheigh Freeberg said by appointing Bizen to the MAC, "Gov. Walz and Lt. Gov. Peggy Flanagan have shown that they believe working people's voices matter. We are proud and excited to see a long-time member take such an important role!"

## Painters' charity golf fundraiser Aug. 27

District Council 82 of the International Union of Painters and Allied Trades (IUPAT) will hold its annual PATCH Day Golf Fundraiser Tuesday, Aug. 27, at Majestic Oaks Golf Club in Ham Lake.

All proceeds from the 18-hole event will support the Painters and Allied Trades Children's Hope Foundation, which contributes to causes across the council's five-state jurisdiction.

For registration information, call Lindsay at 651-224-5480.

## Ready to strike, airline catering workers say 'one job should be enough'

By Michael Moore  
Union Advocate editor

Airline catering workers at Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport are mobilizing in advance of a potential nationwide strike that could impact services on board American, Delta and United airlines.

During informational picketing at MSP July 3, LSG Sky Chefs workers said they aren't backing down from their demands for a living wage and affordable, accessible health insurance.

"We're going to fight together, and we're going to win," Sky Chefs worker Juana Estrada said.

UNITE HERE Local 17, which represents about 450 Sky Chefs workers based at MSP Airport, scheduled the picketing on a busy travel day, as vacationers headed out of town for the holiday weekend.

After gathering across the street from Terminal 1's departures area, some 50-plus workers and supporters marched, carried signs and chanted the union's rallying cry, "one job should be enough!"

U.S. Rep. Ilhan Omar, who represents Minnesota's 5th Congressional District, joined the picketing. During a brief rally, she applauded Sky Chefs workers for taking a stand against corporate greed, noting that the airlines doing business with Sky Chefs have earned a combined \$50 billion in profits over the last five years.

"So the greedy bosses think that it's OK to take home \$50 billion of profit and not pay their workers?" Omar said. "We're saying not under our watch."

"Health care should be a human right, and nowhere in the United States should people have to work more than one job to take care of themselves. I hear you loud and clear, and we're going to make sure that (the airlines) hear you loud and clear."

Yobit Bizen, a Local 17 member who was appointed by Gov. Tim Walz to the Metropolitan Airports Commission just weeks earlier, pledged to make sure workers' voices are heard by the MAC.

"It's because of these people and their contributions that we are able to be the best airport in the country," said Bizen, who works as a server at an MSP restaurant. "It's only fair that they get the respect and fair treatment they deserve."

The union contract between UNITE HERE and Sky Chefs, covering roughly 11,000 workers, became amendable under the Railway Labor Act in December 2018. Federally mediated talks have been taking place on the national level for months.

In June UNITE HERE members nationwide voted overwhelmingly to authorize a strike if the National Mediation Board, which administers the Railway Labor Act, declares an impasse and releases the two sides



Members of UNITE HERE Local 17 who work at Sky Chefs, Delta's catering contractor, staged informational picketing at MSP Airport July 3. Union Advocate photos



"Nowhere in the United States should people have to work more than one job to take care of themselves," U.S. Rep. Ilhan Omar told picketers.

from negotiations. Union officials at the picket said they expected that to happen in the coming weeks.

"But we're not going to wait until they release us," Local 17 President Christa Mello said. "It's important that we all continue to join in actions" to pressure Sky Chefs and the airlines.

Locally, 99.7% of MSP-based Sky Chefs workers who participated in the vote supported a strike. Estrada said the vote shows her co-workers "are tired of working for a company that doesn't want to give us the rights we deserve."

According to Local 17, catering workers at MSP earn as little as \$11.15 per hour, a rate lower than the City of Minneapolis' minimum wage for large employers. Most earn less than \$15 per hour, and only 26 percent of catering workers enrolled in their employer-provided health insurance last year.

Estrada said the insurance plan's premiums and out-of-pocket costs are



Juana Estrada

too high for most Sky Chefs workers to afford. Family coverage costs her \$500 a month, she said, and even after 23 years working for Sky Chefs, she's still forced to "choose between paying bills at the clinic or buying food for my family."

"We're not even living like humans," she said.



## At the Capitol

## Unions hail new wage theft law as nation's toughest

Minnesota is now a national leader in making sure workers get paid what they're owed, thanks to a new, bipartisan wage theft law. The measure won approval during a special legislative session in May and was quickly signed by Gov. Tim Walz.

Advocates, including the union-backed Minnesota Coalition to End Wage Theft, hailed the new law as one of the strongest in the country. It makes wage theft a criminal felony and broadens the state's power to prosecute alleged violators.

That means more of the estimated 40,000 working Minnesotans who pursue wage-theft claims annually will get the justice they deserve.

"If you earn a wage, you should be paid a wage," Walz said July 17, during a ceremony at the

Capitol to celebrate the new law. "If a worker has their wages stolen, it is no different than any other kind of theft.

"For too long, bad employers have taken wages from hardworking Minnesotans, with little to no recourse for the workers."

Wage theft can take the form of failing to pay the minimum wage or overtime premiums, or denying workers their mandatory breaks. Employers who misclassify employees as independent contractors also commit wage theft.

In July, Attorney General Keith Ellison announced plans to form a special unit "to use all the powers the law gives us to investigate wage theft and enforce the new law."



Advocates gathered around Gov. Tim Walz during a celebration of the state's new wage theft law at the Capitol last month. photo courtesy SEIU Healthcare MN

## On Prime Day, Shakopee warehouse workers strike for safer conditions and a voice on the job

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

dozens of her co-workers took a stand against Amazon's punishing productivity rates, unsafe working conditions and anti-union culture.

The July 15 strike put up a "digital picket line" on Prime Day, the company's annual savings celebration. It was the first Prime Day strike at a U.S. worksite, and it drew the attention of presidential candidates, union leaders and media outlets worldwide.

"We know Prime Day is a big day for Amazon, so we hope this strike will help executives understand how serious we are about wanting real change that will uplift the workers in Amazon's warehouses," Safiyo Mohamed, an MSP1 worker who joined the strike, said. "We create a lot of wealth for Amazon, but they aren't treating us with the respect and dignity that we deserve."

## Solidarity pours in

MSP1 workers walked off the job and onto the picket line at 2 p.m., cutting short their scheduled shift by three and a half hours.

They were greeted by members of community, faith-based and labor groups who traveled to Shakopee to stand in solidarity with the striking workers. The crowd steadily grew to well over 200 people, who fanned out along the sidewalk that borders Amazon's property in the Shakopee industrial park.

Members of the Minnesota Nurses Association, Service Employees International Union, Teamsters, United Food and Commercial Workers and other local unions walked the picket line, and a string of elected officials offered words of encouragement during a rally later that afternoon.

Liz Shuler, secretary-treasurer of the AFL-CIO and the second-highest-ranking labor leader in the U.S., praised the striking workers for their courage in a video posted on social media.

"At the AFL-CIO, we're standing strong in solidarity with the workers in Shakopee and beyond, and we hope



Striking Amazon warehouse workers Hibaq Mohamed (L) and Meg Brady (R) shared a laugh on the picket line outside the MSP1 facility in Shakopee.

Union Advocate photos

you will too," Shuler said. "Show Amazon that Prime Day is not just for shopping, it's for respecting the rights of working people."

## 'Humans, not robots'

Striking workers wore shirts and carried banners emblazoned with their rallying cry, "We are humans, not robots!" Atop the list of demands printed on their picket signs was "humane workloads."

Amazon assigns a productivity rate to each position at the facility, and that rate, MSP1 workers say, is too inflexible. Hibaq Mohamed said she's scheduled to be at MSP1 for 10 and a half hours per workday, and she clocks out for a 30-minute meal break each shift. During each of the remaining 10 hours, Mohamed is expected to "make rate," or assemble a minimum number of packages.

The number doesn't change if she stops working to use the bathroom, to rest her sore arms, or to pray. That's why Mohamed tries to drink as little



Hibaq Mohamed, Amazon MSP1 worker

**"They're not even treating us like animals. They're treating us like insects."**

water as she can. She's seen co-workers running to and from the restroom fall and injure themselves. She's seen people who failed to make rate lose their jobs.

"They're not even treating us like animals," Mohamed said. "They're treating us like insects."

Meg Brady, currently on short-

term disability from her job at MSP1, described Amazon's attitude toward its warehouse employees as "churn and burn."

Brady was among a group of 70 workers who started at MSP1 in November 2017. Only five still work at the warehouse today, she said.

"Some of them left because they were injured in the first few weeks, and some left because they couldn't make rate," Brady said. "Still others left because the constant mental and physical stress of this job just wasn't worth it to them any longer."

## Amazon can do better

Brady wants to see Amazon not only ease its productivity quotas, but take steps to reduce workers' risk of injury. She and Hibaq Mohamed agreed that too many workers are afraid to speak up about fatigue or safety concerns because, Mohamed said, the answer is always the same: "If you don't like it, go home."

Organizers said many more MSP1 workers supported the strike, but feared retaliation from management.

Amazon has a track record of hostility toward unions. The company ditched plans to locate its new headquarters in New York after the city's unions pressured elected officials to attach minimum wage and other labor standards to generous tax breaks and subsidies they had offered the company.

Tax avoidance and low wages – that's how founder and CEO Jeff Bezos, the world's richest person, has built his company. Despite turning an \$11.2 billion profit last year, Amazon paid no federal taxes. And while workers in Amazon's warehouses scurry back and forth from the bathroom, CEO Jeff Bezos, worth an estimated \$120 billion, is building his own spaceship.

If any company can afford to do better by its workers, it's Amazon.

"Management demands the best from their workers," Brady said. "Now we want their best."



## Labor News in Review



Nursing home workers in Elk River walked the picket line for two days in June, standing together for higher wages and staffing that, they say, would benefit themselves and their residents. Union Advocate photo

### STRIKE IN ELK RIVER

Nursing home workers at Guardian Angels in Elk River staged a two-day strike June 6-7, putting their employer on notice that they are serious about bargaining higher wages and staffing levels to improve the facility for both residents and staff.

"We are on strike for our residents, our jobs and our whole community," said Avis Lage, a dietary aide at the facility.

SEIU Healthcare Minnesota represents more than 100 workers in the bargaining unit who do housekeeping, laundry, dietary, health unit coordinating, nursing assistance, recreation and maintenance work. On the picket line, they raised concerns about Guardian Angels' increased use of temporary workers – paid higher wages to do the same jobs as union members – over the last two years.

Jane Gardner, a nursing assistant and trained medic with 14 years of experience at Guardian Angels, said temporary staff lack familiarity with the facility's residents and procedures. "They don't know anything about these people," Gardner said. "We're like an extension of their families. For some, we are closer than their families."

Workers reported several alarming mistakes made by temp workers, including failure to properly administer medication and, in another instance, administering a pain patch to the wrong resident.

That's why union members are drawing a line in the sand during contract talks. Rather than paying a temp agency, they want Guardian Angels to invest in the workers who are invested in their residents. "We want them to offer a wage that will attract, retain and reward their staff," nursing assistant Nicole Mellum said. "We want respect."

### TALLYING THE TONNAGE

The annual food drive of the National Association of Letter Carriers, which took place May 11, collected more than 76.1 million pounds of food nationwide, the third-highest total in the drive's 27 years. Locally, Twin Cities letter carriers brought in about 900,000 pounds of donated items.

The Stamp Out Hunger Food Drive is the nation's largest single-day food drive, and it relies on the generosity

of residents, who leave donations of non-perishable food items next to their mailboxes before the mail delivery that day. Letter carriers collect donations along their routes, and distribute them to local food banks, pantries, shelters and churches.

"This is a labor of love for letter carriers, and we are proud to see how it has grown in impact over the years," NALC President Fredric Rolando said. "It's an honor to be able to help people in need all across the country – and to do so in a way that brings out the best in so many Americans."

Since the food drive began in 1993, letter carriers have collected a total of about 1.75 billion pounds of food.

### BTCU GETS SEAL OF APPROVAL

Building Trades Credit Union received a lofty ranking last month in an online publication's annual review of credit unions nationwide. The Twin Cities-based institution, which serves more than 17,000 members of Building and Construction Trades unions and their families, was recognized as the 10th-safest credit union in the country by DepositAccounts.com.

Each year, DepositAccounts.com evaluates the financial health of all 5,460 credit unions in the U.S. in an effort to assist consumers in making the right choice for their money. Each institution is graded on a number of factors, including capitalization, deposit growth, and loan-to-reserve ratios, to determine a comprehensive health score. The top 200 safest credit unions are recognized on their Top 200 Healthiest Credit Unions in America list.

"Serving our members in the union building and construction trades with comprehensive product and service offerings has always been our mission," CEO Bill Daehn said. "And we recognize that, more than ever, consumers are focused on the safety and soundness of the financial institutions they choose. We're proud that our members can continue to trust BTCU as their primary financial partner."

DepositAccounts.com is the largest and most comprehensive online publication in the U.S. dedicated to banking and deposit product information for consumers.



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## FARE FOR ALL

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### Save 40 percent on groceries!

The St. Paul Regional Labor Federation is pleased to encourage union members and their families to participate in Fare For All Express. Stretch your budget by picking up a package of fresh fruits, vegetables and frozen meats at the sites below each month. Fare For All is open to anyone who eats! There are no questions asked, no forms to fill out. And the more people who take advantage of the program, the better the discounts get – and the more neighborhoods it can serve.

Give it a try!

#### East Metro Locations – August 2019

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| • Burnsville: Diamondhead Ctr.<br>Aug. 28, 3 to 5 p.m.                    | • Roseville: Real Life Church<br>Aug. 20, 3 to 5 p.m.                  |
| • Cottage Grove: All Saints<br>Aug. 8, 4 to 6 p.m.                        | • St. Paul: Hallie Q. Brown Ctr.<br>Aug. 22, 4 to 6 p.m.               |
| • Eagan: Easter Lutheran Church by the Lake<br>Aug. 13, 3:30 to 5:30 p.m. | • St. Paul: Hazel Park UCC<br>Aug. 7, 4 to 6 p.m.                      |
| • Forest Lake: VFW<br>Aug. 28, 4 to 6 p.m.                                | • St. Paul: West 7th Community Ctr.<br>Aug. 9, 10 a.m. to noon         |
| • Maplewood: Redeeming Love<br>Aug. 12, 3:30 to 5:30 p.m.                 | • South St. Paul: Central Square<br>Aug. 27, 4 to 6 p.m.               |
| • North Branch: Trinity Luth.<br>Aug. 14, 2 to 4 p.m.                     | • Stillwater: Community Thread<br>Aug. 20, 4 to 6 p.m.                 |
| • Northfield: St. Dominic<br>Aug. 15, 3:30 to 5:30 p.m.                   | • White Bear Lake: Community of Grace Lutheran<br>Aug. 16, 2 to 4 p.m. |
| • Oakdale: Grace of God Luth.<br>Aug. 26, 3:30 to 5:30 p.m.               |  |

Questions? Please go to [www.fareforall.org](http://www.fareforall.org) or call 763-450-3880.



# Building Trades leaders help bring 'dinner with the family' to soldiers stationed in Kuwait

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

featuring Gov. Tim Walz and several members of the state's congressional delegation.

Live video feeds projected onto theater-size screens linked the two events. It was virtual "dinner with the family," an idea that has been at the core of Serving Our Troops' mission for the last 15 years.

The trip to Kuwait this year was the St. Paul nonprofit's 14th project, and founder Pat Harris, a former St. Paul City Council member, beamed with pride from the podium set up in Camp Arifjan as volunteers served the organization's 100,000th steak to a soldier.

"This is about the kitchen being open in Minnesota for Minnesota's service men and women and their families," Harris said.

## Reaching out to soldiers

In planning the May trip to Kuwait, Serving Our Troops' fourth since 2012, Harris approached local Building Trades leaders to discuss a potential partnership. They didn't require much convincing.

Mullin, executive secretary of the St. Paul Building and Construction Trades Council, said the decision was a "no-brainer." Fowler, business manager of LIUNA Local 563, told Harris he was willing to "go over there and clean latrines if that makes the life of a soldier easier," joking that "as a Laborer, it wouldn't be the first time."

Eager as union leaders were to show their appreciation for those serving, they also had another objective in mind: raising awareness among soldiers of the many post-military career opportunities available in the Building Trades.

Construction unions have been aggressive both locally and nationally in marketing their apprenticeship training programs to military veterans. Unions founded an outreach organization, Helmets to Hardhats, in 2003, and since then over 20,000 veterans have entered construction jobs across the U.S.

By building a pipeline from the barracks to the Building Trades, unions and their contractors are doing their part to help veterans make the transition back into civilian life. Registered apprenticeship offers veterans a chance to earn middle-class wages while they learn a marketable trade. And working union offers veterans the familiarity of sharing a common goal – not to mention good health insurance and retirement security – with the people they work along-



Joe Fowler (L) and Trinidad Uribe loaded steaks onto the grill at Camp Arifjan, where Serving Our Troops volunteers provided a Mancini's-style dinner for roughly 4,000 soldiers and civilians stationed on the base. Temperatures at the grill exceeded 135 degrees, Fowler said.

photos courtesy  
Michael Murray  
Photography



Pat Harris, a former St. Paul City Council member, directed Serving Our Troops volunteers who arrived at Camp Arifjan the Friday before Memorial Day. Harris is a co-founder of the organization.

side.

"For military personnel, they already have the structure, the discipline, the self-motivating skills to succeed in our labor union apprenticeship programs," said Uribe, an Army veteran and business manager of Sprinkler Fitters Local 417. "They're used to striving to be successful and proficient at what they do."

That means recruiting veterans to construction apprenticeship programs isn't just good for veterans – it's good for the industry as well.

McCarthy, president of the St. Paul Building Trades and Plumbers Local 34, recalled being in awe of soldiers setting out on an 18-mile hike in 109-degree heat, carrying 20-pound packs on their backs. "Yeah, I would imagine that person is a good worker," McCarthy laughed. "When they get back here, I think we can find them a spot."

## A 'humbling' experience

Seizing the opportunity to thank active-duty soldiers – and represent

their unions in person – meant agreeing to a whirlwind schedule, with 48 hours of travel over six days. After departing the Twin Cities on Wednesday, May 22, the Serving Our Troops team landed in Kuwait City at 10 p.m. Thursday.

Early Friday morning, volunteers bused to Camp Arifjan. The Minnesota National Guard's 34th Red Bull Infantry Division has been stationed there since November 2018, when it took command and control of Task Force Spartan.

The task force is part of Operation Spartan Shield, intended to "maintain a U.S. military posture sufficient to strengthen U.S. defense relationships, build partner capacity and execute U.S. Central Command's contingency plans, if necessary," according to the Guard. Thousands of soldiers from subordinate brigades fall under the Red Bull division's command.

Volunteers stayed overnight on the base Friday and Saturday. It was the first time Fowler, McCarthy and Mullin



Soldiers serving in the Minnesota National Guard's 34th Infantry Division, denoted by the Red Bull patches on their sleeves, enjoyed a steak dinner while their friends and families had the same meal for lunch at RiverCentre in St. Paul.

had been on an Army base, an experience all three described as "humbling."

"Here, if you want a little bit of space to your own, you're able to get that space," Mullin said. "There, you're not able to do that. In some ways you're extremely isolated from everybody that you know and love, but in other ways you're never alone."

"Our men and women that are serving, they're doing it in some extraordinary conditions. It's a huge sacrifice."

And there was no escaping the heat, which regularly climbs above 115 degrees in the summer. Kuwait recorded the hottest temperature on earth two weeks after the Serving Our Troops event.

Uribe's eight-year stint in the Army never took him to Kuwait. "I do recall a couple rotations in the Mojave Desert," he said. "I don't recall the heat being as hot as it was in Kuwait."

## A taste of St. Paul

It was even hotter at the grill,

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 9)



(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8)

where Uribe, Fowler and other volunteers spent Saturday afternoon flipping steaks – the same steaks served at Mancini's Char House, St. Paul's iconic, union steakhouse.

It was over dinner at Mancini's 15 years ago that the idea for Serving Our Troops hatched, according to Harris. Wars in Iraq and Afghanistan had pulled thousands of Minnesota soldiers into active duty.

"We didn't think it was fair that we were here, enjoying a meal, while the men and women serving our country didn't have that option," Harris said. "So we decided to do something about it."

Within months, Serving Our Troops had raised enough money to embark on its first project – a trip to Kosovo to serve steaks to 800 Minnesota soldiers, connected via video feed to their family and friends gathered at Xcel Energy Center for a similar meal.

Under Harris' leadership, Serving Our Troops has evolved into a network of civic, business, community and, now, labor leaders that, with support from local restaurants, not only provides "dinner with the family" for the state's active-duty soldiers, but also raises awareness of Minnesota's tradition of service.

"The people that are part of Serving Our Troops, these are selfless people, great people," Uribe said. "We had the opportunity to foster new relationships with these people and spread the message among their organizations that labor was there to support the troops along with all of their organizations."

"Some of the connections I made, not only with the volunteer team but with some of the soldiers that were there, hopefully will last forever," Mullin added. "This organization more than exceeded any expectation that I had."

#### Getting the job done

About 4,000 soldiers and support personnel passed through the buffet line at Camp Arifjan during the Saturday-night event, keeping volunteers on their toes. McCarthy said everything happened so fast that the



Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz addressed military families gathered at RiverCentre in St. Paul and troops at Camp Arifjan via video feed. Union Advocate photo

event "is kind of a blur" in his memory.

"The soldiers have very healthy appetites," he said. "As they started to devour everything, we would pretty much keep changing everything out – changing out the pasta salad, changing out the potatoes, changing out the corn as fast as they went through it."

Fowler and Uribe took turns at the grill, where temperatures exceeded 135 degrees. "It was a very well choreographed dance we had going on for several hours," Fowler remembered. "We started about 3 p.m. and we were still serving when it was dark, around 8:30. I haven't drunk that much water in my life. It was easily 20 bottles and four or five Gatorades."

For Uribe, working side by side with other volunteers in miserable conditions, pulling together to get the job done, "brought back those great memories of the camaraderie and the so-called second family" during military deployment. "You're depending on each and every one of the people you work next to," he said.

If steak is on the soldiers' menu during an overseas deployment, it's usually tough – and never Mancini's-grade quality. "We got a lot of thank-yous," Mullin said.

"Every single person that came

through the buffet line thanked us for coming out," McCarthy added. "Regardless of whether they were from Minnesota or around the United States or around the world, they were happy that someone appreciates what they're out there doing."

"Most humbling experience I've ever had," Fowler said. "These soldiers are saying 'thank you' to us, and we're saying, 'No, thank you.'"

#### Keeping in touch

Before beginning the journey home with a 3 a.m. wake-up call Sunday morning, Fowler, McCarthy, Mullin and Uribe handed out as many business cards as they could. Since returning to St. Paul, the union leaders have remained in contact with National Guard officers, who they hope will remind soldiers, as they return to civilian life in early fall, that the doors to Building Trades' apprenticeship halls are open.

"We go to schools and we do outreach events all the time," McCarthy said. "But this was nice because it was a singular event based on soldiers who are deployed and are coming back."

"They help us out, and we should be helping them out too."

## Letter to the editor

### Labour sight-seeing in Winnipeg worth the trip

Looking for a three- or four-day holiday with a labor/labour flavor?

Winnipeg is an easy day's drive from the Twin Cities – even closer to many other Minnesota communities. And 2019 is the 100th Anniversary of the Winnipeg General Strike, when 35,000 – Yes, thirty-five thousand! – workers walked off the job for six weeks.

Considered the most influential in Canadian history, the strike is being commemorated in a variety of ways, including museum exhibits, walking tours, public art and even a musical. Take a few days and check them out:

- "Strike 1919: Divided City," an exhibit at the Manitoba Museum's Urban Gallery, 190 Rupert Ave. For information call 204-956-2830 visit manitobamuseum.ca.

- "Strike! The Extended Walking Tour," a 90-minute, guided stroll around strike landmarks, with lots of information about what life was like in Winnipeg before, during and after the strike, and some of the people involved. Call 204-942-6716.

- Life-size replica of a streetcar tipped over by angry protestors on what's called Bloody Saturday, June 21, 1919. It's at Pantages Plaza, across from City Hall.

While in Winnipeg, you could also stay another day to visit The Canadian Museum of Human Rights (humanrights.ca), an amazing building whose eight levels of exhibits and galleries hold a wealth of information in all kinds of formats, exploring human rights from multiple perspectives, telling stories of struggles for liberty, equality, justice and respect by many diverse groups and individuals throughout history and around the world. There's an exhibit about the 1919 General Strike there too. And the many interactive exhibits and helpful staff make it a fun place for kids.

The Manitoba Federation of Labour website has a "Unionized Suppliers" feature that will help you find lodging at a union hotel: mfl.ca/buy-union-retailer.

And, if you don't manage to make it to Winnipeg, you can still learn about the 1919 strike from a new book by Dennis Lewycky, "Magnificent Fight: The 1919 Winnipeg General Strike."

What's more, the feature film "Stand!" is set to premier this fall. It's adapted from "Strike! The Musical," with updates relevant to the current political climate.

– Bill Moore, AFSCME Council 65 and TNG-CWA Local 37002 retiree and Minnesota State Retiree Council board member, visited Winnipeg in early June with his wife, Mary Wagner.

## Let's get together, union members!

The St. Paul Regional Labor Federation's local labor assemblies bring working people and retirees together to exchange ideas and take action on issues that matter most in their communities. Assembly meetings are open to all union members who live or work in our four-county area.

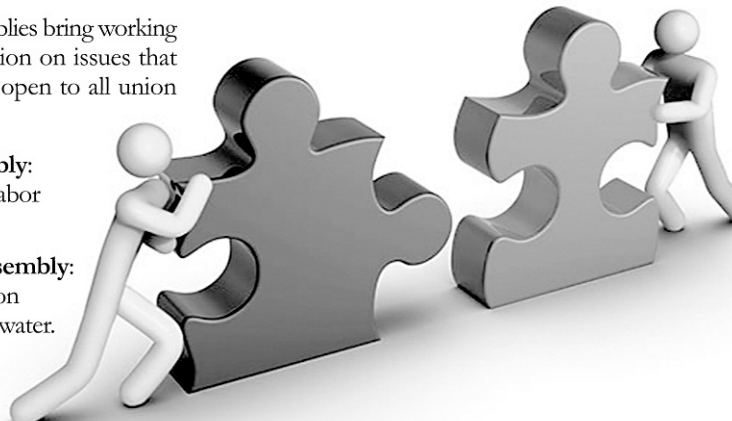
**Chisago County Assembly:**  
Aug. 22, 4:30 p.m., Wyoming  
Public Library, 26855 Forest Blvd.

**Dakota County Assembly:**  
Aug. 8, 7 p.m., Dakota County  
United Educators,  
6950 W 146th St., Apple Valley.

[www.stpaulunions.org](http://www.stpaulunions.org)

**Ramsey County Assembly:**  
Aug. 26, 6 p.m., St. Paul Labor  
Center, 353 W. 7th St.

**Washington County Assembly:**  
Aug. 28, 6 p.m., Washington  
County Gov't Center, Stillwater.





## After non-union janitors raise concerns, union seeks answers from St. Paul property owner

To mark the 29th anniversary of a turning point in the historic "Justice for Janitors" campaign, union janitors took to the streets of St. Paul, marching on an influential property owner whose business practices are dragging down wages and working conditions in their industry.

Local 26 of the Service Employees International Union, which represents about 8,000 property-service workers in the Twin Cities, organized the action in response to troubling reports from janitors working inside buildings owned by Madison Equities, one of downtown St. Paul's most prominent landowners.

One of those janitors, Carlos Hernandez, gave his account of working inside a Madison Equities property as an employee of ROC Commercial Cleaning. He earned an hourly wage, Hernandez said, in his first few weeks on the job. But that soon changed.

According to Local 26, Hernandez and other janitors say they were misclassified as independent contractors – a tactic unscrupulous employers use to dodge labor laws and avoid payroll taxes.

Hernandez said he confronted his supervisor about the change and was given a choice: accept it or find a new job. He chose the latter.

"They're trying to deny us some basic benefits and protections that employees have," Hernandez said



Janitors marched from Mears Park to the offices of Madison Equities, calling on the company to do business with cleaning firms that respect workers' rights. Union Advocate photo

during a rally in Mears Park, just blocks away from Madison Equities' offices. "That's why it's important we all join together in this fight."

From Mears Park, the delegation of about 40 janitors and supporters marched to Madison Equities, distributing fliers along the way. They urged people to call owner Jim Crockarell and demand he do business with responsible cleaning contractors – like those that employ members of SEIU Local 26.

Union janitors do the same work,

in similar properties, owned by companies comparable to Madison Equities, Local 26 steward Elsa Guaman said. But union janitors earn fair wages with access to vacation and earned sick time, health care benefits and protections against unsafe working conditions.

But they didn't get those benefits without a fight.

SEIU members in cities across the U.S. launched "Justice for Janitors" in the mid-1980s, taking a stand against

the steady erosion of workplace standards in their industry.

At the time, commercial property owners were increasingly outsourcing property-management responsibilities – like cleaning and security – to independent companies, which competed fiercely for the contract, putting downward pressure on janitors' wages.

The campaign drew national attention on June 15, 1990, when hundreds of striking janitors in Los Angeles marched through the streets, drawing a violent response from the police. A flashpoint in the campaign, the date is remembered annually as "Justice for Janitors Day."

In the decade that followed, janitors organized, mobilized and bargained strong contracts that hold building owners and their cleaning contractors accountable – just like Local 26 plans to do with Madison Equities in St. Paul.

"If Jim Crockarell is wealthy enough to own two restaurants and all these buildings," Guaman asked, "then how can he not have enough to make sure workers get paid fairly?"

It's a question no one at Madison Equities was willing to answer.

The delegation made it as far as the hallway outside the company's offices, where security guards refused Local 26 President Iris Altamirano's request to enter and speak with Crockarell.

"We'll be back!" workers pledged.

– Michael Moore, UA editor

Proud to welcome

# MILES WHITE

to our growing Trust Division!

Miles J. White has joined our Trust Division as Vice President, Senior Officer and Head of Business Development. He is a Chartered Retirement Planning Consultant (CRPC) and has worked in the field of retirement services and financial planning in the industry for over 16 years. Help us welcome Miles White to our team!



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## Beebe departs RLF after seven years as Community Services liaison

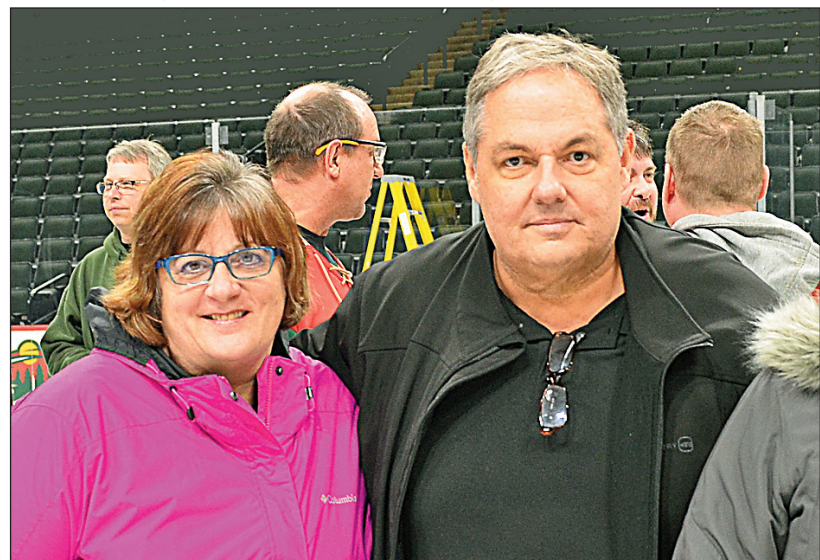
After more than seven years as a member of the St. Paul Regional Labor Federation's professional staff, Vicki Beebe resigned last month to accept a position as community relations officer with St. Paul Federal Credit Union. Her last day was July 12.

Beebe served as a political organizer for the St. Paul RLF and as an AFL-CIO Community Services liaison with the RLF's nonprofit organization, St. Paul Labor Studies and Resource Center.

"I really will miss the people I worked with and the relationships I've built," Beebe said. "I look forward to maintaining them in my new job – and building new ones, too."

As a political organizer, Beebe worked closely with the federation's labor assemblies in Chisago and Dakota counties, coordinating phone banks, door-knocks and other volunteer activities in support of local labor-endorsed candidates.

As a Community Services liaison, she recruited volunteers for service projects, served as a founding board member at the East Side Freedom Library and helped plan the RLF's participation in the State Fair parade on



Vicki Beebe and RLF President Bobby Kasper

Labor Day.

"It was very rewarding to get people in the labor movement out in the community, whether it was for a United Way project or a parade," Beebe said. "I hope to continue helping union members at my next job, to build more bridges and more relationships."

St. Paul RLF President Bobby Kasper credited Beebe as the driving force behind the annual Union Jobs and Resource Fair, which has expanded each year since launching in 2016.

"Our job fair has introduced so many people to the opportunities available when you work union, and it wouldn't have happened without Vicki's hard work," Kasper said. "Sometimes it seemed like she had only one word in her vocabulary – 'yes.' Vicki is a true union sister, who will be well missed."

Beebe is a longstanding member of the Machinists union and retirees organization, stemming from a 36-year career with Northwest and, later, Delta Air Lines.





# Minutes of the Saint Paul Regional Labor Federation

**JUNE 12, 2019**

The Saint Paul Regional Labor Federation met in regular session on the above date and was called to order with the Pledge of Allegiance by President Kasper at 6 p.m. Board members in attendance were Beedle B, Beedle G, Beissel, DeRoy, Engeldorf, Faber, Gorman, Guertin, Kasper, Madden, McNamara, Meyer, Robles, Ryan, Sansom, Schmidt, Seath, Slattey, St. Aoro and VanDassor. Excused were: Haugen, Markham-Kocurek, and Mullin. Absent were: Dreyer, Gibbons, Hoppe, Luneberg, Maki-Green, McCarthy, Monsour, Varco and Weed.

## CREDENTIALS

Credentials were received from Construction and General Laborer's Local 563, International Operating Engineers Local 49, Minnesota Newspaper Guild – CWA 37002, Sheet Metal Workers Local 10 and Teamsters Local 120 and Local 320. President Kasper administered the Oath of Obligation to those new delegates and alternates present.

## MINUTES

**M/S/C TO APPROVE MINUTES OF MAY 8, 2019 AS PUBLISHED IN THE UNION ADVOCATE NEWSPAPER AFTER THE SECRETARY NOTES THERE ARE NO ADDITIONS OR CHANGES CALLED FOR.**

## COMMITTEE ON POLITICAL EDUCATION (COPE) MINUTES JUNE 12, 2019

COPE met in regular session on the above date and was called to order by President Kasper at 5 p.m. Board members in attendance were Angrimson, Beedle B, Beedle G, Beissel, DeRoy, Edwards, Engeldorf, Faber, Gorman, Guertin, Hoerth, Kasper, Lohmann, Madden, Mayer, McNamara, Meyer, Qualy, Robles, Ryan, Sansom, Schmidt, Seath, Slattey, St. Aoro, VanDassor and Wise. Excused were: Haugen, Markham-Kocurek, and Mullin. Absent were: Dreyer, Froemke, Gibbons, Hoppe, Krey, Luneberg, Maki-Green, McCarthy, Monsour, Varco and Weed.

Items to come before this board included:

- The Ramsey County Labor Assembly requested consideration of granting Labor Endorsement to the following Saint Paul City Council candidates: Liz De La Torre, Ward 1; Jane Prince, Ward 7

- The committee made a decision to screen for Saint Paul City Council Ward 6 and Saint Paul School Board but will be holding off endorsing for Ramsey County Commissioner District 1.

- Immediately following the delegate meeting tonight there will be a meet and greet with elected leaders in Ramsey and Washington Counties.

- M/S/C TO APPOINT AUGUST "GUS" FROEMKE, TEAMSTERS LOCAL 320, TO THE COPE BOARD.**

- M/S/C TO RECOMMEND LABOR ENDORSEMENT OF SAINT PAUL CITY COUNCIL CANDIDATE JANE PRINCE, WARD 7.**
- M/S/C FOR NO ENDORSEMENT IN WARD 1.**

- M/S/C FOR THE RLF TO MAKE A \$250 CONTRIBUTION TO THE MINNESOTA DFL CAUCUS AND A \$250 CONTRIBUTION TO THE SENATE DFL CAUCUS FOR THE 2019 POST-SESSION FUNDRAISER ON WEDNESDAY,**

**JUNE 19, 2019 AT THE CARPENTERS HALL, 700 OLIVE STREET, SAINT PAUL, FROM 4 TO 6 P.M.**

- M/S/C FOR THE RLF TO MAKE A \$1,000 CONTRIBUTION TO THE 2019 POST LEGISLATIVE SESSION BRIEFING EVENT IN HONOR OF GOVERNOR WALZ AND LT. GOVERNOR FLANAGAN ON MONDAY, JUNE 24, 2019 AT THE ST PAUL HOTEL, 350 MARK STREET, ST. PAUL, FROM 5 TO 6:30 P.M.**

There being no further business to come before this committee, the meeting adjourned.

## EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES JUNE 12, 2019

The Executive Board met upon conclusion of COPE with those same members present who are duly elected to this board.

Items to come before this board included:

- PRESIDENT'S REPORT:**

- President Kasper reported on tonight's Meet and Greet.

- He will be attending the upcoming Strategic Planning Retreat on July 15 and 16, 2019 at the Delta Hotel in Minneapolis and will be attending the Minnesota State Building Trades Convention on July 24-25 at Maddens on Gull Lake.

- The RLF sponsored UFCW Local 1189's Kaposia Days – 5K & 10K Labor Against Cancer Run-Walk, and we are looking for other folks to run.

- The Saint Paul Labor Appreciation Night will be at 7 p.m. on Wednesday, August 14, 2019 at Allianz Field. We will raffle tickets at the July meeting.

- Kasper thanked everyone for supporting Teamsters Local 120. On behalf of 12,000 teamster members, they thanked everyone for their support of the Murphy Warehouse bargaining unit during their strike. The outpouring of financial donations, social media outreach and in-person presence on the picket line was overwhelming and exceeded anything that Tom Erickson, President, Teamsters Local 120, has ever seen in his 36 years as a union member.

- The RLF sent a letter of support for UNITE HERE Local 17 to the owner of JAX Café in Minneapolis to negotiate a fair and honest contract.

- Management at the hotel located next to the Labor Center is asking 2/3 property owners consent for a liquor license. The Board has instructed President Kasper not to sign.

- Kasper reviewed the 2018 RLF audit. **M/S/C TO APPROVE AUDIT.**

- M/S/C TO APPROVE BONUSES AND STAFF CONTRACT.**

- M/S/C TO APPOINT CARRIE ROBLES, LIUNA LOCAL 563; SCOTT SEATH, PIPEFITTERS LOCAL 455; AND LEAH VANDASSOR, ST. PAUL FEDERATION OF EDUCATORS LOCAL 28 TO THE EXECUTIVE BOARD.**

- ORGANIZING/UPDATES/CAMPAIGNS:**

- Minnesota Nurses are in ongoing negotiations with Metro Hospitals and Allina Metro Regional Rx Center. Thank you for your support.

- The NALC Annual Food Drive was once again a huge success.

- The Saint Paul and Minneapolis Federation of Educators are in contract negotiations.

- The Saint Paul Retirees will be holding their annual picnic on Wednesday, July 17, 2019 here at the

## A legislative debrief with the deciders



The St. Paul Regional Labor Federation's Ramsey and Washington County Labor Assemblies held a "meet and greet" with labor-endorsed legislators June 12. It offered union members an opportunity to learn more about the decisions made at the Capitol this year – and what work remains in 2020. "We've been doing these meet-and-greet events since 2012," RLF President Bobby Kasper said. "They are a big part of how we get working people's issues on the agenda."

submitted photos

Labor Center.

- Save the Date: United Way Day of Action will be held August 8, 2019 at the Xcel Energy Center. Team up with United Way and the Minnesota Wild, the hosts of this year's annual volunteer event, where we will pack 40,000 backpacks to help local students start the school year ready to learn.

- Brian Beedle, Chair of the Washington County Labor Assembly, shared that Josiah Hill will be running for Senate District 39.

- REQUESTS:**

- M/S/C FOR THE RLF TO MAKE A \$1,000 CONTRIBUTION TO THE LABORERS FAMILY FUN RAISER & PICNIC SCHEDULED FOR SATURDAY, AUGUST 17 AT COMO REGIONAL PARK FROM 10 A.M. TO 1 P.M.**

- Thank-you notes received from the Organized Workers' Fight in the Philippines for the RLF's contribution of \$1,000, Twin Cities Labor Chorus for the RLF's \$500 contribution and Teamsters Local 120 for the RLF's support of the Murphy Warehouse bargaining unit during their strike as well as the support from our unions.

There being no further business to come before this board, the meeting adjourned.

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

President Kasper read the thank-you letter he received from Tom Erickson, President of Teamsters Local 120, regarding support of the Murphy Warehouse workers' strike.

Kasper announced that Kera Peterson, political director, will be doing the introductions of tonight's discussions with the state elected leaders from Ramsey and Washington counties.

## NEW BUSINESS

- President Kasper called for a floor vote on the COPE Committee recommendation to grant labor endorsement to Jane Prince, Saint Paul City Council Ward 7.

- M/S/C TO GRANT LABOR ENDORSEMENT TO JANE PRINCE, SAINT PAUL CITY COUNCIL, WARD 7.**

- PRESIDENT KASPER DEFERRED ALL REPORTS UNTIL JULY 2019 TO ACCOMMODATE THE RAMSEY AND**

## Endorsement notice

The St. Paul RLF may consider local endorsements during its August and September meetings, including endorsements for St. Paul City Council (Ward 6), St. Paul School Board and Ramsey County Board (District 1).

For more information, call 651-222-3787.

WASHINGTON COUNTIES MEET AND GREET.

There being no further business to come before this delegation the meeting adjourned.

Submitted by,  
**BERNADINE ENGELDORF**  
Secretary-Treasurer



## Ninety years ago, St. Paul unions took on a big fight at City Hall – and won

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2)

The city manager would serve at the pleasure of the council for an indeterminate term. In turn, he would appoint the heads of city departments, including Finance, Public Works and Public Safety. In a major departure from St. Paul's existing municipal system, the city's public schools would be placed under the jurisdiction of a separate seven-member school board appointed by the mayor. Under the structure then in place, the schools functioned as a city department under the City Council's control.

In order to sell the plan to St. Paul voters, Otis and his supporters organized an unofficial advocacy group, the New Charter League. In its promotional materials, the League argued St. Paul needed to overhaul its governmental structure because the existing system was not meeting residents' needs. A Pioneer Press ad placed just a few days before the Nov. 6 election warned of "Streets Getting Rougher – Schools Under Manned and Deteriorating – Two Big Deficits, Created Since 1924 to Pay out of Taxes – A Wonderful Library Decaying – A Year Gone By Since the People Authorized Money for Improvements and Virtually NOTHING Has Been Done. And Yet Your Taxes Go Higher."

The League's supporters believed a city manager would help City Hall operate in a more efficient, businesslike manner. But the manager was expected to do more than oversee the daily workings of local government. In order to lead the city, the manager, at least indirectly, needed to become a policy maker too. The manager had the potential to become City Hall's most powerful person, wielding power without being held in check by voters.

The St. Paul Trades and Labor Assembly and opponents of the proposed system would exploit this

lack of accountability as they worked to defeat the charter plan.

In its Sept. 19, issue, The Union Advocate headline announced "ORGANIZED LABOR DECLARES AGAINST CITY MANAGER PLAN." The paper reported that the Assembly, at its September meeting, had voted unanimously to adopt a report opposing the charter, which "would open the way for a powerful, securely entrenched special interest that would enjoy enlarged privileges at the expense of the rank and file taxpayer." The report concluded by calling on unions "to do everything in their power" to defeat the plan.

Those efforts were led by William Mahoney, a longtime St. Paul labor leader who served as editor of The Union Advocate and later as mayor of St. Paul. As Mahoney honed his arguments, his newspaper implied – but never explicitly stated – a major reason for labor's position: a belief that unions' influence at City Hall would be diminished by a manager who would take cues from the city's business establishment. At an earlier time, St. Paul labor leaders might have viewed the business establishment with less suspicion. But by the late 1920s, the two groups had taken a more combative stance.

As the charter campaign entered its final weeks, the Advocate served as the public voice of the "Vote No" campaign. St. Paul's three daily papers firmly supported the plan and provided only minimal coverage to its opponents. Opponents had to rely on The Advocate to deliver their message to St. Paul voters.

In the end, voters turned down the city manager charter. The tally was almost evenly split, with opponents edging out proponents by 500 ballots. But a 60% vote was needed for passage. The charter lost decisively in working class wards on the East Side, but it carried the city's more affluent neighborhoods.

During the hard-fought campaign, both sides resorted to exaggerated claims, but charter proponents faced one challenge they were not able to overcome. They argued a city manager would take politics out of government, failing to acknowledge that government, by its very nature, was political in the broadest sense.

Particularly in the country's largest cities, with their diverse and often competing interests, another model of municipal organization, the strong mayor system, was intended to make local government more efficient while, at the same time, taking account of the political environment within which it operated.

St. Paul would wait another four decades before moving to this new municipal model. Following another defeat of the city manager charter in 1930, St. Paul maintained its status quo until 1970, when voters finally approved a "strong" mayor system, with an elected chief executive who was able to hire and fire city department heads. During the 40 year interim, The Union Advocate, with the backing of the Trades and Labor Assembly, was able to hold off a move that would have substantially altered the balance of power in City Hall.

– Iric Nathanson is the author of "Minneapolis in the Twentieth Century: The Growth of an American City."



William Mahoney, editor of The Union Advocate, led the fight against a business-backed charter proposal in 1929.

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