

# The St. Paul Union Advocate

124th Year, No. 1, Issue 5438

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

June-July 2020

## Do Something!

### Help heal our community

As Minnesotans, we like to think of ourselves as resilient and big-hearted. We're a community that sticks together.

And in the last two weeks, we've proven it's true, whether that means standing shoulder-to-shoulder in support of justice for George Floyd, or rolling up our sleeves to clean and rebuild neighborhoods and businesses caught up in the turmoil.

Wondering how you might pitch in?

Fundraising drives are helping small businesses and community organizations rebuild in two of the area's most-impacted neighborhoods:

- We Love Lake Street: [welovelakestreet.org](http://welovelakestreet.org).
- The Neighbors

United Funding Collaborative in St. Paul's Hamline-Midway area: [hamlinemidway.org](http://hamlinemidway.org).

Additionally, Twin Cities worker center CTUL has offices in south Minneapolis, and has served as a hub for distributin food and other supplies. Support its work at [ctul.net](http://ctul.net).

## Justice for George Floyd

### AFL-CIO headquarters burns as protests over alleged Minneapolis police killing spread worldwide

Public outrage and grief spilled into the streets after George Floyd's death in Minneapolis Police custody May 25, after video emerged showing officer Derek Chauvin's knee pinned to Floyd's neck for 8 minutes and 46 seconds.

Floyd's dying plea, "I can't breathe," became a rallying cry at demonstrations in the Twin Cities and around the world – before and after Hennepin County prosecutors charged Chauvin with third-degree murder – as activists, including many union members, sought not only justice for Floyd, but systemic changes to policing in black and minority communities.

Although many protesters remained peaceful, St. Paul, Minneapolis and other metropolitan areas saw incidents of looting and arson, as well as violent confrontations with police

While steadfastly opposed to violence and property damage, the nation's labor movement continued to stand in solidarity with those seeking justice. That solidarity was put to the test overnight May 31 during civil unrest in Washington, D.C., when the AFL-CIO's national headquarters, located just blocks from the White House, suffered significant fire damage.

The next morning, AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka, the nation's highest-ranking labor leader, issued this statement:

"My heart is heavy at the events of the past few days. I watched the video of George Floyd pleading for his life under the knee of a Minneapolis police officer. No person of conscience can hear Floyd's cries for help and not understand that something is deeply wrong in America.

"What happened to George Floyd, what happened

to Ahmaud Arbery, what happened to far too many unarmed people of color has happened for centuries. The difference is now we have cell phones. It's there for all of us to see. And we can't turn our heads and look away because we feel uncomfortable.

"Racism plays an insidious role in the daily lives of all working people of color. This is a labor issue because it is a workplace issue, and unions are the community. We must and will continue to fight for reforms in policing and to address issues of racial and economic inequality.

"We categorically reject those on the fringes who are engaging in violence and destroying property. Attacks like the one on the AFL-CIO headquarters are senseless, disgraceful and only play into the hands of those who have oppressed workers of color for generations and detract from the peaceful,



passionate protesters who are rightly bringing issues of racism to the forefront.

"But in the end, the labor movement is not a building. We are a living collection of working people who will never stop fighting for economic, social and racial justice. We are united unequivocally against the forces of hate who seek to divide this nation for their own personal and political gain at our expense.

"We will clean up the glass, sweep away the ashes and keep doing our part to bring a better day out of this hour of darkness and despair.

"Today and always, the important work of the AFL-CIO continues unabated."

**Inside:** Local unions join call for justice, pitch in to clean-up, relief efforts. Story on Page 5

## MARKING A GRIM MILESTONE IN PANDEMIC



As the sun set May 1 in St. Paul, members of the Minnesota Nurses Association set 1,000 votive candles on the Capitol steps to represent the number of health care workers statewide who had contracted COVID-19 at the time. The total now exceeds 1,500. Union Advocate photo

*Less than one month after Minnesota unions held a vigil for workers exposed to COVID-19, state's deaths from pandemic surpass 1,000*

**By Michael Moore**

*Union Advocate editor*

One thousand votive candles flickered on the steps of the State Capitol May 1, a tribute to Minnesota's essential workers who have fallen ill with COVID-19.

"To workers who have contracted COVID, this is for you," Minnesota Nurses Association President Mary Turner said, opening the candlelight vigil as the sun set in St. Paul.

The nurses' union organized the vigil after Department of Health statistics showed 1,000 confirmed COVID-19 cases among health care workers statewide. A month later, the total approached 1,500.

Meanwhile, the number of deaths in Minnesota attributed to the pandemic had

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 11)





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This state wouldn't be what it is without our labor unions. And neither would we. You've fed, housed and cultivated us. And after 43 years, we're finally able to return the favor.

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# 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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Labor Voices: **Bill McCarthy**

## In 'reopening,' worker safety must come first

Every single day workers across Minnesota are putting themselves at risk; both in the battle against COVID-19 and in the effort to continue providing the essential goods and services Minnesotans depend on. These workers didn't ask to put their lives on the line, but they are keeping Minnesota moving none the less.

Despite the best efforts of state government and labor unions to keep workers safe, many of our state's non-union employers continue to put workers at unnecessary risk.

In Shakopee, more than 50 workers at the Amazon warehouse walked off the job in the middle of the night to protest retaliation against workers with safety concerns. Caribou Coffee workers staged drive-in protests across the metro, protesting unsafe working conditions, lack of sick time, and lack of hazard pay. In Cold Spring, more than 100 workers walked out of the Pilgrims' Pride plant to protest how the company was handling worker safety.

Workers shouldn't have to take drastic action to win basic safety protections. Workers must have a say and have their safety concerns addressed in any viable plan to save lives, defeat the coronavirus, and revive the economy.

The AFL-CIO has proposed eight conditions for reopening the economy in Minnesota and across the country:

1. Workers must have a say in these decisions at every level: workplace, industry, city, state and federal.
2. Decisions must be based on worker safety and sound science.
3. Strong, clear, and enforceable workplace health and safety standards must be in place.
4. Workers must have stronger protections against retaliation.
5. There must be a massive increase in adequate levels and types of personal protective equipment for workers currently on the job—and then for those returning to the job.
6. There must be a massive increase of rapid and reliable coronavirus testing.

**"Minnesotans want to get back to work, but we have to do it the right way."**

— Bill McCarthy



7. There must be a comprehensive system of recording, reporting and tracking worker infections.

8. Employers, in coordination with local and state public health departments, must trace the contacts of infected workers and remove exposed workers from work with pay and without retaliation.

Without properly addressing worker safety before lifting or relaxing preventive measures that are currently reducing the number of cases and deaths due to COVID-19 will result in more workers falling sick and dying and even more economic damage.

Minnesotans want to get back to work, but we need to do it the right way. While some have been loudly clamoring to "flip the switch" and reopen all businesses at once, a clear majority of Minnesotans in every area of our state understand how irresponsible and dangerous such a decision would be. They understand that our economy cannot rebound unless workers are protected. They support Governor Walz and our state government's measured approach to protect workers and overall public health.

Minnesotans' strength comes from us being there for one another. This crisis shows that when we face adversity, we join together to protect our neighbors and our co-workers. It's by working together that we will get through this crisis and emerge stronger than before.

— Bill McCarthy is president of the Minnesota AFL-CIO, the state's largest labor federation, representing over 300,000 members of 1,000-plus local unions throughout the state. Learn more about the federation and its work at [mnaflcio.org](http://mnaflcio.org).

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.



## Operating Engineer hospitalized with COVID-19: 'I couldn't breathe at all'

By IUOE Local 49

On March 17, Dick Kryzer, a 12-year member of Operating Engineers (IUOE) Local 49 and plant operator for Met Council, experienced the first symptoms of what would later be confirmed as COVID-19.

Kryzer is a plant operator at a wastewater treatment facility and is responsible for cleaning water so that it can be re-used. This requires efficiently treating the wastewater, performing tests and sending samples to multiple labs to ensure the water meets Minnesota pollution control requirements before being released back into the Mississippi River.

"There are only four of us that run the plant, and on the weekends, only one of us operates the plant, so it's a shared responsibility between all of us," Kryzer said.

Kryzer said it was during one of those weekend shifts where he started to feel the beginning symptoms of what would be diagnosed as COVID-19.

"On that Saturday, when I was scheduled to work, I just felt terrible and experienced aches, pains and a headache, so I finished my shift and went home," Kryzer said. "By 11:00 that night, I had a fever of 103 degrees, and I had to have someone cover for me on my Sunday shift so that no other employee would get sick."

Kryzer stated that after experiencing those symptoms for longer than three days, he called his primary care doctor to attempt to be seen.

"I was first told that I shouldn't come into the hospital as I didn't have enough symptoms, but just a few days later is when I started to develop the cough, so that's when I went into a special COVID-19 clinic," Kryzer said.

Kryzer was then tested for both strains of Influenza, as well as strep throat – which all came back as negative.

"I was told that I probably did have COVID-19, but at that point in time they were only testing medical professionals, so I was told to return home, treat my symptoms and quarantine," he said.

A few days after he returned home, Kryzer's symptoms took a turn for the worse.

"I remember it was the night of March 29, and I couldn't breathe at all. My wife called the ambulance, and I was taken to the emergency room, where I was started on oxygen," he said.

It was that night, 12 days after he first started showing symptoms, that Kryzer received his COVID-19 test and tested positive.

"I was in intensive care for five days, so in total, I spent about a week in the hospital before I started to feel better," he said.

Kryzer said that while dealing with the symptoms was extremely hard, it was even more difficult to go through it alone.

"I am very grateful to the nurses and doctors that helped me," he said. "They were all wonderful, but other than seeing them, you're in isolation. Your family can't come and see you, and that was heartbreaking for them and for me. Though I am glad that no one else got sick."

None of Kryzer's family or co-workers reported symptoms during the time that he was sick.

"At work, there's only four of us that run that plant, and every plant is different, so it's not like my employer could call someone from another plant to fill in," Kryzer said.

After Kryzer and his family completed their quarantine, the Minnesota Department of Health



Dick Kryzer, a member of Operating Engineers Local 49, is back on the job at the Met Council's Hastings facility after fighting off COVID-19. IUOE Local 49 photo

cleared Kryzer to return to work.

"The Met Council was very supportive throughout the whole process, and even now we have all the personal protective equipment that we need, they sanitize daily and everyone practices social distancing," Kryzer said.

As an essential worker, it was critical for Kryzer to return to work as soon as he was able to. Many Local 49 members are considered essential workers, and Kryzer is just one of many examples of how Local 49 members fill vital roles in our society.

From ensuring that there is clean water to making sure that our roads and bridges are safe to commute on, Local 49 members are an essential part of ensuring we remain a functioning and safe society.

- Reprinted with permission from [www.local49.org](http://www.local49.org).



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## Rescheduled again, job fair plans online presence

The Union Job and Resource Fair, held annually on St. Paul's East Side, offers the opportunity to learn more about family-supporting career opportunities in the East Metro. And with so many people out of work as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, that mission is more important than ever.

While organizers have had to postpone the in-person job fair for a second time – this time to Aug. 20 – they plan to begin sharing job opportunities, hiring information and relevant resources from the event vendors on social media this month.

"We are aware that many union employers are eager to hire, needful of bringing new employees on board, and that many working women and men are in immediate need of job opportunities," said St. Paul Regional Labor Federation President Kera Peterson and East Side Freedom Library Director Peter Rachleff, whose organizations co-founded the job fair five years ago.

"We appreciate your patience as we try to develop and provide a process which, as best as possible, can meet the needs of employers, job seekers, and unions."

To access the "virtual job fair," find the Regional Labor Federation's page at [facebook.com/SaintPaulRLF](https://facebook.com/SaintPaulRLF).

Opportunities and resources will be shared on the job fair's event page, pinned to the top of all posts. RSVP your attendance to receive notifications as they are shared.

The in-person job fair Aug. 20 will take place at the St. Paul Electrical Industry Building, 1330 Conway St., from 3 to 6 p.m.

## Labor Against Cancer Run-Walk goes virtual

The Labor Against Cancer Run-Walk has gone virtual this year!

Sponsored by Local 1189 of the United Food and Commercial Workers, the event raises funds for the UFCW's movement to end the devastation of cancer by sponsoring research and patient support in partnership with The Leukemia and Lymphoma Society.

The union has helped raise \$86 million for LLS since their partnership began in 1982.

The virtual run-walk operates on the honor system. Participants register for either the 5,000-meter or 10,000-meter course, and, after completing the course on their own, enter their times online.

It's not the Boston Marathon, but it does it support a good cause.

Learn more at [andersonraces.com](https://andersonraces.com), and click on "Events."

## Unions react to Floyd's death, respond to community needs

Minnesota's labor community joined in the public outpouring of sadness and anger following George Floyd's death in Minneapolis Police custody May 25, amplifying calls for justice and police reform.

"This incident is an all-too-familiar reminder that a double standard still exists for African American men when interacting with law enforcement," Minnesota AFL-CIO President Bill McCarthy said. "Both as a Labor movement and as a country, we must recommit ourselves to ridding our society of the systematic racial inequalities that continue to ... deny justice to far too many Americans."

But union members also joined their neighbors in cleaning up storefronts, parks, streets and other areas impacted as peaceful protests became less so in both Minneapolis and St. Paul.

"People are responding to the unjust killing of George Floyd in different ways, including physical action to further agitate the system towards justice and systemic change," St. Paul Regional Labor Federation President Kera Peterson said.

Peterson praised St. Paul's elected officials and city staff for working to keep neighborhoods safe and citizens informed, as well as local unions helping members navigate jobs impacted by the crisis.

"Today, many union leaders are



A crew of volunteers from the Minneapolis Building Trades spent Friday, May 29, on Lake Street, volunteering to help clean up and repair building damaged the night before.  
photo courtesy Minneapolis Building Trades

working to support members who are showing up to jobs and workplaces that look and feel very different than they did yesterday and the day before," she said. "And some are working to support members who are not able to work at all, whether it's because transit and delivery services have been suspended in certain areas, or because the physical buildings where they work have been damaged

and are unsafe at this time.

"Union members show up to support their communities, and many are rolling up their sleeves and pitching in to help clean up impacted neighborhoods. As a labor movement, we stand united in support of efforts to rebuild our communities as places that are free of systemic racial inequalities, and to move the capital city forward, together."

## From first to worst: AT&T failing to protect employees during pandemic, offshoring more jobs and threatening to lay off essential U.S. workers

As the President of Communications Workers of America Local 7250 and an AT&T employee for nearly 32 years, I was very proud of AT&T when they were one of the first companies to work with our national union to create a COVID-19 plan.

It called for workers to self-quarantine up to 80 hours if exposed to the virus, and to stay home to take care of themselves and their families for up to 160 hours if necessary. It would close and consolidate retail store locations to help ensure worker safety. And the company negotiated and implemented a work-from-home program and 20% pay bonus for all essential employees on the job. All of this took place before Congress passed the Families First Coronavirus Response Act and extended paid leave benefits to millions of working people nationwide.

Sadly, it only took a few weeks for more AT&T stores to open back up. It took just seven weeks for AT&T to cancel its paid COVID-time policy and cancel the 20% work incentive.

Is the pandemic over? No.

CWA members are still essential workers on the front lines, working hard every day to keep our networks running and ensure service for all

## Letter to the Editor

customers, including first responders using the Firstnet network.

AT&T retail store employees in Minnesota have all been called back to work. Thirty-four of the 36 CWA-represented stores in the state have opened or have a plan to open back up, including inside Mall of America June 1.

And AT&T has already announced a plan for mass layoffs to start in June, according to town-hall calls with employees held by new CEO Jeff McElfresh and other business leaders.

Yet outgoing CEO Randal Stephenson will still receive \$274,000 a month in retirement for life. Stephenson will make 4-5 times the annual salary of the average frontline employee working for AT&T in Minnesota EVERY MONTH.

Meanwhile, AT&T started offshoring work to the Philippines in May. This work includes obtaining sensitive personal information from customers, like credit card and bank account numbers from business owners, for payments that were previously

being handled by dozens of workers at an AT&T office in Minneapolis. Though data breaches are rare, most of AT&T's prior data breaches happened with overseas contractors – "non-badged employees" – and not by AT&T employees who are invested in our business and committed to serving our customers.

CWA continues to fight for the U.S. Call Center Worker and Consumer Protection Act, bipartisan federal legislation that would protect consumers in the U.S. from identity theft by forcing call-center workers to disclose their location, and transferring customers back to the U.S. before providing personal or financial information. This would force corporations like AT&T to keep work in our country.

We need to protect customers and keep jobs in the U.S., and that starts with big corporations who have remained profitable, like AT&T. Now is not the time to desert U.S.-based workers, the same workers who have been deemed essential long before the pandemic.

AT&T can afford to be a leader in preserving and growing good middle class jobs in the United States.

– Shari Wojtowicz

President, CWA Local 7250



## At the Capitol

# State infrastructure jobs bill held hostage by Republican legislators

By Steve Share

Minneapolis Labor Review editor

The 2020 session of the Minnesota Legislature adjourned May 18 but failed to take care of one of the top agenda items: passing a bonding bill to invest in state infrastructure and create jobs.

DFL and Republican legislators repeated a familiar debate about the size of a proposed bonding package. DFLers wanted a bigger package. Republicans supported a smaller level of investment and job creation.

But this year brought a new twist: Republican legislative leaders said they would not support an infrastructure jobs bill unless Gov. Tim Walz first terminated the emergency executive orders he has used to direct the state's response to the COVID-19 crisis.

That tack drew a sharp rebuke from some of the state's Building Trades unions, which normally strive to be as bi-partisan as possible.

"We are disappointed that for the second year in a row, the Legislature, specifically the House Republican Caucus, failed to support a large infrastructure bill that would have created up to 30,000 construction jobs on local projects across the state," said Joel Smith, president and business manager of LIUNA Minnesota and North

Dakota.

Although the Legislature's regular session adjourned, Building Trades unions are pushing to get bonding on the agenda for a yet-to-be-scheduled special session this summer.

"Now is not the time for our jobs and our community's infrastructure needs to be used as leverage," said John Raines, executive secretary-treasurer of the North Central States Regional Council of Carpenters. "I urge all legislative leaders, who have expressed support for bonding since the end of the 2019 legislative session, to sit down and work out a substantial bonding bill as soon as possible. Our members and our state are counting on you."

"A strong bonding bill is critical to helping our state recover from the COVID-19 pandemic and to jump start our economy," the Minnesota State Building and Construction Trades Council declared, writing April 14 to legislative leaders. "Funding needed asset preservation, community development, energy efficiency, clean water, and safe roads, bridges, and transit systems will serve Minnesota communities and businesses and help get goods to market and put Minnesotans to work."

"There are over \$5.2 billion in

unmet needs for over 500 public construction projects across our State. Even conservative estimates indicate that this level of economic investment can put tens of thousands of Minnesotans to work. A balanced approach to funding building, water and road infrastructure, and prioritizing shovel-ready projects will allow the state to maximize its bonding power to provide on-going economic stimulus to the areas."

Yet GOP House Minority Leader Kurt Daudt sent out a news release May 4 announcing "the legislature will not be passing a bonding bill while the governor's emergency powers remain in effect. A bonding bill requires a three-fifths majority, or 81 votes, and must originate in the House."

The Minnesota House currently includes 75 DFL House members and 59 Republican members. When the

DFL's \$2 billion bonding bill came up for a floor vote May 15, Daudt made good on his threat. The bill failed on party lines.

A statement from Operating Engineers Local 49 took both sides to task: "The time for partisan rhetoric is over. We call on Gov. Walz and majority and minority legislative leaders to get in a room (virtually, if needed) and find a deal on infrastructure investment. There are no more excuses. The next time the Legislature meets, this deal should already be done, and the bill should be passed."

"Instead of sabotaging votes or using a bonding bill as trade bait, the four caucus leaders and the governor must find a way to get a deal on infrastructure spending," Local 49 business manager Jason George added. "There should be no higher priority as they negotiate a special session agenda."

## Walz blocks GOP from pulling back state workers' raises

Gov. Tim Walz last month thwarted an attempt by Republicans in control of the Minnesota Senate to block raises for nearly 50,000 union members employed by the state.

Unions negotiated the raises, due July 1, in bargaining last summer. Although their contracts went into effect after a legislative committee failed to act on them in the fall, state law still required final approval by the full Legislature.

After the DFL-controlled House gave its approval, GOP senators passed an amended version of the contracts with no cost-of-living increases in the second year.

That drew outrage from union leaders like Julie Bleyhl, executive director of Council 5 of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, which represents 43,000 public service workers statewide. Senate Republicans, she said, "showed total disrespect" for the state workforce – and the collective bargaining process.

"They grossly overstepped their authority in amending the contract," Bleyhl said. "The money for these

contracts was proposed by Gov. Walz in the last budget, voted on favorably by the House and Senate and became law."

After consulting with the Department of Management and Budget and the Attorney General's Office, Walz determined the Senate had no authority to amend the union contracts. By law, the Legislature's only obligation is to give them an up-or-down vote.

"We have consistently said that we never have, nor will ever negotiate our contracts with the Legislature and working people should never be treated as political pawns," Bleyhl said. "Under longstanding collective bargaining law, we negotiate our contracts with employers and not with outside entities."

"The Minnesota Senate's action in amending the contracts was an attack on not just state employees, but all public, private, and non-profit sector workers. We will continue fighting against attacks on decades-long collective bargaining laws, rights and processes."

– Union Advocate staff

## Home care workers eye pandemic pay in special session

Home care workers represented by SEIU Healthcare Minnesota are hoping legislators will revisit a measure providing them with a temporary, 15% pay raise during the COVID-19 pandemic during a special session this summer.

Despite bipartisan support, the measure stalled in the Senate after winning approval in the House.

Workers and their clients say the pay raise would help attract workers to the home care industry, which faces a crisis as the number of caregivers

fails to keep up with the number of elderly Minnesotans and people with disabilities statewide who need care.

"Home care workers are on the front line, putting ourselves and our families at risk, all to make sure our clients can stay safely in their homes," SEIU Healthcare Minnesota member Deb Howze said, adding that "legislators from both parties mentioned many times in discussing the bill that large wage and benefit increases ... are long overdue."

"Enough talk. We need action."



Thank You

UNION MEMBERS FOR YOUR  
ESSENTIAL SERVICE AND  
COMMITMENT TO OUR COMMUNITIES





## Governor's order bars retaliation against workers speaking out about job safety

As Gov. Tim Walz moved to relax COVID-19 restrictions and re-open Minnesota's economy in stages, he also acted to protect worker safety.

Walz issued Emergency Executive Order 20-54 May 13: "Protecting Workers from Unsafe Working Conditions and Retaliation During the COVID-19 Peacetime Emergency."

"Although frontline workers are at heightened risk, all workers need protection from unsafe work conditions during this pandemic," the order read. "Recent news reports contain accounts of workers facing discipline or retaliation for raising concerns about protective equipment and their safety, or for wearing protective equipment," the order noted.

"Those who return to work can and should raise concerns about the health and safety practices of their workplaces without fear of discrimination or retaliation," said Lieutenant Governor Peggy Flanagan in a statement.

The order directed, in part:

- "...[E]mployers must not discriminate or retaliate in any way against a worker communicating orally or in writing with management personnel about occupational safety or health matters related to COVID-19, including asking questions or expressing concerns."

- "Employers must not discriminate or retaliate in any way against any worker for wearing gloves, a cloth face covering, eye protection, or other protective gear which the worker has personally procured and reasonably believes will protect them, their coworkers or the public against COVID-19 in the course of their work, provided that the protective gear which the worker has personally procured does not violate industry standards or existing employer policies related to health, safety, or decency. Employers may require use of employer-provided protective gear that meets or exceeds protective gear procured by employees."

- "[W]orkers have the right to refuse to work under conditions that

they, in good faith, reasonably believe present an imminent danger of death or serious physical harm. This includes a reasonable belief that they have been assigned to work in an unsafe or unhealthful manner with an infectious agent such as COVID-19. Employers must not discriminate or retaliate in any way against a worker for the worker's good faith refusal to perform assigned tasks if the worker has asked the employer to correct the hazardous conditions but they remain uncorrected. These situations should be immediately reported to the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry ("DLI")."

- The order also stated that a worker who quits a job due to safety concerns, or who is dismissed for raising safety concerns, "shall not lose unemployment insurance benefits under existing law..."

Minnesota AFL-CIO president Bill McCarthy issued the following statement in response to Governor Tim Walz's executive order:

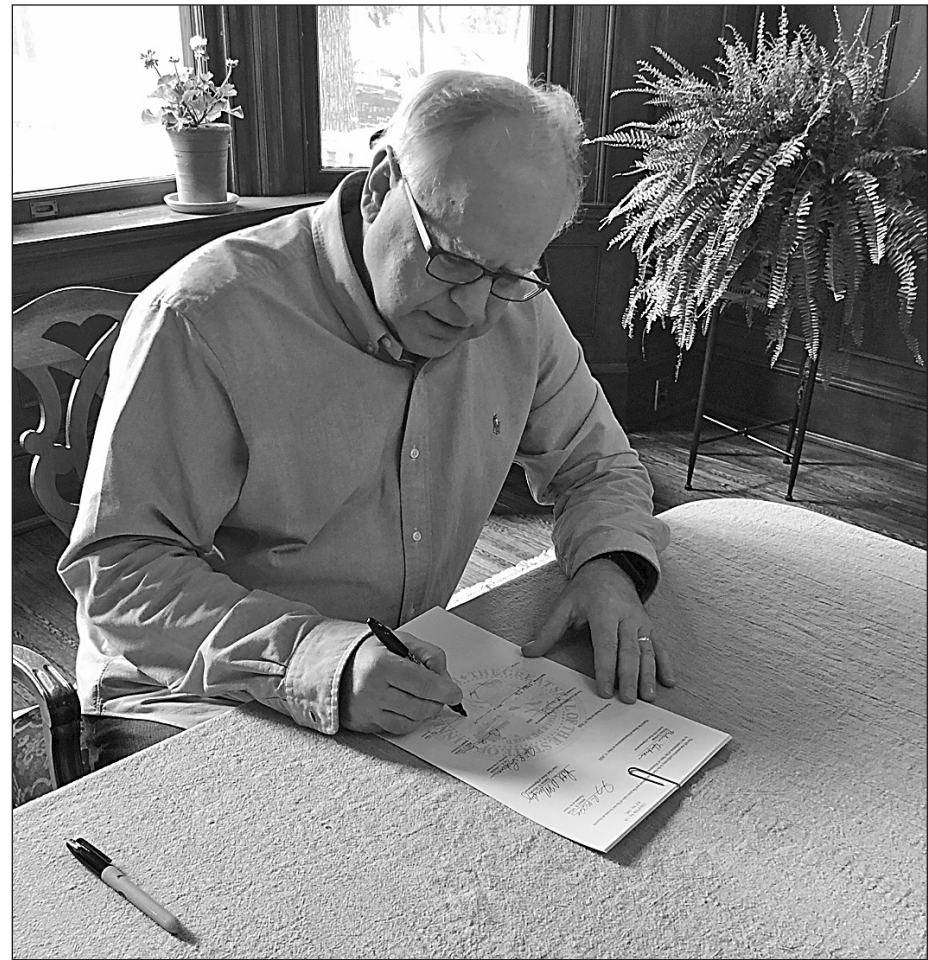
"As Minnesota's economy slowly reopens during this pandemic, it is vital that workers are empowered to report unsafe working conditions and to refuse to work without loss of income if they have not been provided proper protections or training to do their jobs safely."

"The simple truth is that our economy cannot rebound unless employers are held accountable to implement safety measures to protect both workers and public health. Failing to do so would result in more workers falling sick and even more economic damage."

McCarthy added, "we thank Governor Walz for continuing to actively seek the input of Minnesota's labor movement during the peacetime emergency."

For more information about Governor Walz's Emergency Executive Order 20-54, visit [mn.gov/covid19](http://mn.gov/covid19).

To make a complaint about safety issues to the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry, call 651-284-5050. — Minneapolis Labor Review



Gov. Tim Walz signs legislation from his office in the Governor's residence at the end of the 2020 session. Lawmakers planned to return this summer to handle unfinished business, including an infrastructure jobs bill.

photo courtesy governor's office

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After informational picketing outside United Hospital in St. Paul, a large crowd of nurses and community supporters kept their social distance while marching to the Capitol for a rally for more PPE. Pictured at top are (L to R) Anna Dykhuis, a nurse at Hennepin County Medical Center; Molly O'Meara, a nurse at Children's in Minneapolis; and Deiondrea Vandassor, a supporter. At bottom-left is United nurse Leif Thorsgaard, who spoke at the rally while showing off his makeshift PPE.

Union Advocate photos

## United Hospital nurses lead march for PPE in St. Paul

Faced with a continued lack of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), rising COVID-19 patient levels, and resumption of elective surgeries, members of the Minnesota Nurses Association and community supporters marched from United Hospital to the Capitol in St. Paul May 20.

Their demands: proper equipment, training, staffing and transparency from United and other hospitals, as well as for the Minnesota Department of Health to enforce the highest standards of safety and protection for patients and health care workers.

"Hospital management has been unresponsive to nurses' concerns," said Brittany Livaccari, a registered nurse at United. "Nurses have asked, pleaded and finally just grabbed scrubs to protect themselves and their families from this horrible virus. And our nurses are being disciplined."

At United, several RNs were given non-disciplinary "counselings" for wearing hospital-provided scrubs. A few have been issued disciplinary notices, and, so far, one has been terminated. Several RNs were docked pay, in violation of the Fair Labor Standards Act, because management chose to spend an hour yelling at nurses who were asking for scrubs rather than providing the scrubs.

"All over Minnesota, nurses are being forced to utilize unsafe practices," said Mary C. Turner, an

intensive care unit nurse at North Memorial Health and MNA President. "At my hospital, nurses are re-using gowns and masks, that until recently, we threw away. Yet, we're told they're safe now."

This is crazy in a state where we pride ourselves on delivering the best care. We've relaxed our standards when we should be setting them by protecting our workers and our patients."

Nurses opposed Gov. Tim Walz's Executive Order allowing for the resumption of elective procedures until hospitals can show PPE resources have been obtained and healthcare workers' exposure is minimized.

Nurses encouraged everyone at the march to practice appropriate social distancing.

Additionally, they delivered a Pandemic Bill of Rights Petition with more than 10,000 signatures to the Minnesota Department of Health, demanding it protect workers and patients.

The action was an informational picket, not a work stoppage, as no nurses left their jobs to participate in the march.

"Minnesota is falling short," Turner said. "We are not protecting the very people who are caring for Minnesotans. Nurses and hospital workers need to be there as this pandemic spikes, and it's going to be all hands on deck. The effect of these policies is not just numbers, it's lives."



# The right to refuse unsafe work is more important than ever – but expect a fight

By Kathy Wilkes

Special to The Union Advocate

The COVID-19 pandemic is taking a heavy toll on workers. Reports of job hazards grow increasingly dire as several governors and President Trump push past CDC guidelines to "reopen" the economy while forecasts predict soaring infections and deaths.

Some states at the direction of the Labor Department threaten termination of unemployment benefits for workers fearing return to dangerous jobs. Senate Republicans demand employer liability protection from workers who contract the disease.

A new study finds that 90% of people who test positive work outside the home. Trump's lawsuit to destroy Obamacare would deprive them and millions more of treatment.

In short, the news is terrifying – and rightly so. But it often misses essential information about rights workers have to save their own lives. First and foremost is the right to refuse unsafe work free of employer retaliation.

The Supreme Court affirmed that right in 1980, relying on regulations promulgated by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, which publishes information online. An excerpt:

Your right to refuse to do a task is protected if all four of the following conditions are met:

- Where possible, you have asked the employer to eliminate the danger, and the employer failed to do so.
- You refused to work in "good faith." This means that you must genuinely believe that an imminent danger exists.
- A reasonable person would agree that there is a real danger of death or serious injury.
- There isn't enough time, due to the urgency of the hazard, to get it corrected through regular enforcement channels, such as requesting an OSHA inspection.

This is no walk in the park. It affords an alternative to the "starve at home or die from work" choice confronting so many workers, but there are exceptions – and the path to safety can be rocky.

Although OSHA sets and enforces safety standards for most workplaces, budget and staffing cuts have impeded its ability to respond. Worse, the



agency's initial COVID-19 policy limits intervention to health care providers or worksites where people have already died.

"That's one of the reasons why we're seeing catastrophic results in meatpacking plants, at Amazon warehouses, in transit systems, in other workplaces," former deputy Labor Department secretary Seth Harris said on MSNBC Live. "The cop is not on the beat."

OSHA's updated policy expands field staff's "discretion" in some cases. Not good enough, says the AFL-CIO, which is suing to compel immediate intervention in the face of "grave danger."

Ironically, these harsh realities reinforce workers' "right to refuse." In a blistering April 7 article for Politico, former OSHA administrator David Michaels said the agency "is suffering from malign neglect" under Trump, sparking worker job actions and strikes "to force their employers into providing even basic protections."

Collective action is bolstered further by workers' right to "concerted activities for...mutual aid or protection" under the National Labor Relations Act, which governs most private sector employment. Even the Trump-dominated Labor Board agrees that "participating in a concerted refusal to work in unsafe conditions" is protected.

But what about pay? Workers whose employers don't offer safe job assign-

ments should be eligible for unemployment insurance, according to the National Employment Law Project, which is pressing the Labor Department to enforce and publicly clarify rules.

UI applies in "situations where there has been an intervening change in the conditions of work, which the employee objects to," NELP says. Workers getting new pandemic employment assistance should only return to jobs that don't "present any unusual risk to the health, safety, or morals of the individual." NELP advocates CDC guidelines as a "baseline" to determine workplace safety.

Contracting COVID-19 on the job may be covered by state workers' compensation laws that generally require employer-provided insurance for disability pay and health care and also prohibit retaliation for pursuing or getting these benefits.

Proving work-related infection can be tricky (especially as Republicans deploy "blame the worker" talking points), but more states like Illinois and California make it easier to show a connection by presuming causation for some occupations.

The "no fault" nature of the insurance means there's no right to sue the employer, but there are exceptions, including gross negligence for failing to provide a safe workplace. State workers'

comp laws vary. FindLaw summarizes them with links to agencies in charge.

As with almost every worker right, there are exclusions, caveats and case law that impact their interpretation and application. Advice: Get the facts, recruit co-workers if possible, expect a fight.

Employers could refuse to mitigate dangers, challenge claims or fire workers taking a stand, precipitating more battles over reinstatement and compensation. It's wise to consult a labor lawyer. Union workers have additional representation, a collective bargaining agreement and referrals to other services.

There's plenty more help from labor advocates. The AFL-CIO offers COVID-19 pandemic resources for workers, union and nonunion alike. The National Council of Occupational Safety and Health has guidance in English and Spanish.

The National Employment Law Project provides a "policy toolkit...to help ensure that workers are protected." And Labor Notes explains rights to paid leave and unemployment.

Bottom line: This fight for survival – however long it lasts – is universal. No one has to go through it alone.

– Kathy Wilkes – a longtime labor writer and editor and former union co-founder and officer – grants rights to reprint this article to pro-labor organizations.

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## AFL-CIO sues OSHA for COVID-19 protections

The AFL-CIO filed suit May 18 in the U.S. Court of Appeals seeking to force OSHA to issue an emergency temporary standard protecting U.S. workers against the coronavirus.

The petition demonstrates thousands of workers have been infected on the job via exposure to infected patients, co-workers and unscreened members of the public. As the economy reopens and people return to work, person-to-person contact will increase and health experts predict infections

and deaths among workers will rise.

"It's truly a sad day in America when working people must sue the organization tasked with protecting our health and safety," said AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka. "But we've been left no choice."

OSHA has a duty to issue an ETS when it finds there is a grave danger to working people and that a standard is necessary to protect them. The AFL-CIO, together with 23 national unions, first petitioned for an ETS in March.



## Commentary: Imagining a more just, equitable post-COVID workweek

By John Crea

Special to The Union Advocate

A growing number of us have been arguing for some time now for shorter workweeks so we can spend more time at home with our families. Recent events have lent new support to that argument.

As we work our way through this period of COVID-19 imposed isolation, we are being offered a glimpse of what a mandated shorter workweek could mean to our lives. The stay-at-home orders from Gov. Walz are giving many of us the chance to learn a few things about ourselves. Parents are not spending all day every day at work, and children are not racing from school to piano practice to soccer game. We have much more time to spend with each other, and our roles within the family have become

amplified. This is especially true in three-generation households as we are spending more time in caregiving roles involving child-rearing and elder-care activities.

We are also getting the chance to learn more about our neighbors, as they too have been ordered to stay home. As the weather gradually turns nice and with more time on our hands, we have the chance to hold conversations with neighbors beyond hi and bye, all from a safe distance of six feet apart, of course. We are learning more about them, and they about us. We may be knee-jerk liberals. They may be dyed-in-the-wool conservatives. Or vice versa. But by golly, they are still good people and we are happy to have them as neighbors.

The chance for social bonding, despite social distancing, extends beyond our immediate neighborhood. When we make our needed trips to the grocery store and we see others wearing face masks, we feel a social kinship. Even those who are not wearing a mask seem to be trying to keep some distance apart. The coronavirus is a common enemy, one that respects no geographic borders, no political boundaries. And we are learning how wonderfully interdependent we are on each other.

There is one more positive outcome within this difficult situation, a beneficial side-effect of the disease, if you will. As bad as the slow-down is for the economy, it is good for the environment! Fewer commutes to work. Less emission from factory smokestacks. We see evidence of cleaner air after just a few months of decreased economic activity.

But all of this, the environmental and societal benefits, does *not* mean we want to live with this debilitating disease any longer than we must, and we are all hopeful that a vaccine for the virus is developed as quickly as possible.

As the pandemic releases its grip and we are "allowed" to go back to work, let's not forget all those beneficial side-effects. We should reprioritize the role of working in our lives, spend less time at work, and more time at home with our families and our neighbors. And, in these days of automation, robotics, and artificial intelligence, with each individual worker being many times more productive, there is no reason why a shorter workweek is not possible.

I published a book two years ago titled "Recalibrating the Labor Market," where I called for a drastic reduction in the length of a standard workweek to 24 hours. When I started researching material for the book, we were suffering high unemployment and slow growth on the heels of the great recession. One of the main arguments for the shorter workweek was to make sure there was enough work to go around. That particular argument gradually

lost steam over the next 10 years as unemployment dropped down to under 4%.

Then COVID-19 struck.

All the job gains in the 10 years of growth since the recession have been lost. We will recover; but unlike the crash, the recovery from COVID-19 will not happen overnight. Reducing the number of hours in a standard fulltime workweek, while keeping weekly paychecks whole, should create more demand for rehiring all those laid-off workers, and accelerate the economic recovery.

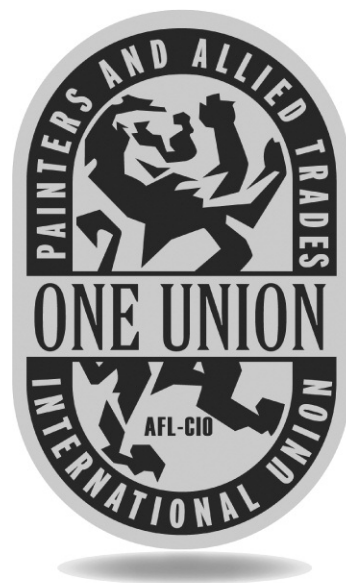
But as we bring them back into the workforce, why not at something less than 40-hours per week? We may not want to drop all the way from 40 to 24-hours in one jump. But, in the interest of political expedience and societal continuity, it may be prudent to do this stepwise.

How can we make strides toward a shorter workweek? I believe this will take a two-pronged approach: top-down and bottom-up. Top-down, we look for leadership from progressive lawmakers. They will follow cues from those they perceive in their base of support. With some encouragement, perhaps they will codify changes to the labor market with an amendment of the 1938 Fair Labor Standards Act, dropping the number of hours in a fulltime workweek from 40 to something lower. In the bottom-up approach, labor unions in negotiations with employers could push for shorter workweeks with corresponding hourly raises to assure no loss on weekly paychecks.

With my "rip-off-the-bandage" approach, I have been advocating for The 2024 Plan as remedy for a broken labor market: \$20 per hour, for 24 hours per week. But that target is now out-of-date. The "Fight for \$15" movement has given us a baseline for the weekly minimum wage for a fulltime worker – \$15 per hour at 40 hours per week mean \$600/week. In a 24-hour week, for a full-time worker to earn \$600 per week, the minimum hourly wage must be \$25.

My thought is that we would not lay all that burden on the employer. We should accept the \$15 per hour minimum wage that is currently being pushed around the country. The federal government, through an Earned Income Credit, could cover the next \$10 per hour. This would be paid to the worker week-by-week as it is earned. Just like the reduction in the length of the workweek, the EIC could be phased in over time.

Would salaried workers receive any benefit from an EIC for hourly workers? Of course! When they look up and see hourly employees putting in shorter workweeks with no loss in pay, they will quit spending 50 or 60 or 70 hours a week at work and start spending more time at home with their families.



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### UNITE HERE holds successful food drive for hospitality workers



With Ramadan fasting soon to end for many UNITE HERE Local 17 members, the union set up a food distribution site May 22 off West 7th St., near MSP Airport. The hospitality union, whose members have been hit hard by the COVID-19 shutdown, collected enough during a food drive May 18 at the United Labor Centre in Minneapolis to fill 100 grocery bags. Bakery Workers Local 22 stepped up in a big way for the food drive, arranging a large donation of pasta from one of its employers, Dakota Growers in New Hope.

Union Advocate photo





As Lisa Weed of SEIU Healthcare MN speaks, (L to R) UFCW Local 663's Paul Crandall, the Firefighters' Chris Parsons, MN AFL-CIO's Bill McCarthy and MNA's Mary Turner keep their social distance behind her. UA photo

## At COVID-19 vigil, unions call out PPE shortages

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

surpassed 1,000, and shortages of personal protective equipment continue to plague hospitals, nursing homes and other essential workplaces.

"Our members are fearful," said Lisa Weed, executive vice president of SEIU Healthcare Minnesota, which represents more than 35,000 health care and long-term care workers across the state. "We as one Minnesota have a responsibility to make sure health care workers are not being put in harm's way, as well as the residents and patients they care for."

But the coronavirus has spread in other industries, too. More than 20 meatpacking plants nationwide have been forced to halt production, including Worthington's JBS pork processing facility, where over 200 employees have tested positive for COVID-19, according to a report in the Sioux Falls Argus Leader.

Warehouse workers, retail clerks, transit operators, child care providers, corrections officers – the list of essential workers at high risk of being exposed to the pandemic is long.

Unions representing many essential workers in Minnesota – including United Food and Commercial Workers Local 663, which represents workers at the Worthington plant – took part in the vigil, which fell on International Workers Day, appropriately enough.

Local 663 Secretary-Treasurer Paul Crandall said at least 400 members of his union had contracted COVID-19. Chris Parsons of the Minnesota Professional Firefighters Association said lack of PPE creates a common fear among everyone who works with the public.

"The greatest fear among all of us is that we will bring (COVID-19) home to our families," Parsons said.

Union leaders at the vigil said the best way the public can help keep frontline workers safe is to follow state guidelines designed to contain the virus. "Right now the best way we can prevent the increased spread of this illness is to stay at home," Parsons said.

But Minnesota AFL-CIO President Bill McCarthy, head of the state's largest labor federation, acknowledged those measures have created hardship for people working in industries like hospitality and leisure, who are making an "extraordinary sacrifice" during the pandemic response.

"As we pause this evening to recognize workers who have suffered and, in some cases, even died from COVID-19, we owe them action," McCarthy said. "We owe it ... to them not to simply focus on when we can reopen the economy, but rather how we can reopen it to ensure the health and safety of working people."

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*A message from the members of Local 1005*



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## Labor Q&amp;A: Angie Craig

## Instead of lawmakers' thanks, 2nd District rep says, essential workers 'need us to deliver the PPE'

By Michael Moore

Union Advocate editor

Before taking questions from roughly 60 union members, leaders and retirees who participated in a virtual roundtable discussion last month, U.S. Rep. Angie Craig wanted to make one thing clear.

"Thank you to each of you who are deemed essential," she said. "You're all essential to me."

"Those of you putting your lives and the health of your families at risk by going to work and supporting us, you don't need words from elected leaders, you need action, you need PPE, you need testing – and that's what I'm going to continue to fight for."

Craig also gave a blunt assessment of President Trump's COVID-19 pandemic response, which she called "embarrassing." She blasted the administration for aggressively wielding executive power to force people back to work, while taking a more restrained approach to stockpiling the personal protective equipment (PPE) and testing supplies necessary to ensure their health and safety in the workplace.

Craig, a DFLer, is in her first term representing Minnesota's 2nd Congressional District, which covers all of Dakota, Scott, Goodhue and Wabasha counties, and part of Washington and Rice counties. She is seeking reelection this fall and was endorsed by the state's largest federation of unions, the Minnesota AFL-CIO, earlier this year.

"I hope you feel like I've done I said what I would do in my first term in Congress," she told

union members on the call. "I'm going to be here for you and be fighting for you both through COVID-19 relief and as we work to, best case, build our way out of a short-term recession or, worst case – I'm not even going to verbalize it."

The first question for Craig during the virtual roundtable came from an essential worker on the front lines of fighting the spread of COVID-19. Jennifer Gomez, who works as a janitor in a local grocery store, told Craig her employer does not always provide gloves, masks and other protective equipment, and many cleaning workers worry about contracting the virus and bringing it home to their families.

Fifteen members of the union representing Twin Cities janitors and security guards, Service Employees International Union Local 26, had been exposed to the coronavirus and four had tested positive by early May, Gomez said. Local 26 member Armando Solis died in April after contracting COVID-19.

Asked by Gomez what the federal government was doing to address PPE shortages in workplaces like hers, Craig said if there has been a federal strategy for stockpiling essential equipment and getting it to essential workers, it isn't working.

"We have companies like Lunds competing with HyVee competing with the State of Minnesota competing with our hospital systems competing with our meat processing plants for this equipment," Craig said. "There really has been no national strategy because the president and his administration don't want to accept responsibility for failure here."

While the pandemic may have given the public a new perspective about which jobs and workers really are essential, "instead of us being grateful, you need us to deliver the PPE," Craig added. "You and your colleagues need to be able to protect yourselves while you serve our communities."

Kera Peterson, president of the St. Paul Regional Labor Federation, pointed to the "heartbreaking" situation in local nursing homes, where "the most vulnerable people are being taken from us, and our workers are putting themselves and their families at risk." She asked Craig if it was too late for the federal government to take action to replenish the federal stockpile.

"It wasn't too late to start in March or April or even now," Craig answered. "When we look at the second wave medical experts are predicting here, it's not too late to do what we should have been doing three or four months ago."

"But for this administration, that would mean admitting they weren't doing what they should have been doing."

In another question about nursing homes and their employees, SEIU Healthcare Minnesota member KaeJae Johnson, who lives in the 2nd District, asked if Craig would fight to include undocumented and temporary immigrant workers in future COVID-19 relief packages, noting they make up a large part of the industry's workforce and are among "communities of color who had large disparity issues before" the pandemic struck.

Craig acknowledged COVID-19 has "highlighted" racial and ethnic disparities in Minnesota and around the country, but without a partner in the White House, she acknowledged, policies to reduce those disparities stand little chance of becoming law. Craig said it took "a real fight" for House



U.S. Rep. Angie Craig, in her first term representing Minnesota's 2nd Congressional District, was endorsed for reelection by the Minnesota AFL-CIO earlier this year.

file photo

Democrats to negotiate free testing for everyone, regardless of immigration status, in the \$484 billion relief package enacted April 24.

"I understand people will still be fearful ... because this administration does not have a good history," Craig said. "For marginalized communities – immigrants, LGBTQ folks, people of color – 2020 is do or die to change this administration and replace it with one that is not going to discriminate."

Other union members on the video conference raised concerns about the pandemic's impact on multiemployer pension funds, the U.S. Postal Service, and state and local governments' budgets, which Craig called "the next hammer to fall" in the looming recession.

In addition to shoring up local governments, Craig said a major federal investment in infrastructure nationwide would help keep people employed as the economy recovers. President Trump has expressed support for an infrastructure bill in the past, but so far has not followed through.

"I have said from the start, if the president comes back and arm-twists Republicans to support an infrastructure bill, then (Democrats) should support an infrastructure bill," she said. "We have got to stand up this economy as quickly as possible, and I view infrastructure as a part of that."

But winning Senate Republicans' support for infrastructure investments and relief for local governments could come at a steep price, Craig acknowledged in response to a question from AFSCME retiree and 2nd District resident Katie Farber. Trump has demanded any future stimulus bill include payroll tax cuts, which, Farber warned, would further threaten the solvency of Social Security and Medicare.

"How does a payroll tax help the 30 million Americans who no longer have a job?" Craig asked. "I think (Republicans) are using this as a stunt to back up on Social Security, and it does not shock me at all."

"We know what they're after, and they will use any crisis as an opportunity to get to where they want to be."

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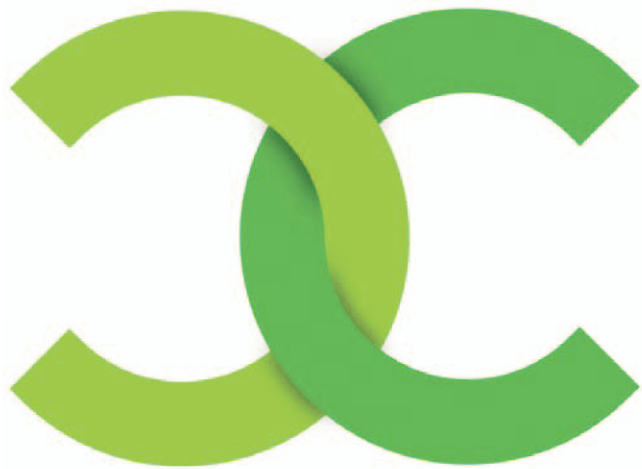


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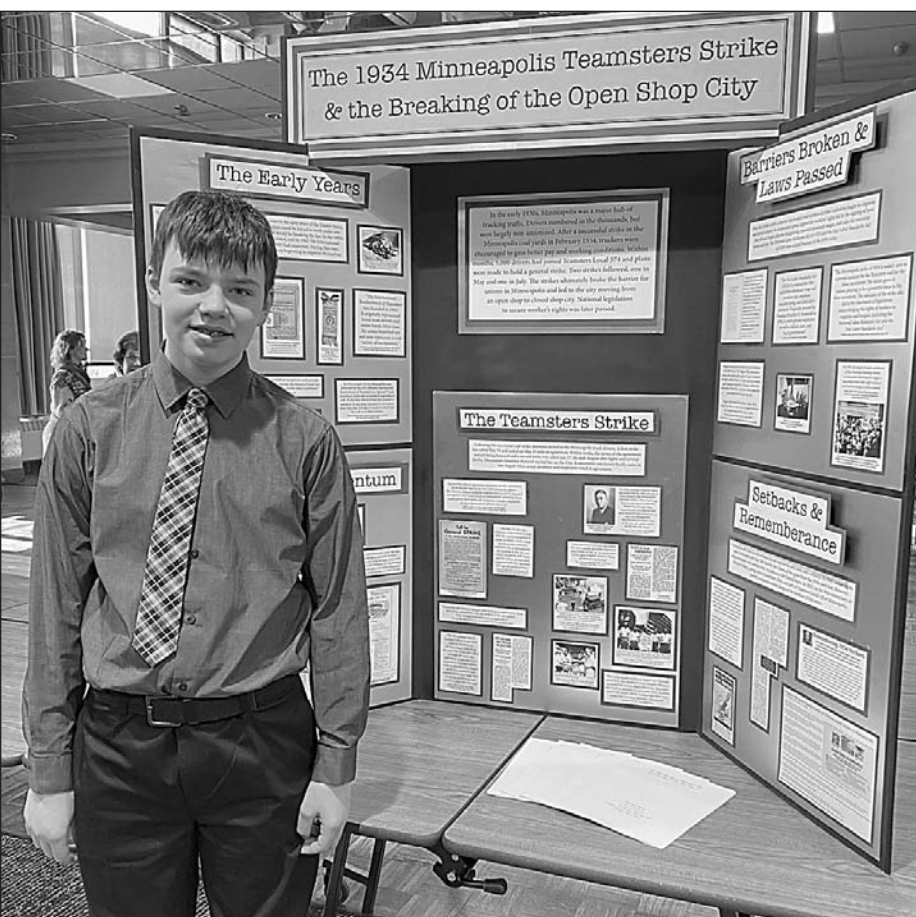
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Michael Martin created an exhibit about the 1934 Minneapolis Teamsters strike.  
photo courtesy Martin family

## Labor media award History Day prizes

Prizes in labor history went to students competing in the 2020 Minnesota State History Day competition last month, courtesy of the Minneapolis Labor Review and St. Paul Union Advocate newspapers and the University of Minnesota Labor Education Service.

The state competition is part of an annual national competition for junior high and senior high students, who research a topic and present their findings via original exhibits, live performances, documentary videos, websites or research papers. This year's History Day theme was "Breaking Barriers in History."

Student projects advance from school competitions to regional competitions and then to the state competition. Due to COVID-19 precautions, this year's state competition became a virtual event.

Labor history prize winners, each awarded a \$100 cash prize, included:

- Esther George, "The Memphis Sanitation Workers Strike of 1968," Junior Individual Documentary, Olson Middle School, Bloomington.
- Michael Martin, "The 1934 Minneapolis Teamsters Strike and the Breaking of the Open Shop City," Junior Individual Exhibit, Stella Maris Academy – St. John's Campus, Duluth.
- Wen Winter, "The Slave Narratives Project: Breaking the Barrier of Silence," Junior Individual Performance, Many Rivers Montessori, Duluth.
- Adelaide Norton and Evelyn Nelson, "WWII Women in the

Workforce: Breaking Barriers and Sparking Equality," Junior Group Website, Wayzata West Middle School.

• Maya Atherly-Larsen, "Americana in Light and Shadows: The Empathetic Lens of Dorothea Lange," Senior Individual Documentary, DeLaSalle High School.

• Anna Lage, "Dorothea Lange," Senior Individual Exhibit, St. Cloud Technical High School.

• Phoebe Tilburt, "The Mary Tyler Moore Show and Second-Wave Feminism," Senior Individual Performance, Schaeffer Academy, Rochester.

• Lily Hennessee, "Lewis Hine: Breaking the Barrier Between Reality and Perception of Child Labor," Senior Individual Website, Open World Learning Community, St. Paul.

In addition, the judges awarded an honorable mention for a junior exhibit, "David Roe and the Labor Movement," created by Samantha Nohrenberg and Kaysen Solorz, students at Big Lake Middle School. Nohrenberg is Roe's great granddaughter.

Thanks goes out to the team labor history judges: Jean Baudhuin, Laborers Local 563; Steve Brandt, Minnesota Newspaper Guild; Lynne Larkin-Wright, St. Paul Regional Labor Federation; Theresa St. Aoro, AFSCME Local 2829; John See, Labor Education Service; Steve Share, Minneapolis Labor Review; Louise Sundin, Minneapolis Federation of Teachers; Hannah Weber, St. Paul Federation of Educators.

– Minneapolis Labor Review

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**Saint Paul Building & Construction Trades Council**





# Minutes of the Saint Paul Regional Labor Federation

## MAY 13, 2020

The Saint Paul Regional Labor Federation met in regular session remotely due to COVID-19 on the above date and was called to order with the Pledge of Allegiance by President Peterson at 6 p.m. Board members in attendance were Beissel, Dreyer, Edwards, Engeldorf, Faber, Gibbons, Guertin, Madden, Maki-Green, Markham-Kocurek, McCarthy, McNamara, Meyer, Michelson, Mullin, Peterson, Schmidt, Seath, Slattery, St. Aoro, Terry, Vandassor, Varco and Weed. Excused were Beedle B, Beedle G., Luneburg, Ryan and Sansom. Absent were Froemke, Gorman, Hoppe, and Robles.

## MOMENT OF SILENCE

President Peterson called for a Moment of Silence for Bill Haring, Education Minnesota: Forest Lake, and George Kisel, Heat and Frost Insulators Local 34.

## CREDENTIALS

Credentials were received from Bakery Workers Local 22, Elevators Local 9 and Laborers Local 563. President Peterson administered the Oath of Obligation to those new delegates and alternates present on-line.

## MINUTES

**M/S/C TO APPROVE MINUTES OF APRIL 8, 2020, 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 MAY 13, 2020

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

Items to come before this board included:

- The Ramsey County Labor Assembly requested consideration of granting Labor Endorsement to the following candidates:
  - Nicole Frethem, Ramsey County Commissioner, District 1
  - Mary Jo McGuire, Ramsey County Commissioner, District 2
  - Victoria Reinhardt, Ramsey County Commissioner, District 7

• President Peterson reported on the legislative priorities at the Capitol. We are currently working on getting a robust bonding bill passed. Please call your Senators. State employees are trying to get their contracts ratified but the Senate is holding their contracts hostage. Reach out to your Senators to help get the contracts ratified. You now have an option to "vote by mail." Contact Steve Simon, Secretary of State's Office, to request an Absentee Ballot. The HERO's Act will get direct payments to workers. We will let you know as soon as more information

becomes available. The Workers Compensation presumption for first responders and healthcare workers who contract COVID-19 passed the House and Senate and Governor Walz signed it into law.

- President Peterson provided the committee with a list of candidates who qualify for the MN AFL-CIO's friendly incumbent endorsement, and she asked for feedback. The RLF received a request for a support letter from Saint Paul City Councilmember Mitra Jalali for the proposed tenant protections ordinance for Saint Paul. The tenant protections policy will be heard at the May 20 public hearing. Council Member Jalali is asking our community partners to send a support letter to the full City Council via e-mail at [contact-council@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:contact-council@ci.stpaul.mn.us).

- Phil Qualy, State Legislative Director, UTU announced that he will be retiring and will be resigning his COPE board seat. The committee congratulated Phil on his retirement and thanked him for his tireless advocacy.
- **M/S/C FOR THE SAINT PAUL REGIONAL LABOR FEDERATION TO WRITE A LETTER SUPPORTING THE CITY OF SAINT PAUL TENANT PROTECTIONS ORDINANCE.**

- **M/S/C TO RECOMMEND LABOR ENDORSEMENT OF NICOLE FRETHEM, RAMSEY COUNTY COMMISSIONER, DISTRICT 1; MARY JO MCGUIRE, RAMSEY COUNTY COMMISSIONER, DISTRICT 2; AND VICTORIA REINHARDT, RAMSEY COUNTY COMMISSIONER, DISTRICT 7.**

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

## EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES MAY 13, 2020

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 Peterson reported on:

- The Fifth Annual Union Resource and Job Fair has been rescheduled for Thursday, Aug. 20, 2020, at the Electrical Industry Building located at 1330 Conway Street in St. Paul, from 3 to 6 p.m.

- The Tenth Annual Labor Bowl for St. Paul Labor Studies and Resource Center will be rescheduled for Thursday, Aug. 6, 2020. Shift times available are 2 and 4 p.m.

- The National AFL-CIO and the City of Saint Paul Labor Standards Advisory Council.

- Working with ATU Local 1005, Saint Paul Building and Construction Trades Council and Teamsters Local 120 around issue campaigns.

- Working with Bree Halverson at the Blue Green Alliance, U.S. Rep.

Betty McCollum on PPE production and the Defense Production Act, Labor roundtable with U.S. Rep. Angie Craig covered health care, industrial manufacturing, postal service and the impact in rural areas.

- Check-ins with Governor Walz regarding workers and human rights.

- ORGANIZING/UPDATES/CAMPAIGNS: AFSCME Council 5, Minnesota Nurses Association, the Postal Workers, and United Transportation Union updated everyone on the impact of COVID-19 on their membership, as well as their organizing activities.

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

## REPORT OF THE TREASURER

Secretary-Treasurer Engeldorf reported on the financial status of the Federation as of April 2020. The report was accepted as read.

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

President Peterson reported on the following:

- During this time there have been many opportunities to connect with elected officials regarding COVID-19. Peterson is having conversations with Rep. Betty McCollum, and led a Labor Roundtable Discussion with Rep. Angie Craig on industrial manufacturing, postal workers and health care unions' issues. Even though we are collectively facing this crisis, we all have different needs. U.S. Sen. Tina Smith has reached out to unions. Governor Walz is making connections with organized labor. The news of reopening will have a real impact on workers.

- Peterson also spoke with City of Saint Paul regarding issues. John Grebner at the Mayor Carter's office put together a Labor Advisory Council around Safe and Sick and \$15 NOW. Council Member Mitra Jalali is working on the tenant protections ordinance. She is requesting a letter of support from the Saint Paul RLF.

- Peterson is doing ongoing work with transit and transportation unions and with the Saint Paul Building and Construction Trades Council on prevailing wage, and project labor agreements. On Monday, the White Bear Lake Area School Board voted to put prevailing wage in place regarding the bonding project.

## STAFF/LABOR LIAISON REPORTS

- Lynne Larkin-Wright, AFL-CIO Community Services liaison, reviewed the 2019 Emergency Fund Report. Greater Twin Cities United Way provided a \$5,000 grant to LSRC's Emergency Fund to help union members affected by COVID-19. Liaisons are working with Minneapolis Regional

Labor Federation and Working Partnerships on the Twin Cities Hospitality Fund. Money raised will help union members that are impacted in the hospitality arena. We currently have 72 members that have gone through the process. UNITE HERE Local 17 is having a non-perishable food drive on Monday, May 18, 2020, at 312 Central Avenue in Minneapolis from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

- Colleen Nocerini, political organizer, shared that she continues to work on connecting with officials for the screening process. Go to the AFL-CIO website and fill out the questionnaire as it needs to be complete to screen.

- Vice President Perry Schmidt, NALC Branch 28 union member, announced that the NALC Letter Carriers Food Drive event will be rescheduled for a later date.

- Minnesota Nurses Association will have an action on May 20, 2020,

from 6 to 9 p.m. in front of United Hospital to promote a voice at the table and personal protective equipment for health care workers.

## UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- President Peterson called for a floor vote on the COPE Committee recommendations for labor endorsement

**M/S/C TO GRANT LABOR ENDORSEMENT OF NICOLE FRETHEM, RAMSEY COUNTY COMMISSIONER, DISTRICT 1; MARY JO MCGUIRE, RAMSEY COUNTY COMMISSIONER, DISTRICT 2; AND VICTORIA REINHARDT, RAMSEY COUNTY COMMISSIONER, DISTRICT 7.**

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

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

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Gov. Walz's Executive Order protects you from retaliation. Message @mnafclcio for questions.

## Job Openings



The Saint Paul Regional Labor Federation, AFL-CIO, is seeking to fill two full-time job openings on its professional staff:

- Political organizer
- AFL-CIO Community Services liaison

Job descriptions and details about the RLF's hiring process will be posted online:

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

## Endorsement notice

At its June 10 delegate meeting, the St. Paul Regional Labor Federation may consider recommendations for labor endorsement of candidates for Minnesota State Senate and House of Representatives. These recommendations will be made to the Minnesota AFL-CIO COPE, which has jurisdiction over granting endorsements in these races.

The RLF may also consider endorsement in the North Branch mayoral race June 10.





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