



The St. Paul Union Advocate

124th Year, No. 2, Issue 5439

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

August 2020

Do Something!

Act up for good

Each summer, Action Day brings together hundreds of volunteers from local businesses, unions and civic organizations, who team up in service to the community.

Last year, volunteers at Xcel Energy Center packed 40,000 backpacks with school supplies. Greater Twin Cities United Way's partner agencies delivered the packs to families across the metro area, so that students returned to school ready to learn.

This year the goal is the same. But the event will look very different.

There are two ways to help United Way reach its goal. First, consider donating to the Action Day Backpack Fund. Make an individual, one-time donation, or engage your friends and family in a team fundraiser.

Volunteers can also sign up to purchase supplies and assemble packs at home, using a list provided by United Way.

To learn more, sign up to volunteer or to make a donation, visit ActionDay2020.com.



Cerenity Humboldt nursing assistants Helen Boayle (L), Jennifer Balanay and Janice Dunbar (R), members of SEIU Healthcare Minnesota, walk the picket line July 20. Union Advocate photo

Nursing home workers strike in St. Paul

On a day when working people in over 25 cities across the U.S. joined a union-backed Strike for Black Lives, nursing home workers at Cerenity Humboldt Care Center in St. Paul staged a 24-hour strike, demanding a contract that reflects their essential work.

Members of SEIU Healthcare Minnesota who work at Cerenity Humboldt set up a picket line July 20 after a

majority voted to authorize a strike over unfair labor practices.

The health care workers say contract talks with the employer have broken down despite seven meetings between representatives for the two sides over the last six months.

As bargaining has dragged on, the novel coronavirus has spread widely in Minnesota's long-term-care and assisted-

living facilities. Their residents account for more than three-quarters of the state's COVID-19 deaths, and some 7,500 known cases have been traced back to congregate living facilities.

Despite the risks SEIU members are taking, Cerenity Humboldt, workers say, has refused their demand for pay increases that reflect their crit-

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 9)

Statewide primary to test Minnesota's vote-by-mail push

Minnesota has a track record of leading the nation in voter turnout, and no one wants that to change as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

That's why public officials, union leaders and others are calling on Minnesotans to apply for absentee ballots online and vote by U.S. mail in both the Aug. 11 primary and the Nov. 3 general elections.

"We need to treat the upcoming statewide elections as a public health issue," Secretary of State Steve Simon said. "To slow the spread of COVID-19 we need to reduce large gatherings, including at polling places. I'm challenging all eligible Minnesota voters to cast their vote from the safety of their home."

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 10)

Voting by mail

- Request a ballot, register to vote and update your registration online at mnvotes.org.
- Primary election ballots must be postmarked by Aug. 11.

Excluded from UI benefits, hourly school workers speak out: 'It is insulting'

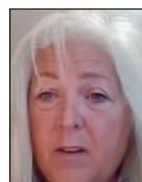
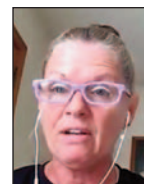
By Michael Moore

Union Advocate editor

For decades, hourly school employees in Minnesota have been fighting to change a state law that restricts their access to unemployment insurance benefits, but to no avail.

Now, school bus drivers, paraprofessionals, teaching assistants and support staff across the state are being left behind as unemployment benefits, bolstered by \$600 per week through the federal CARES Act, keep many Americans from slipping into poverty during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"It is insulting we aren't treated the same as other workers when it comes to unemployment," Sieara Washington, an



School employees pictured while speaking during the video press conference are (clockwise from top-left) Teresa Jakubowski, Ronnie Sprigler, Rochelle Stoffel, Sieara Washington and Kelly Gibbons.

education support professional in the Osseo school district, said. "It's really telling us how they feel about ESPs. I guess we aren't valuable enough."

Washington spoke out during a virtual press conference hosted last month by four Minnesota unions that represent hourly school employees: Local 284 of the Service Employees International Union, Education Minnesota, AFSCME Council 5 and Teamsters Local 320.

Union members called on state lawmakers, who began a special legislative session Monday, to take emergency action providing relief for hourly school employees, who are simultaneously dealing with the uncertainty of what their jobs will look like – assuming they exist at all – in the fall

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 10)



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- Email them to: mmoore@stpaulunions.org

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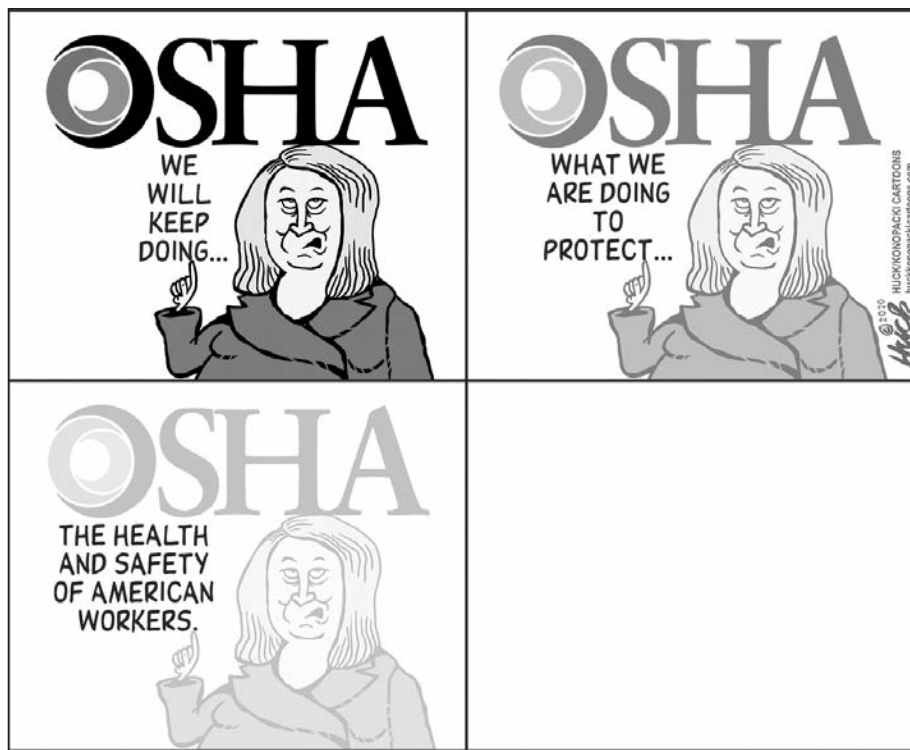
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Labor Voices: Kera Peterson

In uncertain times, voting is sure way to make an impact

"In these uncertain times ..."

It's the marketing catchphrase of 2020, and for good reason. Our lives have been upended by three crises at once: a public health pandemic, an economic free fall and long-standing structural racism. Both locally and nationally, our labor movement is responding to each crisis with urgency and solidarity, and we will carry that same energy into our next big challenge of 2020, the election.

That much I am certain about.

Working people need safe jobs, economic security and freedom from systemic racism. We won't get it with elected leaders who take orders from the corporate lobbyists and CEOs whispering in their ears. We're seeing what happens when our federal government puts profits and stock prices before working people's health and safety, and the results have been tragic.

A staggering number of Americans have lost their lives to COVID-19, more than any other country on earth. And an unacceptable number of cases are being traced back to the worksite, where essential workers have too often felt expendable, forced into the impossible choice between getting sick and getting paid. We can't have a healthy economy without healthy workers. But the Trump administration was painfully slow ramping up production of the protective equipment and testing needed to keep workers safe, and the president has repeatedly undermined his own agencies' guidelines for preventing the virus' spread. OSHA, the federal agency charged with protecting workers, was understaffed before the pandemic. Now, as thousands of complaints pour in from the front lines, the agency stays mostly on the sidelines. We deserve better.

Failing to protect the health and safety of frontline workers has only made our nation's persistent racial disparities worse. COVID-19 hospitalization and death rates are higher for members of Black and Latinx communities, who make up a disproportionate share of the essential workforce. At the same time, protests of systemic racism, sparked by the killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis police custody, have spilled into the streets nationwide.

Stopping the free fall into even deeper and deadly racial inequality, ensuring the health and economic security of working people, putting our country on a path to prosperity

"The primary election is Aug. 11, and at least one labor-endorsed candidate, Senator Tina Smith, will appear on every ballot."

— Kera Peterson



for all – these are our goals as a movement, and they are goals we share with our labor-endorsed candidates. We know this because, over the last four months, local union members have screened these candidates, discussed where they stand on the issues and recommended them for endorsement.

Now, the work of our Labor 2020 campaign begins. Minnesota's primary election is Aug. 11, and at least one labor-endorsed candidate, U.S. Sen. Tina Smith, will appear on every primary ballot. Across the metro, labor-endorsed congressional candidates and state legislative candidates face primary challenges as well. They need your vote.

Unions are about bringing people together, and our political work is no exception. While the physical distance necessary to fight this pandemic means bringing people together – and getting them the polls – will look a little different in 2020, I know we will find creative ways to succeed. The easiest way to make a difference right now is to make sure your voter registration is current and to request an absentee ballot, so you can vote by mail in both the primary and general elections. It takes just a few minutes on the Minnesota Secretary of State's website, www.sos.state.mn.us.

Distance may be inevitable, but division is not. Fundamentally, that's what the choice in 2020 comes down to. We can join together behind a vision of equality and prosperity for all, or we can continue to be divided by those familiar fault lines of race, religion, sexual orientation, region and beyond. This is a moment that demands clear action and common purpose. And while, in these uncertain times, no one knows exactly how the election will play out, you can be certain which side the labor movement is on.

— Kera Peterson is president of the St. Paul Regional Labor Federation, AFL-CIO.

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.

Minnesota nurses union backs mask mandate to slow COVID-19 spread

The Minnesota Nurses Association is urging state and local lawmakers to make face coverings mandatory in public places, calling it a “necessary measure to protect the public and stave off a resurgence of the vicious COVID-19 virus that has ravaged this state.”

The union’s board of directors adopted the statement supporting a mask mandate July 2. The MNA represents 22,000 registered nurses in Minnesota and three surrounding states.

Gov. Tim Walz has said he is considering a statewide order, and some cities in Minnesota already have adopted mask ordinances. St. Paul requires people to wear face coverings when indoors at public facilities and

businesses licensed by the city.

Public health recommendations regarding masks have evolved as researchers continue to learn about the novel coronavirus that causes COVID-19, particularly how it spreads from carriers who show no symptoms – or have yet to show symptoms – of the disease.

“Asymptomatic transmission is a significant concern in how rapidly and easily this virus can cause COVID-19,” the nurses’ statement said.

“Mandatory use for those who can wear cloth face coverings, rather than only requiring symptomatic individuals to wear masks, may reduce asymptomatic transmission.”

The MNA’s statement stressed that face coverings are merely one piece of the broad public-health response necessary to combat the pandemic and safely reopen the economy. Simple cloth masks do not protect the wearer, but they may protect others by limiting the infectious particles the wearer

releases into the air.

Masks are not a replacement, the union warned, for other measures that prevent the spread of COVID-19. Physical distancing requirements, workplace protections and policies ensuring workers who feel sick can stay home remain critical to protecting the public, nurses said. And cloth face coverings should not be used in health care settings.

“Nurses will continue to support physical distancing policies, including stay-at-home and shelter-in-place orders, as the most effective method for reducing the spread of infection,” the MNA said. “The decisions to protect the public must be made based on the ability to provide needed care, not to achieve profits or cost-savings.”



“Decisions to protect the public must be made based on the ability to provide needed care, not to achieve profits or cost-savings.”

Labor News in Review

JCA STAFF JOINS OPEIU

Employees of Jewish Community Action, a local nonprofit organization committed to racial and economic justice, have formed a union, joining Local 12 of the Office and Professional Employees International Union (OPEIU). JCA’s executive board voted in June to recognize the newly formed union, after staff members delivered a petition requesting voluntary recognition.

Members of the seven-person bargaining unit include community organizers, a business and office manager, a communications director and an outreach and engagement manager. In a statement, they said they are looking forward to bargaining a first contract with JCA.

“We repair the world as a ‘bnai brit’ – covenantal partners,” union members said. “Forming a union binds us in covenantal relationship with one another and commits us to take responsibility for one another as fellow workers. It also allows us to make more explicit the implicit covenant that forms our relationship with JCA as an organization and with our members.

“We are looking forward to entering this new covenant, one that brings us all towards a just world, together.”

JCA was founded in 1995 and is a member organization of the Jewish Social Justice Roundtable and an affiliate of Bend the Arc: A Jewish Partnership for Justice.

MET COUNCIL BACKS WAGE RULE

The Metropolitan Council in June approved a resolution to require that laborers, workers and mechanics on all of its large public works construction and maintenance projects be paid local prevailing wages, effective Aug. 1. The measure applies to all projects let by sealed bids and all design-build construction projects let by formal requests for proposals after public notice.

Prevailing wage rules build fair wages into the public construction bidding process by ensuring craftspeople and laborers earn wages comparable to those paid for similar work in the community.

Following the vote, the Minnesota Building and Construction Trades Council, which represents 70,000 skilled tradespeople from 15 unions, issued a statement congratulating the Met Council.

“Minnesota prevailing wage laws advance the metropolitan regional economy by ensuring that workers on Minnesota’s publicly funded construction projects are paid local wages,” the council said. “With prevailing wages, local contractors are more likely to win bids on local construction projects. Prevailing wages also ensure that construction workers have family sustaining wages, encourage safety and skills training and facilitates a more diverse and inclusive construction workforce.”

UNIONS QUESTION CLINIC CLOSINGS

Unions that represent workers at HealthPartners decried CEO Andrea Walsh’s announcement in June that the provider would close several clinics across the state, terminating health care workers and reducing services in communities in the middle of a pandemic. Local 12 of the Office and Professional Employees (OPEIU) and SEIU Healthcare Minnesota are urging supporters to sign a petition to Walsh, posted at opeiu12.org.

HealthPartners plans to close eight health care clinics Aug. 31. In the East Metro, the provider will close clinics in Highland Park, Cottage Grove, and Mahtomedi, as well as the St. Paul Regions Alcohol and Drug Abuse Program and the Regions Maplewood Behavioral Health Clinic. HealthPartners is also reducing services and ending primary care at the University Avenue Clinic for Women in St. Paul.

“Once again HealthPartners is putting profits before the people who work for them and the people they take care of,” the unions said. “We demand that HealthPartners stop clinic closures and protect health care workers -- and protect the health care of the communities those workers serve!”

AFSCME, ST. PAUL SCHOOLS SETTLE

Local 844 of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), which represents clerical and technical employees of the St. Paul Public Schools, reached a tentative agreement on a two-year contract with the district in June.

The contract provides two cost-of-living adjustments and preserves wage step increases for both years. In addition, the contract increases the employer’s share of health insurance costs by \$20 each year and improves overtime and seniority language.

The school board was scheduled to vote on final approval of the contract in late July.

49ERS LAMENT LINE 3 DELAYS

The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency announced June 3 it will hold a contested hearing on the Enbridge Line 3 pipeline replacement project. The decision will delay the start of construction for the shovel-ready project, and it brought a sharp rebuke from Jason George, business manager for Operating Engineers Local 49.

“I strongly disagree with the decision made by Gov. Walz to hold a contested case hearing on a simple water quality permit for the Line 3 replacement,” George said. “This is a basic construction permit, one that is issued for many other kinds of infrastructure projects.”

The MPCA previously issued a draft permit for the project in February. The additional hearing will begin Aug. 24.

The pipeline would cross Minnesota beginning at the North Dakota border and carry Canadian tar sands crude oil from Alberta to a Superior, Wis., refinery.

“A private company wants to invest \$2.6 billion to build an infrastructure project in northern Minnesota. They want to replace a 60-year-old pipeline with a brand new one,” George noted.

“This project is supported by every local county and city in the area where the project will be built. Construction workers and their families, bars and restaurants, hotels, equipment dealers, material suppliers, and local governments that desperately need tax revenue will all benefit tremendously,” he said. “Instead of throwing up hurdles and changing the process to create delay, the state of Minnesota should be doing what it can to swiftly move permits through the legal process in place.”

— Minneapolis Labor Review

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

Labor support for Black Lives Matter escalates from talk into action

In the immediate aftermath of George Floyd's death in Minneapolis police custody May 25, public statements condemning the alleged murder and supporting the fight for racial justice rang out from the labor movement. The nation's largest union federation, the AFL-CIO, draped a Black Lives Matter banner from its headquarters near the White House in Washington, D.C.

But since then unions have done more than talk about racial injustice. Both nationally and on the local level, unions have begun taking concrete action to address the country's long history of racism and police violence against Black, indigenous and other communities of color.

"The labor movement is committed to being the tip of the spear in the fight to bring long overdue racial justice to our country," AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka said, announcing a new Task Force on Racial Justice.

The task force will engage all corners of the labor movement in frank discussions about race, promote open dialogue on how to build a more diverse labor movement, fight to make police reform the law of the land, encourage law enforcement unions to be agents of change and more.

Closer to home, labor councils in St. Paul, Minneapolis, southeast and western Minnesota have joined the Minnesota AFL-CIO in passing resolutions affirming their support for anti-racist and anti-white-supremacist movements. The groups took up the resolutions at the urging of UNITE HERE Local 17, the Twin Cities-based hospitality union.

"Union members in Minnesota and across the county have been organizing in their workplaces, with elected officials and in the streets to fight back against injustices caused by structural racism," St. Paul Regional Labor Federation President Kera Peterson said. "I'm thankful that the members and officers of Local 17 asked our delegation to consider adopting a resolution."

The St. Paul resolution bars members of any fascist or white-supremacist organization from participating in the organization as a delegate, officer or employee. It also commits the RLF to educating union members about the ways "race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation and other differences impact the lives" of union members.

"By unanimously passing this resolution, our delegates committed to making our federation a place where all union members know that they are welcome and respected, and that we will partner with them in their work to build a more just Minnesota," Peterson said. "Several of our affiliate unions are considering similar resolutions through their own internal processes."

Meanwhile, the Minnesota AFL-CIO and several statewide unions, including Education Minnesota, the Service Employees and AFSCME Council 5, publicly called on Bob Kroll, the Minneapolis police union president who has resisted efforts to reform the department, to resign. And as Gov. Tim Walz called legislators into a special session last month, many unions joined the push for police reform.

"We join in solidarity with our fellow Minnesotans who are marching in the streets demanding justice for George Floyd," Minnesota AFL-CIO leaders said in a statement. "We join in solidarity with Black residents who have seen too many deaths at the hands of the Minneapolis Police Department, but find no accountability, no justice, and no meaningful steps to make sure these events never happen again."

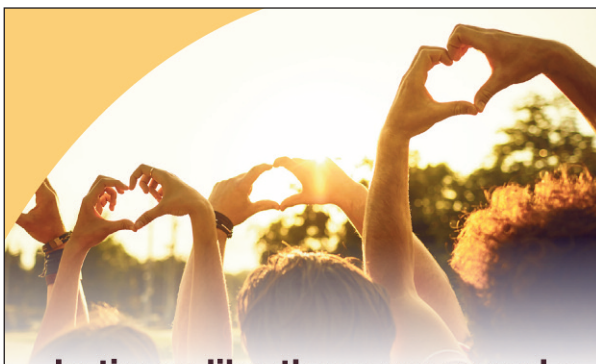


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Second special session provides another chance for bonding, home care pay hike

Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz called the Legislature into a special last month, with an infrastructure jobs bill and policing reforms, two measures backed by the state's labor unions, at the top of lawmakers' agenda.

Also known as a "bonding bill," the infrastructure bill is traditionally a priority for lawmakers during even-numbered years like 2020, when they are not working on the biennial state budget. The measure funds building projects across the state, putting skilled tradespeople to work and sparking growth throughout local economies.

But this year some Republican lawmakers have used the bonding bill, which requires support from two-thirds of the House and Senate, as a bargaining chip, demanding the governor call off the state of emergency he's declared to respond quickly to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Leaders of the state's Building and Construction Trades unions say construction jobs shouldn't be a political football.

"Now is not the time for our jobs and our community's infrastructure needs to be used as leverage," John Raines, executive secretary-treasurer of the North Central States Regional Council of Carpenters, said.

Joel Smith, president of the Laborers District Council of Minnesota and North Dakota, accused House Minority Leader Kurt Daudt and his caucus of "recklessly preventing the creation of 45,000 construction jobs in the last 13 months – at a critical time when we need to meet the need for infrastructure, keep Minnesotans working and stimulate our economy."

The second special session may also be legislators' last chance to approve an emergency wage



Home care clients and workers outside the Capitol in St. Paul last month call on lawmakers to pass an emergency rate increase. submitted photo

increase for in-home health care aides, a measure workers and their clients say is necessary to address a care crisis facing the industry – and made worse by the COVID-19 pandemic.

In-home care helps shield seniors and people with disabilities from exposure to the virus that causes COVID-19. Without home care, many clients would have to relocate to congregate-care facilities.

Public health data shows such facilities are a leading source of exposure to the virus in Minnesota. And of the 1,541 people who died after contracting COVID-19 in Minnesota at press time, 77% of resided in assisted living or long-term care facilities.

Seniors and people with disabilities in Minnesota faced a shortage of home care workers before the pandemic, with about 8,000 unfilled positions. Now, they say, the problem is getting

worse.

"I struggle recruiting the folks to help me do any of the previously mentioned things because they don't think \$13.25 an hour is worth it," said Adrienne Kleinman, who has muscular dystrophy and has used a wheelchair since she was 3 years old. "I'm sick of being forgotten, cast aside, hidden, reduced to a body that simply isn't worth the time or importance to help out. I'm sick of being an afterthought."

SEIU Healthcare Minnesota, which represents over 25,000 home care workers statewide, won bipartisan support for a temporary 15% wage increase during the regular legislative session, but the measure never reached Walz's desk. During an eight-day special session in June, the DFL-controlled house included an emergency rate increase in a larger pandemic-relief bill, but Republican-controlled Senate did not.

That didn't sit well with many home care workers and clients like Kleinman, who brought their demands for action to the Capitol July 1.

Nearly 60 cars and dozens of wheelchairs rolled up to the demonstration, which highlighted the risks workers are taking – despite wages as low as \$13.25 per hour with no health insurance – to provide critical services to their clients.

"Our lawmakers can't hide behind excuses anymore," home care client Brittanie Wilson said. "If we want any chance at real change then we must make our lawmakers understand that they are hurting us and our caregivers by not doing their job and passing this bill."

At press time, it appeared lawmakers had gotten the message. A House bill that included rate increases of 13.75% was advancing with bipartisan support, passing one committee hearing by a 25-1 vote.

In letter to Walz, educators union outlines what it will take to reopen Minnesota's classrooms safely

Leaders of Education Minnesota, the union 89,000 teachers and school employees statewide, last month sent a checklist for safely reopening the state's schools and colleges during the pandemic to Gov. Tim Walz and his health and education commissioners.

The list outlines "what needs to be done, at a minimum, before we go back to in-person learning. It calls for a decision based on science, with pre-set data points determining when schools open and, potentially, if they close again.

"Minnesota schools can't reopen safely if we don't listen to science and public health officials – and if they don't have the money, resources and staff to

do it right," Education Minnesota's three highest-ranking officers wrote.

Educators also called for robust testing and tracing, stronger sick-leave policies for both educators and parents, and investment in protective equipment and cleaning supplies needed to prevent the virus that causes COVID-19 from spreading.

"Broad worker and community involvement is necessary" to ensure any reopening plan succeeds, the union leaders said, and state leaders need to apply an equity lens to the process as well.

"Let's also see this moment as an opportunity to rebuild our public edu-

cation system so all students, no matter what they look like or where they come from, have access to safe, welcoming schools where they can pursue their dreams," they wrote. "We don't just want to 'get back' to school. We want to

make the schools our students return to better."

The letter was signed by President Denise Specht, Vice President Bernie Burnham and Secretary-Treasurer Rodney Rowe.



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Senator Sandy Pappas

Cell 651 247-8698
sandypappas65@gmail.com

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Paid for by Sandy Pappas for Senate, 909 Bayard, St Paul MN, 55102.

NALC's 'Stamp Out Hunger' food drive goes virtual

The need for food relief has never been greater. Making matters worse, the nation's largest single-day food drive, the National Association of Letter Carriers' "Stamp Out Hunger" event, was canceled in May.

But Letter Carriers remain determined to helping feed families in need during the crisis. They've launched a virtual food drive, encouraging supporters to donate money directly to food pantries in their communities. Go to nalc.org/food to contribute.

Union job fair Aug. 20 in St. Paul

Union employers, apprenticeship programs and nonprofit agencies will meet with jobseekers at the St. Paul Union Job and Resource Fair. The on-site hiring event, in its fifth year, will run from 3 to 6 p.m. Aug. 20 at the Electrical Industry Building, located at 1330 Conway St. The event is an excellent opportunity to learn about the advantages of a union career, with over 35 employers planning to be in attendance.

Strict social-distancing measures will be in place, and attendees will be required to wear face-coverings.

ESFL launches labor history series

History buffs of the world, unite! The East Side Freedom Library in St. Paul has convened two monthly events that will be right up any history lover's alley: a labor history reading group that meets the fourth Tuesday of every month, and a labor history film screening the second Friday of every month.

Both groups are open to all, although they will meet virtually until it's safe to gather at the library. Find out what the groups are reading and watching on the ESFL's website, eastsidefreedomlibrary.org.



U.S. Rep. Betty McCollum shows her support for efforts to save the U.S. Postal Service, facing steep shortfalls as a result of the pandemic, during an action organized by the St. Paul Regional Labor Federation.



Julia Simon (R) and Katie Braddock, who work at the VA Medical Center in Minneapolis, join a protest organized by their union, AFGE Local 1969, calling for hazard pay and more PPE. Union Advocate photos

Pandemic response hasn't gone far enough, workers say

The U.S. Postal Service is running out of cash. Shortages of personal protective equipment are flaring up again. Unemployment benefits, keeping millions of Americans afloat during the worst jobs crisis since the Great Depression, are set to expire.

Unions were doing their best to sound the alarm on the need for more federal action to address the COVID-19 pandemic and its economic fallout, but at press time Congress had not yet agreed on a plan.

The U.S. House in May passed the HEROES Act, which would provide a much-needed influx of cash to the USPS, extend emergency unemployment payments and take new steps to keep workers safe on the job, like requiring OSHA to issue an emergency temporary standard on infectious disease and giving the federal government new tools to procure person-

al protective equipment for health care workers.

U.S. Reps. Betty McCollum and Angie Craig, who represent Minnesota's 4th and 2nd congressional districts, respectively, voted to support the bill.

At an event hosted by Letter Carriers Branch 28 in June, McCollum told postal employees their work deserves to be included the HEROES Act.

"You deliver the checks, you deliver the prescriptions, you deliver the love," she said. "You are heroes."

While Minnesota's senators are "part of the solution," McCollum said, the Republican leadership's lack of urgency in dealing with the crisis is troubling.

The HEROES Act would provide more than \$1 trillion to state and local governments, which are already shedding jobs to deal with steep budget shortfalls, and \$25 billion to the Postal Service.



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Retirees aim to get bold with 2020 election blog

A group of retired Minnesotans last month launched OlderandBolder.Vote, a blog focused on the issues that matter to Minnesota retirees. Organizers hope the new website will inform, engage and inspire seniors to help win the White House, the U.S. Senate and state elections for candidates who will address the needs and concerns of working families.

"This is the most important election of our lifetime," blog editor Wy Spano said. "And it's not a 'normal' business-as-usual election."

The site is built by and for sen-

iors concerned about the nation's future and dismayed at President Trump's failure of leadership. "We vote in high numbers, always. But, for many of us now, we have to be ready to vote safely at home with mail-in ballots," Spano said. "In Minnesota, this means using the absentee ballot system. It's easy, but a voter has to plan ahead."

The site includes easy-to-use links for ordering an absentee ballot and information about voting – and about threats to the vote. Comments and questions are welcome, and there is an application form for writers who

wish to contribute on the blog.

Ray Waldron, president emeritus of the Minnesota AFL-CIO and board member of the Minnesota State Retiree Council AFL-CIO, welcomed the new blog.

"We elders have the experience and ability to read through the President's thin layer of falsehoods," he said. "OlderandBolder.Vote is a great way to keep in touch with the truth. I don't want to tell anyone what to do, but I'm going to follow OlderandBolder.Vote and vote by mail for competent, responsible leadership."

DFL Party campaign staff ratify new union contract

After several days of contract negotiations, DFL Party Coordinated Campaign staff, members of Local 292 of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, voted last month to ratify a collective bargaining agreement with their employer.

Emily Polston, a regional field director for the coordinated campaign and member of the bar-

gaining unit, said staff members set out to bargain a contract that would make campaign work sustainable for the people who do it.

"I am incredibly proud of the thought and genuine care that each member of our team put into getting the CBA off the ground," she said.

Party Chair Ken Martin said support for collective bargaining

is a core value of the DFL.

"That's why I'm extremely proud that our party has reached an agreement with our campaign staff and IBEW Local 292," he said. "The DFL Party will always respect the dignity of work, stand with our partners in organized labor, and support workers who unite to improve their working conditions."

St. Paul nursing home workers stage ULP strike on nationwide 'Strike for Black Lives' day of action

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

ical service during the pandemic. Worse, management continues to make proposals that would move some union members backwards.

Rhonda Little, who has been a cook at Cerenity for over 5 years and member of the union's negotiating team, said management "just doesn't seem to want to negotiate" when the two sides meet.

"During this pandemic we've kept COVID away from our patients, and it is time our facility steps up to respect our work," Little said. "We only can put up with so much. We have lost so many employees because of turnover, but they don't want to give us a fair raise – and they are talking about taking away paid sick time."

Little said she worries high turnover will impact the quality of services SEIU members provide at Cerenity Humboldt. In the last year, 17 people have left her department alone.

The SEIU bargaining unit includes 85 cooks, housekeepers, janitors, nursing assistants, laundry aides, dietary aides and restorative aides who work inside the facility.

"Our pay is some of the lowest around for our work," she said. "St. Paul minimum wage is going up towards \$15, and people starting here don't even make \$15. Enough is enough. We want them to realize that we are tired of not being taken seriously. By going on strike, we are standing together and standing up for ourselves."

Cerenity Humboldt workers went on strike the same day as other nursing home workers across the country, as well as fast-food, hospital, airport and other essential workers participating in the "Strike for Black Lives." Strikers highlighted the risks essential workers, who are disproportionately people of color, face during the pandemic, often without sick pay or good health care, without proper protective



Workers at Cerenity Humboldt Care Center on St. Paul's West Side walk the picket line. Union Advocate photo

equipment and for poverty wages.

In Minnesota, striking workers joined together with MSP Airport workers, currently fighting for a \$15 minimum wage at MSP, for a car caravan highlighting their unity, despite working in different industries, in the fight for economic and racial justice.

VOTE AUG. 11



SUPPORT Labor Endorsed Candidates



A message from the members of Local 1005

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Mail-in voting encouraged for statewide primary Aug. 11

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

"In the face of this pandemic, it is the right thing to do to protect Minnesotans who are most at risk – and the people who care for them. Fortunately, it's very easy to do."

Minnesotans may request an absentee ballot, check their registration status and register to vote online at mnvotes.org.

Ballots may be requested at any time, except the day of the election. Voters should be sure to follow the instructions included with their ballots carefully. Ballots must be postmarked on or before Election Day.

That's Aug. 11 for the primary, and polls will be open across the state for voters who choose not to participate by mail. Find your polling place at pollfinder.sos.state.mn.us.

The primary will be the first test of the Labor 2020 campaign, unions' coordinated effort to get members and retirees to cast ballots in support of labor-endorsed candidates for federal, state and local offices.

Minnesota AFL-CIO President Bill McCarthy, the state's highest ranking labor leader, said labor-endorsed candidates "share our values and will work with us to create new family sustaining jobs, safer workplaces and more equitable communities."

"With less than 15 weeks until the most consequential election of our lifetime, the Aug. 11 primary is our first opportunity to support labor-endorsed candidates and make sure we're ready for November," McCarthy added.

Primary Election: Aug. 11, 2020

LABOR ENDORSED: EAST METRO

Labor-endorsed candidates share our values as union members, like making work pay and supporting our freedom to join together

President **Joe Biden**U.S. Senator **Tina Smith**

U.S. House of Representatives

Angle Craig, 2nd District**Betty McCollum**, 4th District

Minnesota Senate

District 38: **Justin Stofferahn**District 39: **Josiah Hill**

District 41:

Mary Kunesch-PodeinDistrict 42: **Jason Isaacson**District 43: **Charles Wiger**District 51: **Jim Carlson**District 52: **Matt Klein**District 53: **Susan Kent**District 54: **Karla Bigham**District 56: **Lindsey Port**District 57: **Greg Clausen**District 58: **Matt Little**District 64: **Erin Murphy**District 65: **Sandy Pappas**District 66: **John Marty**District 67: **Foung Hawj**


ISSUES MATTER, VOTE UNION

Minnesota House

District 38A: **Krls Fredrick**District 38B: **Aml Wazlawik**

District 39B:

Shelly ChristensenDistrict 41A: **Connie Bernardy**District 41B: **Sandra Felst**District 42A: **Kelly Moller**

District 42B:

Jamie Becker-FinnDistrict 43A: **Peter Fischer**District 51A: **Sandra Maslin**District 51B: **Liz Reyer**District 52A: **Rick Hansen**District 52B: **Ruth Richardson**District 53A: **Tou Xlong**District 53B: **Steve Sandell**District 54A: **Anne Claflin**District 54B: **Kelsey Waits**District 56A: **Jessica Hanson**District 56B: **Kaela Berg**District 57A: **Robert Bierman**District 57B: **John Huot**District 58A: **Erin Preese**District 58B: **Sara Wolf**District 64A: **Kaohly Her**District 64B: **Dave Pinto**District 65A: **Rena Moran**District 65B: **Carlos Mariani**District 66A: **Allce Hausman**District 66B: **John Lesch**District 67A: **John Thompson**District 67B: **Jay Xlong**

Ramsey County Commissioner

District 1: **Nicole Frethem**District 2: **Mary Jo McGulre**District 7: **Victoria Reinhardt**

North Branch Mayor

Jim Swenson

Hourly school workers caught in unemployment limbo as schools weigh options

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

Kelly Gibbons, president of SEIU Local 284, said hourly school employees want both "short term solutions and long-term structural change."

While construction workers, landscapers, resort workers and other seasonal employees are eligible for unemployment, school employees are not, according to the state's unemployment statute, provided they have a "reasonable assurance" of returning to work in the fall.

"I think it's discriminatory," Gibbons said, noting that hourly positions in school districts are "more female-dominated" than other seasonal jobs like construction. "We're being excluded from the law, so I think it's not equitable. I don't think it's fair."

Meanwhile, union stewards on the press call described the mounting financial pressures facing hourly workers, some of whom have been out of work since March.

Local 320 steward Ronnie Sprigler, a teaching assistant in the St. Paul Public Schools, said the sudden loss of income has been "catastrophic" for many of her fellow Teamsters, particularly single parents. Sprigler, herself a widow who cares for a disabled son, has incurred "serious debt and quality-of-life issues" as a result of the pandemic.

"But I also know that I am far from alone," Sprigler said, noting that calls have been streaming in from distressed co-workers. "There's a level of mental and emotional damage happening to people I hear from every week."

Rosemount-Apple Valley-Eagan bus driver Teresa Jakubowski, a steward with Local 284, said that while she's able to weather the storm by taking on debt, others without access to credit have faced heartbreaking decisions. One member of her bargaining unit recently sold her mother's engagement ring for cash, Jakubowski said, and another couldn't afford to replace her broken-down car.

"Food and rent are the biggest worries," Jakubowski said. "We are frustrated, and we are fearful."

AFSCME steward Rochelle Stoffel, a middle-school office clerk in St. Paul, said she gets "calls and emails constantly" from members in a panic about their unemployment status.

"They thought because program-

ming was cancelled and they lost their position, they would receive unemployment, only to find out they're in a pending status, with no help or estimation from the unemployment office when or if they will see a benefit at all," Stoffel said. "It's a terrible feeling."

As painful as the last three months have been for hourly school employees and their families, union members on the press call said they were hopeful the crisis would finally lead to action, which workers like Gibbons have been pressing lawmakers to take for decades.

"I don't think it's any coincidence that this law applies to jobs that are traditionally done by women and people of color," Gibbons said. "But this work is way too important to be treated this way. We need action from our state leaders."



Support your
labor-endorsed
candidates in the
August 11th
primary election!

**Iron Workers
Local 512**

VOTE AUGUST 11th



"Let us never forget that government is ourselves and not an alien power over us. The ultimate rulers of our democracy are not a President and senators and congressmen and government officials, but the voters of this country."

— **FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT**

Saint Paul Building & Construction Trades Council



Minutes of the Saint Paul Regional Labor Federation

JUNE 10, 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 Kera Peterson at 6 p.m. Board members in attendance were Beedle B., Beissel, Dreyer, Edwards, Faber, Froemke, Gibbons, Guertin, Luneberg, Madden, Maki-Green, Markham-Kocurek, McNamara, Meyer, Mullin, Peterson, Robles, Ryan, Schmidt, Slattery, St. Aoro, Terry, Vandassor and Varco. Excused were Beedle G., Engeldorf, Sansom and Weed. Absent were Gorman, Hoppe, McCarthy, Michelson, and Seath.

CREDENTIALS

Credentials were received from Saint Paul Federation of Educators Local 28. President Peterson administered the Oath of Obligation to those new delegates and alternates present online.

MINUTES

M/S/C TO APPROVE MINUTES OF MAY 13, 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 JUNE 10, 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 Angimsson, Beedle B., Beissel, Dreyer, Edwards, Faber, Froemke, Gibbons, Guertin, Hoerth, Luneberg, Madden, Maki-Green, Markham-Kocurek, McNamara, Meyer, Mullin, Naseth, Peterson, Robles, Ryan, Schmidt, Slattery, St. Aoro, Terry, Vandassor, Varco and Wise. Excused were Beedle G., Engeldorf, Mayer, Sansom and Weed. Absent were DeRoy, Gorman, Hoppe, Krey, Lohmann, McCarthy, Michelson, and Seath.

Items to come before this committee included:

- The Chisago County Labor Assembly requested consideration of granting Labor Endorsement to Jim Swenson, North Branch Mayor.
- The Dakota County Labor Assembly supports the Saint Paul Regional Labor Federation recommending that the MN AFL-CIO grant labor endorsement to the following legislative candidates: Jim Carlson, Senate District 51; Lindsey Port, Senate District 56; Liz Reyer, House District 51B; Kelsey Waits, House District 54B; Kaela Berg, House District 56B; Erin Preese, House District 58A; and Sara Wolf, House District 58B.
- The Ramsey County Labor Assembly supports the Saint Paul Regional Labor Federation recommending that the MN AFL-CIO grant labor endorsement to the following legislative candidates: Erin Murphy, Senate District 64; Sandy Pappas, Senate District 65; John Marty, Senate District 66; Fong Hawj, Senate District 67 and John Thompson, House District 67A.
- The Washington County Labor Assembly supports the Saint Paul Regional Labor Federation recommending that the MN AFL-CIO grant labor endorsement to the following legislative candidates: Justin Stofferahn, Senate District 38; and Josiah Hill, Senate District 39, with no endorsement in House District 39A.
- The following candidates meet criteria for the MN AFL-CIO friendly incumbent process: Jason Isaacson, Senate District 42; Chuck Wiger, Senate District 43; Matt Klein, Senate District 52;

Susan Kent, Senate District 53; Karla Bigham, Senate District 54; Greg Clausen, Senate District 57; Matt Little, Senate District 58; Ami Wazlawik, House District 38B; Anne Claflin, House District 54A; Shelly Christensen, House District 39B; Robert Bierman, House District 57A; Kelly Moller, House District 42A; John Huot, House District 57B; Jamie Becker-Finn, House District 42B; Kaohly Her, House District 64A; Peter Fischer, House District 43A; Dave Pinto, House District 64B; Sandra Masin, House District 51A; Rena Moran, House District 65A; Rick Hansen, House District 52A; Carlos Mariani, House District 65B; Ruth Richardson, House District 52B; Alice Hausman, House District 66A; Tou Xiong, House District 53A; John Lesch, House District 66B; Steve Sandell, House District 53B; and Jay Xiong, House District 67B.

• President Peterson reported that the Legislature must be in order for the Governor's Special Powers to be extended. The focus is expected to be Minnesota's economic recovery and criminal justice reform.

• **M/S/C TO RECOMMEND LABOR ENDORSEMENT OF JIM SWENSON, NORTH BRANCH MAYOR.**

• **M/S/C TO RECOMMEND THE MN AFL-CIO GRANT LABOR ENDORSEMENT TO JUSTIN STOFFERAHN, SD 38; JOSIAH HILL, SD 39; JASON ISAACSON, SD 42; CHUCK WIGER, SD 43; JIM CARLSON, SD 51; MATT KLEIN, SD 52; SUSAN KENT, SD 53; KARLA BIGHAM, SD 54; LINDSEY PORT, SD 56; GREG CLAUSEN, SD 57; MATT LITTLE, SD 58; ERIN MURPHY, SD 64; SANDY PAPPAS, SD 65; JOHN MARTY, SD 66; FOUNG HAWJ, SD 67; AMI WAZLAWIK, HD 38B; NO ENDORSEMENT, HD 39A; SHELLY CHRISTENSEN, HD 39B; KELLY MOLLER, HD 42A; JAMIE BECKER-FINN, HD 42B; PETER FISCHER, HD 43A; SANDRA MASIN, HD 51A; LIZ REYER, HD 51B; RICK HANSEN, HD 52A; RUTH RICHARDSON, HD 52B; TOU XIONG, HD 53A; STEVE SANDELL, HD 53B; ANNE CLAFLIN, HD 54A; KELSEY WAITS, HD 54B; KAELA BERG, HD 56B; ROBERT BIERMAN, HD 57A; JOHN HUOT, HD 57B; ERIN PREESE, HD 58A; SARA WOLF, HD 58B; KAOHLY HER, HD 64A; DAVE PINTO, HD 64B; RENA MORAN, HD 65A; CARLOS MARIANI, HD 65B; ALICE HAUSMAN, HD 66A; JOHN LESCH, HD 66B; JOHN THOMPSON, HD 67A; AND JAY XIONG, HD 67B.**

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

EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES JUNE 10, 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, at the Electrical Industry Building, located at 1330 Conway St. in St. Paul from 3 to 6 p.m. Peterson thanked Jamie McNamara and IBEW Local 110 for their hospitality in hosting the Job Fair.
 - Regarding the George Floyd murder and civil unrest in our communities, we are seeing faith, community and labor coming together expressing that it's time to do all we can to create lasting change. AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka says, "We have reached a tipping point and are not going back."
 - If you are a new delegate and have questions about how things work in

the RLF and in the area where you live or work, please give Peterson a call. She will help make those connections.

– The Tenth Annual Labor Bowl for St. Paul Labor Studies and Resource Center is rescheduled for Thursday, Aug. 6, shift times available are 2 and 4 p.m.

- ORGANIZING UPDATES/CAMPAIGNS: AFGE, MN AFL-CIO, NALC Branches 9 and 28, SEIU Local 284, UFCW Local 1189 and UNITE HERE Local 17 provided updates on the impact of COVID-19, as well as their organizing activities.

• The following resolution:
G8HEBI I;ED I E HJ FFEGI 6DI;% G67;HC (6DI ;K : ;1 8 HJ FG8C 67L
WHEREAS, the Saint Paul Regional Labor Federation, AFL-CIO is a diverse and united labor movement of union members dedicated to improving the lives of all working families and an expression of the hopes and aspirations of the working people in Chicago, Dakota, Ramsey and Washington counties, and

WHEREAS, as a labor organization, the Saint Paul Regional Labor Federation, AFL-CIO recognizes the need to improve the lives of and increase power for working families, bring fairness and dignity to the workplace and secure social equity, and

WHEREAS, the Saint Paul Regional Labor Federation, AFL-CIO is committed to mobilizing our members to support of justice and equity through building a strong, diverse, free, and democratic labor movement, and

WHEREAS, racism is a system of oppression, designed to divide the working class so the wealthy elite can consolidate their wealth and power at the very top, and was systemically embedded in American society from our nation's founding when slavery was the dominant base of the economy; and although historic and heroic struggles have yielded progress in destroying its basis in law, racism continues to pervade the social and economic life of our country, causing enormous harm and suffering of all people of color, and

WHEREAS, racism continues to be used as a means to divide working people and weaken their political and economic power, with the aim of imposing austerity, the destruction of unions and the crippling of all democratic institutions and rights, and

WHEREAS, many Black, Latinx, Asian Pacific Islander, Indigenous, Immigrant, LGBTQ and female union members, along with the rest of the nation, are witnessing the results of policies and decisions driven by racial and gender exclusion, coupled with policies and decisions that undermine economic health for all working people, and

WHEREAS, repeated occurrences of deadly police violence in our community and throughout the country have outraged many decent Americans and provoked a mass movement for reform of the criminal justice system, and

WHEREAS, AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka, in his June 3, 2020, speech in the wake of George Floyd's murder, spoke about the urgent need "to dismantle the traditions of oppression in our workplaces, our health system, our housing system, our voting laws, our criminal justice system,"

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Saint Paul Regional Labor Federation, AFL-CIO commits itself to the important initiatives outlined by our national leadership and commits itself to helping carry out this effort in every way possible, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Saint Paul Regional Labor Federation, AFL-CIO works to educate union mem-

bers about the way race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation and other differences impact the lives of our members and would-be members, and to build common understandings of how racial bias and discrimination divide working people and undermine our collective power, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Saint Paul Regional Labor Federation, AFL-CIO commits to dismantling systems of oppression and to building power among union members and community allies to change the institutions and practices that prevent us from advancing a shared vision for a just, anti-racist and democratic economy that works for each of us, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Saint Paul Regional Labor Federation, AFL-CIO affirmatively states that there is no place for white supremacy in our labor movement. To that end, no individual shall be eligible to serve as an Officer, member of the executive board or committee, or other governing body, or any committee of, or as a delegate from, or as a representative, agent, or employee of this body who is a member of any fascist or white supremacist organization and/or consistently pursues policies and/or activities directed toward the purposes of any fascist or otherwise white supremacist ideology.

M/S/C TO RECOMMEND SUPPORT TO THE RLF DELGATION.

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

REPORT OF THE TREASURER

Treasurer's Report has been deferred to next month's meeting.

PRESIDENTS REPORT

President Peterson reported on:

- The Fifth Annual Union Resource and Job Fair, thanking Jamie McNamara and IBEW Local 110 for their hospitality.
- The Tenth Annual Labor Bowl for St. Paul LSRC.
- Meeting via zoom with AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka and other labor leaders across the country regarding the pandemic, the murder of George Floyd and the civil unrest that followed. President Trumka reported that these issues have come up in the past, there would be a few changes and then we would let our foot off the gas. This is an opportunity to combat structural racism and its impact on communities of color.
- Having conversations with the Saint Paul City Council and the Mayor's office regarding how we can work together on this. More information to follow.

REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES

- Theresa St. Aoro reported on behalf of the Ramsey County Labor Assembly. They screened candidates and their next meeting will be via zoom the fourth Monday of the month at 6 p.m.
- Brian Beedle reported on behalf of the Washington County Labor Assembly. Fare for All at Grace Lutheran Church has been cancelled. They screened candidates and hope to meet in person next month.
- Michael Madden reported on behalf of the Chisago County Labor Assembly. The CCLA screened candidates and hope to be able to meet in person next month.
- Connie Beissel reported on behalf of the Dakota County Labor Assembly. The DCLA did not meet due to the shelter in place order. They did have two full nights of screening candidates. Thank you to those who participated. They meet on the second Thursday of the month.

Endorsement notice
The St. Paul Regional Labor Federation, AFL-CIO, may consider endorsements in municipal elections during its Aug. 12 meetings.

STAFF/LABOR LIAISON REPORTS

- Colleen Nocerini, political organizer, has been working on getting candidate endorsement screenings set up and on the upcoming Union Resource and Job Fair being held in August.
- Lynne Larkin-Wright, AFL-CIO Community Services liaison, reported on Neighbors Helping Neighbors and information received from the City of Saint Paul.

M/S/C FOR THE RLF TO MAKE A \$500 CONTRIBUTION TO MOM'S FOOD SHELF.

NEW BUSINESS

- President Peterson read the Resolution in Support of Anti-Racism/Anti-White Supremacy and called for a floor vote. **M/S/C TO UNANIMOUSLY SUPPORT THE RESOLUTION TO SUPPORT ANTI-RACISM/ANTI-WHITE SUPREMACY.**

• President Peterson called for a floor vote on the COPE Committee recommendations on labor endorsements.

– M/S/C TO GRANT LABOR ENDORSEMENT OF JIM SWENSON, NORTH BRANCH MAYOR.

– M/S/C TO RECOMMEND THE MN AFL-CIO GRANT LABOR ENDORSEMENT OF JUSTIN STOFFERAHN, SD 38; JOSIAH HILL, SD 39; JASON ISAACSON, SD 42; CHUCK WIGER, SD 43; JIM CARLSON, SD 51; MATT KLEIN, SD 52; SUSAN KENT, SD 53; KARLA BIGHAM, SD 54; LINDSEY PORT, SD 56; GREG CLAUSEN, SD 57; MATT LITTLE, SD 58; ERIN MURPHY, SD 64; SANDY PAPPAS, SD 65; JOHN MARTY, SD 66; FOUNG HAWJ, SD 67; AMI WAZLAWIK, HD 38B; NO ENDORSEMENT, HD 39A; SHELLY CHRISTENSEN, HD 39B; KELLY MOLLER, HD 42A; JAMIE BECKER-FINN, HD 42B; PETER FISCHER, HD 43A; SANDRA MASIN, HD 51A; LIZ REYER, HD 51B; RICK HANSEN, HD 52A; RUTH RICHARDSON, HD 52B; TOU XIONG, HD 53A; STEVE SANDELL, HD 53B; ANNE CLAFLIN, HD 54A; KELSEY WAITS, HD 54B; KAELA BERG, HD 56B; ROBERT BIERMAN, HD 57A; JOHN HUOT, HD 57B; ERIN PREESE, HD 58A; SARA WOLF, HD 58B; KAOHLY HER, HD 64A; DAVE PINTO, HD 64B; RENA MORAN, HD 65A; CARLOS MARIANI, HD 65B; ALICE HAUSMAN, HD 66A; JOHN LESCH, HD 66B; JOHN THOMPSON, HD 67A, AND JAY XIONG, HD 67B.

GOOD AND WELFARE

- Theresa St. Aoro noted that we lost a good partner in Marry Xiong, Saint Paul School Board chair, who died from COVID-19 at the age of 31. Don Mullin requested a Moment of Silence for our friend and colleague.
- Lynne Larkin-Wright, AFL-CIO Community Services liaison, St. Paul Labor Studies and Resource Center, announced her retirement. We wish her well.

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

Submitted by,
BERNADINE ENGELDORF
Secretary-Treasurer

Exit Interview: Lynne Larkin-Wright

Twenty years helping union members get through the 'bumps on the road'

Lynne Larkin-Wright had been in the workforce five years when her father, George, a member and officer of Laborers Local 132, confronted her with a question: "Why would you work anything other than union?"

Soon thereafter, Larkin-Wright never did. She took a job with the City of St. Paul, where she would remain for 20 years as a member of Local 2508 of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees.

Her father was onto something. "Just knowing how much better your life can be and how much more stable your life can be, rather than being at the whim of someone else," Larkin-Wright said. "It makes such a difference."

But a union card isn't a shield against economic hardship. Layoffs, downturns, work stoppages and unexpected medical expenses are just some of the life events that can throw union members' lives into turmoil.

When union members in the East Metro have found themselves in economic crisis over the last 20 years, they've had a friend in Larkin-Wright, who retired July 2 from her position as an AFL-CIO Community Services liaison with the St. Paul Labor Studies

and Resource Center. The LSRC is the nonprofit arm of the St. Paul Regional Labor Federation, and a longstanding partner organization of Greater Twin Cities United Way.

Larkin-Wright reflected on that partnership – and the 40 years she's spent in the local labor movement – in this Union Advocate interview.

UA: How did you go from payroll clerk at the city to AFL-CIO Community Services liaison?

LLW: At some point the city and my union loaned me to the United Way to help raise money at campaign time. I was also on the board of United Way of St. Paul as a labor representative, where I worked in fund-distribution with local nonprofits. I also got involved on the Community Services Committee as a delegate to the St. Paul Trades and Labor Assembly, and went through their union counselor training, learning about resources available in the community.

UA: Tell me about your dad's influence on your career path.

LLW: When we were kids, we were the first on the block to buy a color TV. I have a friend who reminds me of it to this day! We had good health insurance and dental insurance. My



Lynne Larkin-Wright receives a letter of appreciation from U.S. Rep. Betty McCollum for her four decades of service to the community. McCollum's district director, Josh Straka, presented the letter on her behalf.

UA photo

mother, she lived 20 years longer than my dad, but she never had to worry about paying for surgery or medication or dialysis. All the work Dad did maintaining good contracts for members helped him as well.

UA: You remained a dues-paying member of AFSCME Local 2508 even after leaving the city. What has it meant to be part of that union?

LLW: Getting involved in my local was one of the best things I ever did. That and being loaned to the United Way, those are the two best things that ever happened to me. After getting up and public speaking at United Way meetings, when I went back to my local, I wouldn't say no to getting up and saying something in front of the City Council. I'm sure for the city it was like, "Look what we've created!"

But for me it was a huge shift. I remember one of the first things (former RLF President) Shar Knutson had me do in this job was go in front of the City Council and request a Workers Memorial Day proclamation. I remember thinking, "I don't know if I need to do that." But I marched up there and did it. And it opened up a path to a lot of things I didn't know I could do.

UA: What else surprised you about the job?

LLW: I remember in my interview there were like 13 people at the table. Shar always wanted to have other people's input, and I think because we were friends, she also wanted to make sure there wasn't any bias, that I had all the tools.

But the work we were doing 20 years ago is different than the work we're doing now. And it will change again. I think that's the beauty of what the United Way does. They change based on the needs of the community. Every United Way is different because every community is different. That means LSRC's program is going to change, and we have to.

UA: What's changed in 20 years?

LLW: People used to come in with one thing that was going on. You helped them with that, and they were on their way. Now the issues are mul-

tiply. I think health care is a big piece of that. Retirement security is a big piece of that.

UA: What's the one resource you wish more people knew about?

LLW: We've been talking about United Way 211 first call for help for 40 years! People still don't know it's out there. But also our program, for union members to know that it's a resource that's there, and that Community Services liaisons are there to help? You can only say those things so many times.

Union folks aren't used to asking for help. They're used to being the folks out there helping. I've seen that recently with unemployment. People are proud and want to take care of themselves, but we all experience bumps on the road of life. If there's help out there to make that path a little less bumpy, why not take it?

UA: What's kept you doing this work for 20 years?

LLW: I really liked reducing stress for folks, even if it's temporary. That has been so rewarding. I've been very fortunate to do this work.

The frustrating part? You can encourage people to help themselves, but sometimes they don't. All you can do is keep encouraging people in the right direction.

UA: You've built so many relationships in this movement. What are some that have meant the most?

LLW: I've been blessed to work with great people, and not everybody can say that. I've still got friends I worked with 40 years ago!

I had been mentored by several people and didn't even realize it was happening. Wayne Wittman (former Community Services Committee chair and Machinists union delegate) was a big one, and so were Shar and Robin Madsen from AFSCME. We did a lot of fun things, and we got a lot of good stuff done. Getting up at 8 a.m. on a Saturday and pounding lawn signs with other unions, or having picnics together – knowing we were all in the same boat, working together.

Because if employers find out they can divide you? Well, good luck.

A large advertisement featuring a portrait of Congresswoman Betty McCollum on the left. To the right of the portrait, the text reads: "Congresswoman Betty McCollum" in white on a dark background, followed by "Fighting for you, your family, and organized labor!" in yellow. Below this, in a white circle, it says "The Primary Election is August 11th- Visit Betty2020.com to request your mail in ballot!". In the bottom left corner, there is a circular logo that says "Vote Betty!" with "McCollum for Congress" and three stars below it.