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As new school year draws near, unions push districts for answers

By Michael Moore
Union Advocate editor

As school districts across Minnesota prepare for a school year unlike any other, the union members who work in public education are pushing for a voice in decisions that could affect their health – and the health of their students.

State guidelines announced by Gov. Tim Walz's administration in July set the ground rules for reopening public school buildings during the COVID-19 pandemic, but allow districts leeway to craft their own protocols.

What should not be optional, unions say, is collaboration and communication with their

employees. But in several districts across the metro, union members are calling out administrators for looking past workers' concerns as they push forward with plans to reopen.

"The communication that is received by staff and families is vague at best and non-exis-

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 4)

"Educators are feeling extremely wary, scared and nervous about going back to school because of all of our unanswered questions surrounding safety, consistency and educational quality."

– Karin Hogan,
White Bear Lake Educators

Sunrise and solidarity outside 3M plant



Members of United Steelworkers Local 11-00418 hold informational picketing outside the 3M plant in Cottage Grove on the day their contract with the company was set to expire. The union, which represents about 370 Steelworkers, agreed to a two-month contract extension as talks continue. Read more about the contract campaign on Page 24.

Union Advocate photo

Senate GOP ousts labor commissioner, plays politics with worker health, safety

By Michael Moore
Union Advocate editor

In a surprise move Aug. 12 that troubled Minnesota's union leaders and outraged the DFL minority, Senate Republicans voted to oust the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry's acting commissioner, Nancy Leppink.

Her removal threatens to undermine ongoing efforts, led by Leppink in collaboration with labor and industry leaders, to keep workers safe and healthy during the COVID-19 pandemic, union leaders warned.

Minnesota AFL-CIO President Bill McCarthy, the state's highest-ranking union officer, called the party-line vote a

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HealthPartners workers warn clinic closings will hurt local communities at worst time

By Michael Moore
Union Advocate editor

By moving forward with plans to close nine facilities in Minnesota and eastern Wisconsin, HealthPartners is turning its back on local communities at the worst possible time, clinic workers say.

Members of two unions impacted by the closings, SEIU Healthcare Minnesota and OPEIU Local 12, held informational

picketing in Minneapolis July 30 outside HealthPartners Riverside Clinic, which suspended operations April 25 and will not reopen, the provider has since announced.

Riverside serves some of Minnesota's most racially diverse neighborhoods, including areas of concentrated poverty. The clinic's closing caught many patients dangerously off-guard, said Holly

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 16)



Linnea Forsline, a member of SEIU and physician assistant at Riverside, speaks on the picket line. Union Advocate photo

Go Figure

92% Registered voters who supported federal aid to the Postal Service as part of pandemic relief, according to an April poll.

90% Share of Republican voters who favored financial aid to USPS in the bipartisan survey.

\$25 billion

Emergency funding for USPS in the HEROES Act, passed by House Democrats in May. The GOP Senate has yet to act.

Source: Hart Research Associates and North Star Opinion Research poll, April 10-12, 2020



Labor Voices: Kera Peterson

A distant Labor Day this year, but our solidarity endures

For many of us, Labor Day marks the final days of summer, one last weekend to throw a backyard barbecue or head up to the cabin before the school year begins. For the St. Paul Regional Labor Federation, Labor Day has in recent years been an opportunity to bring hundreds of union members together for a parade through the State Fairgrounds.

This year, of course, Labor Day looks a lot different. Get-togethers with loved ones are spaced six feet apart. And not only is our parade canceled, the whole State Fair has been called off. Despite the differences, Labor Day should always be about celebrating the contributions of America's working people – especially the essential workers who have kept our country and our state going through the COVID-19 pandemic.

The list of heroes working on the front lines during this public health crisis is long and filled with union members. Millions of America's working people have stepped up, risking our lives and livelihoods, to continuously go to work since the onset of COVID-19. U.S. Postal Service employees are working in challenging, sometimes chaotic conditions to make sure our mail is safely delivered. Grocery store clerks are working overtime to ensure we have food to put on the table. Tradespeople are building and maintaining our infrastructure. Health care workers are adjusting to new protocols and care models to keep our communities well. Educators and public employees are working hard in conditions that continue to shift. Transit workers are getting essential workers to and from their jobs.

COVID-19 has highlighted the vast social, economic and racial inequalities in this country, challenges we must face head on moving forward. But the pandemic is also shedding light on another crucial difference in economic and health security: the benefits of belonging in a union. According to the Economic Policy Institute, just 67% of nonunion private-sector workers had access to health care benefits in 2019, compared to 94% of union members. The union difference is real. Collective bargaining leads to benefits like paid leave, job security and wages high enough to sustain a family.

There's never been a year where the union advantage – the power of having a voice on the job, a seat at the table – has been more clear. From National Nurses United winning victories in its fight for adequate personal protective equipment to the United Food and Commercial Workers demand-

“The list of heroes working on the front lines during this crisis is long and filled with union members.”

– Kera Peterson



ing (and winning) stricter safety guidelines for grocery stores, solidarity has been fundamental in protecting America's workers in this crisis. When working people come together, we make things better for everyone, especially in a crisis.

But as we celebrate the working people who got us here and will keep us going, we also must take Labor Day to honor our brothers, sisters and friends who have fallen to COVID-19, especially those who became infected while on the job. No one should have to choose between risking their life or losing a paycheck. In our moments of great darkness, we must continue the fight for safe working conditions, hazard pay and paid sick leave.

As union members, we must never take for granted the rights that empower us to bargain for safe workplaces, quality health insurance, family-sustaining wages and protections on the job. And in the face of this unprecedented pandemic, it's important now more than ever to take this year's holiday to uplift political candidates who share our values and fight to protect our rights.

We've seen firsthand the devastation caused by political pundits who choose to put profits over people. That's why this November, it's crucial we get to the ballot box to elect labor-endorsed candidates for the Minnesota Legislature, for Congress and Joe Biden as the next president of the U.S.

The labor movement has responded to COVID-19 with passion and dedication, fighting nonstop for workers' protections. On Labor Day, we'll pause to celebrate our essential workers and pay tribute to those we've lost, to cherish the rights won by union members before us and imagine what we can accomplish with an ally in the White House. And then we'll get back to work.

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

LA 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

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Labor Events

Care workers, clients have waited long enough

Tired of waiting for state lawmakers to address the deepening crisis in their industry, home care workers and the clients they serve will caravan to the Capitol in St. Paul for a safe, socially distant event to demand action Sept. 12.

Lawmakers have talked about and come close to passing an emergency measure to raise wages for home care workers, who make it possible for Minnesotans with disabilities and serious health conditions to remain in their homes during the COVID-19 pandemic.

But despite three special sessions since the Legislature adjourned in May, the emergency rate increase has failed to reach Gov. Tim Walz's desk. Home care workers and leaders in the state's disabled community warn that without higher wages, Minnesotans in need of home care will continue to struggle to find qualified home health aides.

Supporters are welcome to join a caravan picket line Sept. 12 outside the Capitol. Carloads will gather in the parking lot of Education Minnesota, 41 Sherburne Ave., at 11 a.m. to decorate vehicles and wheelchairs. The caravan will leave for the Capitol at noon.

Spend a day shooting clays with Roofers union

For the 10th year in a row, Twin Cities-based Roofers Local 96 will host a sporting clays shoot to raise funds for conservation and efforts to preserve the nation's outdoor heritage.

Registration is open for the Union Sportsmen's Alliance 10th Annual Roofers Twin Cities Sporting Clays Shoot at Wild Marsh Sporting Clays in Clear Lake Township Sept. 12. Find a registration form at unionsportsmen.org/events/shoots, email Chris Piltz at chris@unionsportsmen.org.

The event is an opportunity to connect with other union members who are passionate about hunting, fishing, recreational shooting and conservation. Proceeds benefit the Union Sportsmen's Alliance's efforts to support wildlife conservation and introduce youth to outdoor sports.

Labor Ed offers free summer trainings

This summer, the University of Minnesota's Labor Education Service rolled out a series of free, online trainings and classes for working people looking to build power in the workplace and the community.

Two classes will take place in early September: "Introduction to Corporate Campaigns," Sept. 10 from 2 to 3:30 p.m., and "People of Color Activists Fatigue," Sept. 15 from 2 to 4 p.m.

For more information, call 612-624-5020 or email les@umn.edu.

Union employers reach out with career opportunities



Greg Renne, recruitment coordinator for the Finishing Trades Institute of the Upper Midwest, discusses career pathways in the International Union of Painters and Allied Trades with jobseekers at the Union Job and Resource Fair. Originally scheduled for April, the job fair took place at the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 110's union hall Aug. 20, with job seekers and over a dozen employers adhering to social-distancing guidelines. The job fair is organized annually by the St. Paul Regional Labor Federation, the East Side Freedom Library and several community partners. Union Advocate photo

No picnics, no parades, but East Side Freedom Library will mark Labor Day with virtual presentation on Amazon, workers rights, community

The East Side Freedom Library in St. Paul will celebrate Labor Day early and online this year, with a virtual discussion about worker organizing at the world's largest retailer, Amazon.

The event, "Labor Day Ain't No Picnic," will broadcast on the ESFL's Facebook and YouTube pages Sept. 3, bringing together activists who are using research, social media, art and on-the-ground organizing to build worker power at Amazon.

"A century ago, farmer, labor and community activists used an octopus to depict the ways they saw capitalist greed grasping control over work, business, community, and political life," East Side Freedom Library Co-Director Peter Rachleff said. "Today, it is hard to imagine a more appropriate metaphor than such a creature for Amazon. Yet, the very breadth of its reach makes possible the weaving of intersectional and international alliances."

All are welcome to join the discussion and learn how to get involved in ways that, as the independent, non-profit library's mission statement says, "inspire solidarity, work for justice and advocate for equity for all."

Lead presenters are Dania Rajendra, director of the Athena Coalition, which brings together more than 50 organizations wrestling with different aspects of Amazon's power and influence, and

Stacy Mitchell, co-director of one of those organizations, the Institute for Local Self-Reliance.

Graduates of Macalester College, both have deep connections in the Twin Cities and to the East Side Freedom Library.

Rajendra is a poet, essayist and journalist who worked for both the St. Paul Union Advocate and the Minneapolis Labor Review in the early 2000s, then moved to New York to be associate editor of The Clarion, the newspaper of the faculty union at the City University of New York. Rajendra also has taught at the Institute for Labor Relations at Cornell University.

Mitchell is the author of "Home-Town Advantage: How to Defend Your Main Street Against Chain Stores and Why it Matters" and "Big Box Swindle: The True Cost of Mega-Retailers and the Fight for America's Independent Businesses." Last year, Mitchell was a significant voice in CNN's documentary film "The Age of Amazon."

While COVID-19 has greatly expanded Amazon's reach and CEO Jeff Bezos' wealth, making him the richest man in the world, the pandemic has further revealed the corporation's ugly sides, Rachleff said, pointing to its "disregard for workers' safety and security, their resistance to workers' efforts to organize, their eco-

The Basics

- **What:** "Labor Day Ain't No Picnic," an event about Amazon, workers' rights and our community
- **When:** 7 to 8:30 p.m. Sept. 3
- **Where:** The East Side Freedom Library's Facebook feed and YouTube channel
- **Register:** eastsidefreedomlibrary.org/events/labor-day-aint-no-picnic

nomic impact on independent small businesses, and their political influence with city, state, and national governments."

"Dania and Stacy will discuss their work to weave together the wide range of people whose lives are being undermined by the modern-day octopus, and they will be joined by some of the grassroots activists with whom they have been working," Rachleff added.

"Grassroots responses to both COVID-19 and the murders of George Floyd and others have revealed the potential power that still exists across this country, across this world. Learn how organizations like Athena and the Institute for Local Self-Reliance are amplifying this power, and learn how we can become involved in productive and constructive ways to promote economic and political democracy."

Union says districts aren't heeding Walz's order to accommodate staff with health risks

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

tent at worst," said Karin Hogan, an educator in the White Bear Lake Area Schools, where union members planned to rally outside the school board meeting Aug. 24.

"Educators are feeling extremely wary, scared and nervous about going back to school because of all of our unanswered questions surrounding the three areas of safety, consistency, and educational quality," Hogan said.

Until they get specific answers to their questions, union members want administrators to pump the brakes on in-person learning, set to begin Sept. 8 with a hybrid approach that combines in-person and remote learning.

"Our union is appreciative of the cooperation that the administration is currently showing with our negotiations committee. It is more than many other districts," she said. "However, it is not enough to address and allay our concerns."

Unions representing school employees initially praised the governor's reopening guidelines as data-driven and based in science.

But Denise Specht, president of Education Minnesota, stressed that readying school buildings would take a "tremendous amount of work," and she cautioned local districts against settling for "safe enough" to meet arbitrary deadlines for starting classes.



The week before Gov. Tim Walz announced protocols for districts looking to reopen buildings during the pandemic, members of the St. Paul and Minneapolis educators unions marched on the governor's mansion to press their concerns about equity and safety,

Minneapolis Labor Review photo

"We know we have a lot of work to do before school can start this fall," Kelly Gibbons, president of SEIU Local 284, added. "We are committed to doing everything in our power to make sure every district in the state, no matter what their plan may be, is putting the health and safety of students, staff and our communities before everything else."

By mid-August, local unions were

reporting problems.

Under Walz's executive order governing school reopenings, districts are required to accommodate staff members with health conditions that put them at elevated risk to COVID-19.

But in a public statement, Specht said she was "deeply troubled" that educators' requests for accommodation weren't being taken seriously, listing several examples of complaints –

some "plainly illegal" – Education Minnesota has heard from its members.

"We can and must do better," Specht said. "Education Minnesota calls on school districts in this state to be model employers."

Some districts are doing better by their employees.

In St. Paul, where the coronavirus cut short a contentious educator strike in March, administrators not only invited members of the St. Paul Federation of Educators to join work groups charged with planning for the fall semester, but took their input seriously, SPFE President Nick Faber said.

"Most of the discussion was around hybrid and returning to classrooms, what it would look like to go back," Faber said. "It seemed like every time we answered a question or concern, it just opened up 50 more. It was just not logistically possible to do it safely."

The St. Paul Public Schools will begin the school year with remote learning for all students, a move Faber characterized as the least-bad option on the table for SPFE members.

"Our members aren't crazy about having to go back to teaching over a computer screen, often while their own kids are in the house somewhere," he said. "But they know this is the safest way."



Sen. Jim Carlson, Rep. Sandra Masin & House Candidate Liz Reyer: Strong leadership for Minnesota's labor community

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USPS workers pledge to 'go the extra mile,' Smith pledges fight to save post office

By Michael Moore

Union Advocate editor

As U.S. Sen. Tina Smith met with postal workers, letter carriers and reporters outside the sprawling mail distribution center in Eagan Aug. 18, a pickup truck exiting the facility slowed to a stop near the crowd. The driver lowered her window and barked out a brief message for Smith before speeding away. "Thank you, senator!" she yelled. "Give him hell."

That's exactly the treatment new Postmaster General Louis DeJoy has received from Smith and other Minnesota DFLers over the last month, as structural changes at the USPS have slowed down mail delivery in many parts of the country and, just 11 weeks from Election Day, cast doubt on the agency's ability to accommodate a vote-by-mail surge during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"I have been hearing from many, many of my constituents about mail that is late, that is unreliable," Smith said after an inspection of changes at the Eagan facility. "And that's not the fault of the people who work so hard inside that building. That is the fault of the chaotic approach and rapid-fire change we've been seeing at the federal level."

In response to criticism from both Democrats and Republicans, DeJoy issued a statement shortly before Smith's scheduled tour, announcing that the Postal Service would put further restructuring plans on hold through Election Day.

"That doesn't give me any great confidence," Smith said, adding that she worries DeJoy shares President Donald Trump's "politicized" view of the Postal Service. "It makes me wonder what their true intentions are."

A postmaster with political ties

The USPS Board of Governors, stacked with six



Tina Smith meets with postal employees outside the Eagan distribution center after a tour of the facility to inspect changes that have slowed down mail service nationwide.

Union Advocate photos

Trump appointees, tapped DeJoy to serve as postmaster general May 6, and he took office in June.

For DeJoy, who has contributed millions to Republican candidates and over \$1.2 million to the Trump Victory Fund, it was his first job with the public Postal Service after a 35-year career in the private shipping industry. He and his wife recently

held investments of between \$30 and \$75 million in companies that compete directly with USPS – a blatant, but not illegal conflict of interest.

Union leaders warned DeJoy's appointment was like putting a fox in charge of the hen house, and he has done little in the last two months to prove otherwise.

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 7)

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(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6)

In July, DeJoy announced processing facilities like the one in Eagan would hold onto mail not sorted in time to meet strict distribution schedules, a move he described as necessary to curb overtime pay. Previously, drivers and postal workers would work in tandem to move as much of the day's mail off the shop floor before closing the truck gate, ensuring timely, dependable delivery.

"We were taught if that mail doesn't go out the next day, we were going to get in trouble," said Todd Elkerton, president of the American Postal Workers Union in St. Paul. "Now we're seeing it happen. It's being directed from above. And we're really having a hard time dealing with it."

Meanwhile, the Postal Service planned to remove 671 sorting machines from stations across the country, leading to further delays. And photos of mailboxes ripped off the streets in several communities spread widely on social media last month, prompting more public outrage.

The Eagan facility is down seven sorting machines since the restructuring began, Elkerton said. It's not the first time he has seen machines "tarped" – or taken out of service – during periods of low mail flow, but it is more than Elkerton has ever seen at once.

So far, postal workers in Eagan have kept disruptions in mail service to a minimum. But the facility was understaffed before the restructuring, and the sorting machines Eagan lost were capable of processing nearly 5 million pieces of mail per day. Elkerton and Joe Malkush, president of the National Association of Letter Carriers in St. Paul, said that doesn't bode well for the inevitable increase in mail volume.

Craig, McCollum fight for mail service too

Smith and other federal lawmakers from Minnesota have demanded DeJoy reverse the changes, alarmed by reports from constituents whose medications have been slow to arrive by mail.

Rep. Angie Craig, a DFLer who represents Minnesota's 2nd Congressional District, sent a letter to DeJoy and Veterans Affairs Secretary Robert Wilkie, Jr., last month, noting that the VA fills nearly 80% of veterans' prescriptions by mail.

"I will not stand by and watch these recent attempts to politicize, dismantle and delay postal services, which put the lives of more than 330,000 veterans every day at unnecessary risk," Craig said. "The politicization of the Postal Service is a grave disservice to the hardworking employees of the Postal Service and puts American veterans in harm's way."

In May, Craig and 4th District Rep. Betty McCollum voted with other House Democrats to keep the agency afloat during the pandemic with \$25 billion in emergency funding, part of the HEROES Act. Trump and Senate Republicans have balked at the notion of bailing out the agency.

The president has acknowledged the emergency funding would improve the agency's ability to handle mail-in voting, which he opposes. "They need that money in order to have the post office work so it can take all of these millions and millions of ballots," Trump said in an interview with Fox Business.

Further stoking election-related fears, the Postal Service sent letters to 46 states warning that mail-in ballots may not be delivered in time to be counted. But local postal employees said they remain confident every ballot cast through the mail here will be delivered to election officials on time – "even if we have to go the extra mile," Elkerton said.

Delivering the mail, Smith quipped to reporters, is embedded in postal employees' DNA.

"We do it during Christmas," Malkush added. "We can do it during the election."



Joe Malkush, president of the St. Paul letter carriers union, says if his members can deliver the mail on time for the holidays, "we can do it during the election."



Todd Elkerton, president of the APWU's St. Paul branch, says postal workers will "go the extra mile" to ensure mail-in ballots get counted this fall. Union Advocate photos



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Representing The Union Advocate since 1958

As nonprofits face uncertain times, some employees look to unionize

By Michael Moore

Union Advocate editor

Hope Community workers are bargaining their first union contract after winning voluntary recognition from the Minneapolis nonprofit in July. The new bargaining unit, organized with Minnesota Newspaper and Communications Guild - TNG-CWA Local 37002, brings together 10 frontline workers.

They announced their victory in a video posted on social media.

"We have organized ourselves to more deeply align with our belief that as everyday people we have the power to change our own lives," the employees said. "We are part of the increasing number of nonprofit workers joining organized labor because we believe that our power plus your power equals more power."

"Solidarity to all rank-and-file workers."

Hope Community works out of the city's Phillips neighborhood. Frontline employees work in the community to find alternatives to development through gentrification, and to grow a network of leaders who work for racial and economic equity.

The work requires long hours and is often stressful, Hope parks and power organizer Shruti Kamisetty said. And like many jobs in the nonprofit sector, the wages are low.

"Everyone should get paid more," Kamisetty said.

And she doesn't just mean everyone in her bargaining unit.

Kamisetty, who has been on staff at Hope for almost two years, wants the union drive and contract campaign at Hope to be a catalyst for more worker power in the local nonprofit community, and many of her co-workers feel the same, she said.

"We have our grievances specific to Hope, but our campaign can't be divorced from other (nonprofit) organizations," Kamisetty said. "We're grounded in our issues, but we're going to use that as fodder and fuel to help others organize."

Local union organizers report an increasing level of interest among nonprofit workers in collective bargaining recently.

In fact, Hope Community is the second nonprofit to unionize this summer. In June, employees of Jewish Community Action, a local nonprofit committed to racial and economic justice, won representation with Local 12 of the Office and Professional Employees International Union (OPEIU).

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."

Ripe for organizing?

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a dramatic impact on the local nonprofit landscape. The Minnesota Council of Nonprofits estimates organizations statewide saw their revenue drop by \$1 billion in April alone.

Nonprofit workers have been hit hard by the budget problems. The Minneapolis Star Tribune reported in July that roughly a third of nonprofit employees in Minnesota had filed for unemployment benefits since the coronavirus outbreak reached the state.

Even before the pandemic, workers at nonprofits like Hope – advocacy, arts, environmental and social service organizations – were seeing lower pay than workers in both the for-profit and public sectors. Median pay for

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 9)

Thank you to the workers in our community, including those who care for us, keep us healthy, educate our next generation, and ensure we have food to eat during these challenging times. *Happy Labor Day!*

Re-elect
Rena
Moran
State Representative



(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8)

nonprofit workers, excluding those at hospitals, clinics and colleges, was about \$18 per hour in 2018.

Making a career of nonprofit work, Hope workers say, usually means going into management. And climbing the ladder requires learning to squeeze as much programming as possible out of limited resources, while finding favor with the powerful foundations and donors who fund nonprofit work.

Workers closest to the mission, parks and power lead organizer Jake Virden said, are too often left without a seat at the table in nonprofit decisions. And that makes the industry ripe for union organizing.

"The people who drive the nonprofit ecosystem are billion-dollar foundations," Virden said. "And yet a lot of our co-workers are working two or three jobs, part-time jobs on weekends or after work at Hope.

"There's this idea we are acting out of our values or our mission. But I think a lot of people are waking up to the idea that there are these big pots of money, billions of dollars, and it's the people who are well connected setting policies and agendas. But it's the youth workers, the health care workers, the policy workers on the ground, doing the grunt work, who have good ideas and a lot to say, who are really shut out."

A voice for workers

Having won recognition of their union from Hope Community's board of directors – a process Kamissety described as "not super smooth" – workers are turning their attention to the first contract. In addition to higher wages, they plan to seek greater clarity regarding expectations and disciplinary procedures.

They will also be looking for a bigger voice in the organization's decision making. Virden said that for many of his colleagues, their lack of voice at work hit home during a recent all-staff meeting to discuss proposed changes to Hope's mission statement. "What became clear to us was we were the very last people to see this mission statement, and it was already written," he said. "The meeting was for us to just check the box.

"We're the ones who do the work of the organization. All the grant money, accolades, prestige – it comes from the work we do in the community. So how is it management, the board and outside consultants have seen this document before we did?"

If it happened to them, it's probably happening to workers at other nonprofits. That's why, although their own organizing drive may be over, Hope workers haven't stopped having conversations about the power of a union in the nonprofit workplace.

"I never thought about myself as a worker until we started our union campaign," Kamissety said. "I'm working. I'm getting a wage. I depend on this wage to support myself. Yet I never thought of myself as a worker. So I'm very invested in making sure my friends, people at other nonprofits, know everyone can unionize."

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GOP holds infrastructure jobs hostage in standoff with Walz

By Michael Moore

Union Advocate editor

If Minnesota lawmakers treated their jobs as seriously as the state's union tradespeople do, Gov. Tim Walz would have signed a bonding bill months ago.

Instead, members of Minnesota's Building and Construction Trades unions were on the steps of the Capitol in St. Paul July 21, expressing their disappointment after legislators adjourned a second special session without investing in infrastructure and local jobs.

And less than a month later, state lawmakers adjourned a third special session with the same outcome – no bonding bill.

"Construction workers put in long, hard, exhausting hours, and we get the job done well," said Fred Livingston, a former Marine who joined Laborers Local 563 after reentering civilian life. "We take our jobs very seriously.

"My brothers and sisters and their families hope lawmakers come back to the table, sit down, roll their sleeves up and do whatever is required to get this bonding bill passed ... so we don't have to tell our families we lost our jobs."

Infrastructure bonding bills authorize the state to borrow money for investments in local water-and-sewer systems, roads, bridges and public buildings. It is traditionally a priority for lawmakers during even-numbered years like 2020, when they are not working on the biennial state budget.

Bonding, however, requires support from two-thirds of the House and Senate, and this year Republican lawmakers have used the measure as a bargaining chip in efforts to force Walz to call off the state of emergency he's declared to respond quickly to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Led by Minority Leader Kurt Daudt, House Republicans held firm to that stance in the July special session. They voted in lockstep to block a package of more than \$1 billion in local projects that would have created an estimated 12,000 jobs and generated \$3 billion in economic impact, according to an analysis by the Building Trades.

Jason George, business manager of Operating Engineers Local 49, said Daudt and his caucus "chose to fight with the governor instead of creating good jobs in Minnesota. That's just something I don't understand."



Members of Minnesota's Building and Construction Trades unions gather on the Capitol steps in St. Paul for a press conference denouncing lawmakers' failure to pass an infrastructure jobs bill during a July special session. Union Advocate photos



Fred Livingston, a member of LIUNA Local 563, speaks at a Capitol press conference on the bonding bill.

The political standoff comes at a delicate time for both the construction industry and the state's economy, as the COVID-19 pandemic continues to create uncertainty.

Employment in Minnesota's construction industry has remained steady so far during the pandemic, union leaders at the Capitol said, but there are signs of trouble ahead.

Minnesota Pipe Trades President David Ybarra said several significant projects have been delayed or canceled since the economic downturn, while design and engineering firms warn of a slowdown in demand for

their services.

"It goes without saying that if architects and engineers are not seeing projects, our members will be without work eventually," Ybarra said.

State lawmakers may get more opportunities to pass the infrastructure package. Walz must call the Legislature into special session in order to extend his emergency powers.

That gives union tradespeople a glimmer of hope their representatives may finally do the job right – even if it's not done on time.

Keoudon Yang, an apprentice with the Electrical Workers union, said it's

Free speaker series tackles diversifying apprenticeship

Over the next three months, Apprenticeship Minnesota, an initiative of the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry, will host a free, three-part speaker series, "Diversity, Inclusion, Equity and Hiring Best Practices," for leaders of apprenticeship programs.

Patricia Jespersion of EmployeeEXP will lead the programming, focused on how to make organizations more diverse, inclusive and equitable. Topics will include outreach and recruitment, sustaining a culture of equity and inclusion, what job performance and retention look like within a diverse workforce and how registered apprenticeship can support these goals.

Find session dates and times, and register to participate, online at www.apprenticeship.mn.gov. Click on "news and events."

"unfortunate that state leadership, in these challenging times, will not do their part."

"This has been one of the most uncertain years, and our future feels unpredictable at best," Carpenters Local 930 apprentice Benjamin Statz added. "We need the Legislature to do their part and chart a strong path forward for young trades workers."

Removal of labor commissioner puts politics before workers, union leaders say

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

“slap in the face to working Minnesotans.” Joel Smith, president of LIUNA Minnesota and North Dakota, said the firing “will make workers less safe.”

Gov. Tim Walz appointed Leppink to serve as labor commissioner after taking office in January 2019, but she, like several members of Walz’s cabinet, had not been confirmed via floor vote in the Republican-controlled Senate.

Majority Leader Paul Gazelka (R-Nisswa) stunned DFLers by putting Leppink’s confirmation on the Senate agenda last month, as lawmakers held a special session required to extend Walz’s state of emergency during the pandemic.

Minority Leader Susan Kent (D-Woodbury) said both she and the governor’s office learned of Republicans’ plan to vote not to confirm Leppink in a text message Gazelka sent just minutes before bringing her appointment to the floor. The ambush effectively prevented Leppink’s supporters preparing arguments in her defense.

“None of us in the minority had any expectation that this was going to be an issue in today’s session,” Sen. Dick Cohen (D-St. Paul) said, adding that the surprise confirmation vote was “in contrast to how we’ve handled things” since he joined the Senate in 1987.

Others from Cohen’s caucus were less diplomatic.

Sen. Jason Isaacson (D-Shoreview) called the move “bush league.” He questioned whether Senate Republicans, who have repeatedly sought to curb Walz’s emergency powers during the pandemic, were exacting political revenge.

“You look at the pedigree (Leppink) brings to the table – the professionalism, the experience,”

Isaacson said. “And then you look at the ridiculously long list, bipartisan list ... who unanimously endorse Commissioner Leppink...”

“It leads me to wonder, why would you do this? Is it because we didn’t get our way, and now we’re mad? Is it because the governor hurt our feelings?”

After accepting a position in Walz’s cabinet, Leppink relocated from Geneva, Switzerland, where she worked as branch chief for the International Labour Organization, overseeing efforts to improve worker protections in 187 member states.

But St. Paul is where Leppink began her career as a watchdog for workers’ rights 34 years ago, advancing from the state Attorney General’s Office to a position as chief general counsel in the labor department. She served under both Republican and DFL governors. Later, she went to work in the Obama administration as a leader in the U.S. Department of Labor’s Wage and Hour Division.

In less than two years as commissioner, Leppink has drawn praise from unions and industry groups for her department’s approach to workforce development, particularly when it comes to expanding registered apprenticeship opportunities statewide.

Additionally, Leppink has sought to modernize the department’s enforcement of wage-and-hour standards, including Minnesota’s historic wage theft law, which Leppink championed last year. The department recently secured nearly \$315,000 in total back-wages owed to 70 construction workers on a project in Thief River Falls, where a subcontractor violated prevailing-wage, overtime and other wage rules.

But during debate on the Senate floor, Gazelka and other Republican senators said Leppink had not been

accommodating enough to the state’s business owners.

“The Department of Labor and Industry is expected to be responsive and not a hindrance to the state’s businesses,” Gazelka said, claiming his caucus has heard “case after case of harassment” from constituents interacting with the department. “She’s in the wrong role.”

Every Republican who spoke in support of removing Leppink was quick to offer assurances that the decision was not being made lightly – even if it was being made without warning.

“I take this very seriously,” Sen. Carrie Ruud (R-Breezy Point) said.

“This is a serious issue we take up,” added Sen. Jason Rarick (R-Pine City).

“We do take this very seriously,” Assistant Majority Leader Karin Housley, of Stillwater, insisted. When the Senate Jobs Committee issued no recommendation on Leppink’s confirmation during a meeting six months ago, Housley added, “that was the notification right there” that a vote to oust Leppink was coming.

DFLers remained unconvinced. Sen. Scott Dibble (D-Minneapolis) pleaded with Republicans not to throw the agency in charge of protecting workers’ health and safety into chaos during a public health emergency, just “to get a shot off at a chief executive



Nancy Leppink

with which you are unhappy.”

Whatever political victory Republicans achieved with the vote to remove Leppink, Minnesota Building and Construction Trades President Harry Melander said, it came at the expense of working people.

“In these uncertain times, difference of opinion is healthy, but this kind of unproductive posturing in government serves no one and creates anxiety for our members,” Melander said. “Minnesota workers should be put first, but today’s action by the Senate put workers last.”

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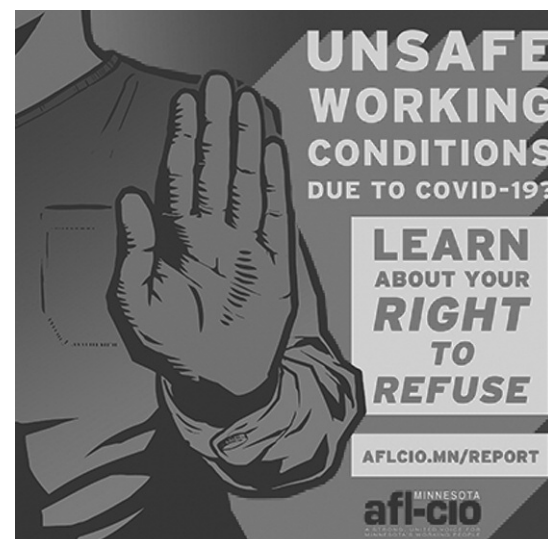
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A message from the members of Local 1005



Labor, Walz administration work together, ensure right to refuse unsafe work during pandemic

The labor movement has long fought for safer working conditions and workplace safety laws. The COVID-19 pandemic has put worker safety back in the spotlight, as working people across Minnesota and the nation face unprecedented concerns.

In too many states, non-union workers are forced to choose between a paycheck and potentially life-threatening working conditions. But in Minnesota, working people have tools to report safety concerns without fear of retaliation from their employer.

Here, unions have worked closely with Gov. Tim Walz's administration during the peacetime emergency to create a safe reporting process for Minnesota workers. This spring, in response to union concerns, Walz issued an emergency Executive Order specifically protecting workers who make a report from retaliation.

But the administration's engagement with unions did not end with the executive order. Minnesota AFL-CIO President Bill McCarthy, the state's highest-ranking union officer, said Walz has continued to seek the input of Minnesota's labor movement.

"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," McCarthy said. "Failing to do so would result in more workers falling sick and even more economic damage."

To better help working Minnesotans who don't have union protection, the Minnesota AFL-CIO created a portal on its website, mnafcio.org/report, for workers to report unsafe working conditions.

"We're receiving reports from workers in almost every single sector and none of them have the protection of a union," said Todd Dahlstrom, the Minnesota AFL-CIO's organizing and growth director. "Many are customer-facing workers who are being forced into daily contact with people not wearing masks or practicing social distancing."

Dahlstrom said he follows up with every worker who submits the form. Depending on their particular situation, workers are either connected to the Minneapolis Regional Labor Federation's worker navigators if they are experiencing financial hardship, referred to an appropriate union if they are interested in organizing their workplace, or provided with assistance reporting unsafe conditions to the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry.

"The Department [of Labor and Industry] has been very responsive in taking action on the reports we've helped workers file," Dahlstrom said. "Unions first emerged in response to unsafe and unfair workplaces, and non-union working Minnesotans are learning why they are more relevant than ever today."

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International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 23

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SEIU, OPEIU clinic workers to HealthPartners: 'We don't bail on our patients'

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

DeSouza, a registered nurse who coordinates care for chronic and high-risk patients.

"I get regular calls from our patients who have high blood pressure, high blood sugar, and they can't get into this clinic," DeSouza, a member of SEIU, said. "They said they were outside, they knocked on the door and no one came."

"And they can't get out to the suburbs where their providers were displaced. They don't have the transportation."

Minnesota's troubling racial disparities have drawn worldwide attention this summer, and health care is among the areas where those disparities are most stark.

According to the Department of Health's 2017 Statewide Health Assessment, "race and ethnicity are powerful indicators of the opportunity people have to be healthy" in Minnesota.

Rep. Mohamud Noor, a DFLer whose district includes the Riverside Clinic, told workers he worries its closing will only heighten barriers people of color and indigenous people face in getting the care they need.

"To walk away from this clinic is what I see as the structural racism that exists in our society," Noor said, adding he and his family consider



Members of SEIU Healthcare Minnesota and Local 12 of the Office and Professional Employees International Union held informational picketing outside HealthPartners Riverside Clinic in Minneapolis in July. Union Advocate photo

Riverside their primary-care clinic. "Closing this clinic is a shame to HealthPartners."

Riverside is just one of eight clinics slated to close, along with the Regions Alcohol and Drug Abuse Program in St. Paul. Other communities impacted by the closings include St. Paul's Highland Park neighborhood, Cottage

Grove and Mahtomedi.

Since announcing the cuts, HealthPartners has laid off 90 SEIU members and about 30 members of OPEIU Local 12, as well as non-union employees. More layoffs could be coming, union leaders said.

For workers, the layoffs are particularly hard to stomach after a difficult

round of contract negotiations this winter – and a year after the "nonprofit health care organization" bumped CEO Andrea Walsh's compensation past the \$2 million mark.

In a petition circulating online, union members are demanding Walsh and HealthPartners "stop clinic closures and protect health care workers – and protect the health care of the communities those workers serve."

"We hear talk about the future of video visits, but we know that people want to be with a real person and talk to their health care providers," Local 12 member Kelsie Anderson said. "We also know that many people may not have proper technology for that."

Rushing forward with virtual care and closing clinics like Riverside are part of a "destructive pattern" of moves, physician assistant and SEIU member Linnea Forsline said, that most impact patients dealing with chronic illnesses and barriers to care.

"I'm here because we need this clinic," Forsline told fellow picketers. "We don't bail on our patients, not during a pandemic, not after the murder of George Floyd, not ever."

"We need this clinic."

Take action online!

Tell CEO Andrea Walsh that closing clinics hurts communities. Find the petition to keep clinics open at www.seiuhealthcaremn.org.

I'm proud to stand with the working families of Minnesota's Fourth Congressional District.

Wishing everyone a happy and safe Labor Day!

Betty McCollum

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Report exposes tactics employers use to stifle worker organizing

A report issued in July provides a new, inside look at how employers routinely threaten, intimidate and harass workers to stop them from exercising their right to collective bargaining.

Published by the Economic Policy Institute (EPI), the report offers perspective into what goes on in the lucrative union avoidance business – and why the share of union members in the workforce remains stubbornly low despite unions' highest popularity in decades, according to surveys.

Specifically, the authors take a deep dive into unionization drives at Kumho Tire in Georgia and DISH TV corporate branches in Texas to illustrate what employer-opposition campaigns look like on the ground.

The report details common employer tactics that often turn overwhelming support for unions at the outset of a campaign into a "no" vote just weeks later.

The tactics include:

- Forcing employees to attend daily anti-union meetings, where pro-union workers have no right to present alternative views and can be fired on the spot if they ask a question.

- Plastering the workplace with anti-union posters, banners and looping video ads – and denying pro-union employees access to any of these media.

- Instructing managers to tell employees that there's a good chance they will lose their jobs if they vote to unionize.

A report published by EPI last year showed that employers collectively spend \$340 million per year on "union avoidance" consultants, who teach them how to exploit weaknesses in federal labor law and effectively scare workers out of exercising their legal right to collective bargaining.

"Protecting the right to collec-

tive bargaining is key to solving the crisis of economic inequality," said Gordon Lafer, professor at the University of Oregon's Labor Education and Research Center and co-author of the report.

"When workers have the ability to bargain collectively with their employers, the division of corporate profits is more equally shared between employees, management, and shareholders. When workers can't exercise this right – as is often the case – inequality grows and wages stagnate."

The report includes several recommendations for legislators necessary to reform and modernize federal labor laws. They include passing and enacting the Protecting the Right to Organize (PRO) Act, which would stiffen penalties for employers caught breaking labor laws and give workers more power over the organizing process.

The report also recommends extending labor rights to farmworkers, domestic workers and independent contractors, all of whom are currently excluded from federal union rights.

"The importance of unions has been even further heightened by both the COVID-19 pandemic and the national protests around racial justice," Lola Loustaunau, a research fellow at the Oregon Labor Education and Research Center and co-author of the report, said. "In recent months, thousands of nonunion workers have been left without personal protective equipment, hazard pay and access to sick leave."

"Unionization has helped bring living wages to once low-wage jobs in industries such as health care and is a key tool for closing racial wage gaps. Congress must ensure workers have a meaningful right to organize and bargain collectively."

Read the report at www.epi.org.



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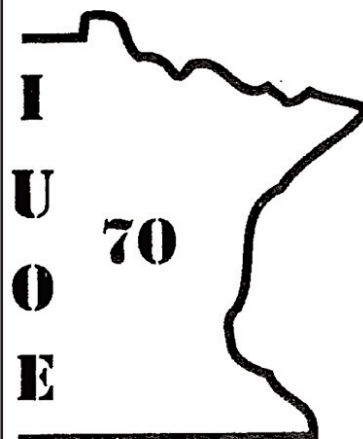
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In Minnesota, early voting for general election begins Sept. 18

Minnesota voters can apply now to request absentee ballots to vote by mail in the state's Nov. 3 general election.

Apply online at the Minnesota Secretary of State's website: mnvotes.org.

Don't delay. With U.S. Mail delivery under attack, people should allow extra time to receive their ballots by mail and return them by mail.

As an alternative, in-person voting will begin Friday, Sept. 18 at local election offices and county election offices.

Who can get an absentee ballot? All eligible Minnesota voters may request an absentee ballot for the primary and general elections at mnvotes.org. The online application will ask for an e-mail address and an identification number, either a Minnesota-issued driver's license, Minnesota ID card or the last four digits of your Social Security Number.

You can also go to mnvotes.org to check your registration status, register to vote, update your voter registration and track both your absentee-ballot request and the status of your mailed-in ballot.

– Minneapolis Labor Review

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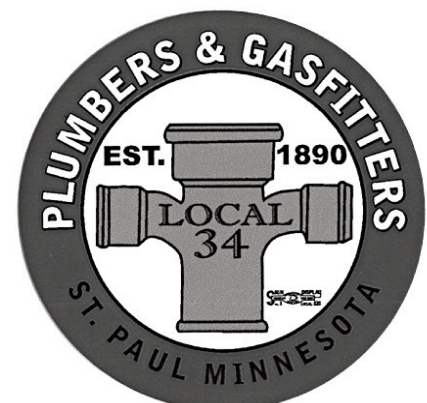
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At a rally in Minneapolis' Chute Square, Twin Cities food service workers, including Tattersall employees, called for industry-wide reform. Union Advocate photos

Minneapolis distillery workers make history with pro-union vote, raising hopes for industry-wide reform

Collective bargaining is in the mix for workers at Tattersall Distilling in Minneapolis after they voted in favor of joining together in a union.

The Twin Cities hospitality union, UNITE HERE Local 17, announced the news on social media Aug. 20. Tattersall employees are the first at any craft distillery in the U.S. to form a union, UNITE HERE said, and the first distillery workers to do so in Minnesota.

When Local 17 filed for an organizing election June 26, the would-be union included 27 Tattersall employees. The bargaining unit will bring together bottlers, distillers, bartenders, servers, dishwashers and hosts at the distillery and cocktail room in Northeast.

It's the first successful union drive to emerge from an upwelling of collective action among Twin Cities food-service workers since restaurants and bars reopened during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Krystle D'Alencar, a bartender and server, said she and fellow workers felt "treated as nothing better than a number" as Tattersall planned its reopening without giving them a meaningful voice in the process.

When workers confronted management with their concerns, D'Alencar added, they got a sneering response urging them to "remember that it's a privilege to enjoy your job."

D'Alencar's comments came during a rally last month organized by food-service workers who want to see reform in the industry. The event in Minneapolis' Chute Square park drew 150 people, who carried signs and chanted as they marched along a symbolic picket line.

The pandemic has layered concerns about health and safety atop existing anxieties, food-service workers said, like greater vulnerability to wage theft and sexual harassment in the industry, where less than 2% of workers nationwide are represented by unions.

Lux Wildenauer, who works at a Caribou Coffee in Minneapolis, described shortages of hand sani-



Food-service workers account for 10% of the workforce in Minneapolis and 5% of jobs statewide.

tizer and cloth rags, and a long wait for masks, which needed to display the company's logo before workers could wear them.

"I'm tired of (bosses) saying they're doing everything they can for us when our safety during a pandemic has been basically a do-it-yourself project," Wildenauer said. "I can't stomach that anymore."

Workers at the rally released a public list of demands for restaurant owners, including health care and other benefits, personal protective equipment and a worker voice in safety policy, fair hiring practices, and equity in promotions, pay and treatment.

The workers framed the rally as a call to action to fellow food service workers to organize and fight for justice and dignity at work.

Food-service workers account for 10% of the Minneapolis workforce, and the industry accounts for more than 5% of jobs statewide.

— Michael Moore, Union Advocate editor

Labor News in Review

NURSING HOME STRIKE PAYS OFF

After going on strike July 20, members of SEIU Healthcare Minnesota who work at Cerenity Humboldt Care Center in St. Paul have voted to approve a new contract that includes gains for workers and blocks several concessions sought by the employer.

The 24-hour walkout sent a message, said Rhonda Little, a cook at Cerenity for the last five years and member of the union's bargaining team. "It is clear that our strike was a huge success," she said. "I'm so proud that we stood together and were able to win such a strong contract."

Gains in the two-year contract include minimum 4% raises for all workers, with base pay for cooks increasing by 22% – to \$15 per hour – and base pay for housekeepers raising over 13%. Shift leads will see a pay increase, too.

Meanwhile, union members were able to block Cerenity's attempt to roll back sick time and restrict leaves of absence – demands that rankled the nursing home's essential, frontline employees, who face new risks during the COVID-19 health crisis.

"Finally getting this contract is a relief, especially during a pandemic," Little said. "I'm hoping this means we can get and retain good employees who can help us continue to provide outstanding care and services our patients need."

SEIU held a ratification vote on the contract Aug. 20, and 94% of participating members voted to accept it. The Cerenity Humboldt bargaining unit includes 85 cooks, housekeepers, janitors, nursing assistants, laundry aides, dietary aides and restorative aides at the facility, located in the city's West Side neighborhood.

The two sides had been bargaining for six months prior to the strike, but they quickly came to an agreement Aug. 10, following workers' unfair-labor-practice strike, Little said.

"I know we would not have won all of what we won without going out on strike," she added. "To health care workers and all essential workers: stay strong and stick together during these challenging times, and never be afraid to fight for what you deserve."

TRADES BLAST LINE 3 APPEAL

The Minnesota Department of Commerce last month filed an appeal challenging permits issued by the Public Utilities Commission that would allow Enbridge Energy to replace the Line 3 oil pipeline through northern Minnesota.

Building Trades unions warned the Walz administration's decision to appeal the project's certificate of need would heighten uncertainty facing tradespeople during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"The Public Utilities Commission has reviewed the Line 3 replacement permits for over six years and has repeatedly confirmed that the project meets Minnesota's permitting standards," the Minnesota Building and Construction Trades Council said in a statement.

The additional delay "will impact the ability for more than 4,000 Minnesota union construction professionals to go to work," the council added. "These are jobs that are needed to keep Minnesotans working across northern Minnesota."

"We urge the expedited approval of the other construction permits needed to get this project going, so the Building Trades can get to work."

The Department of Commerce appeal comes after state lawmakers failed to pass an infrastructure bonding bill, typically a priority in even-numbered years. The failure to act on bonding means lost work for thousands of tradespeople.



SEIU Healthcare Minnesota members walk the picket line outside Cerenity Humboldt nursing home in St. Paul during a 24-hour strike July 20. Union Advocate photo

FURLOUGHS LOOM AT USCIS

Unions warned the American legal immigration system was poised to grind to a halt at the end of August if Congress failed to approve \$1.2 billion in emergency appropriations for the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.

Roughly 70% of USCIS employees were slated to be furloughed Aug. 31, leaving some 13,400 fewer employees to process immigrants into the country. The furlough would effectively slow the nation's already-backlogged immigration system to a standstill – a move the American Federation of Government Employees, which represents many USCIS workers, claims is intentional on the part of the Trump administration.

"This isn't only about the 13,400 American families about to be laid off during a pandemic, this is yet another thinly veiled attack on the legal immigration system by Trump administration officials like Stephen Miller," AFGE Local 119 President Danielle Spooner said. "By failing to fund this agency, the administration has managed to use the global pandemic to effectively shut down all immigration to the U.S. by the end of the month, hurting thousands of American families and businesses in the process."

White House senior advisor Stephen Miller and others within the Trump administration have repeatedly taken aim at the U.S. legal immigration system, from more overtly political moves like the U.S.-Mexico border wall to the recently rescinded policies barring international students taking online-only classes from the country.

According to an analysis from the National Foundation for American Policy, immigration policies under Trump have reduced legal immigration by 49%.

The USCIS furloughs appear to be another step to halt immigration.

The USCIS is traditionally self-funded, run entirely on the fees paid by legal applicants seeking naturalization and other immigration-related services. Under the Trump administration, costs have risen due to new hires at the agency focused on investigating potential fraud in immigration applications.

LOCAL EDUCATORS HONORED

Two area educators received prestigious awards from Education Minnesota, the statewide union of over 80,000 educators, last month.

Qorsho Hassan, a fourth-grade teacher at Echo Park Elementary in the Rosemount-Apple Valley Eagan school district, was named the 2020 Minnesota Teacher of the Year in a ceremony held Aug. 6. Hassan is the 56th recipient of the award, and the second from Rosemount-Apple Valley-Eagan Public Schools.

"Being aware of the lived experiences of my marginalized students and their communities makes me fight harder to ensure they receive a high quality education," said Hassan, a Somali-American educator, in an essay submitted to the Minnesota Teacher of the Year judges. "I build strong relationships in order to know every single student as an individual. I challenge systems of oppression such as poverty and racism by demanding more resources for my students and their families. I believe that if students are in a learning space where they feel safe, seen and heard, they will succeed."

This will be Hassan's first year in Rosemount-Apple Valley-Eagan. She taught for three years in Burnsville, and before that, three years in Ohio and one year as a teacher in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, as part of a Fulbright Fellowship.

Becky McCammon, a member of the St. Paul Federation of Educators, received the 2020 Education Minnesota Human Rights Award for her advocacy on behalf of the St. Paul Public Schools' restorative practices program, the statewide educators union announced last month.

After McCammon's work on SPFE's bargaining team pushed SPPS to establish the restorative practices program, she went to work implementing it as a program coordinator, overseeing restorative practices in 12 school buildings.

"I believe in the infinite possibilities and goodness of educators," McCammon told the Minnesota Educator newspaper. "Restorative practices has a way of nurturing habits and practices in wellness."

The restorative-practices method encourages a less discipline-oriented approach to conflict resolution in the classroom, seeking to build understanding, empathy, accountability and, ultimately, forgiveness.

Happy Labor Day from Local 563!

LiUNA!



Feel the Power

Construction and General Laborers' Union Local 563

Building Trades Credit Union announces new president and CEO, Rick Odenthal

By Steve Share

Minneapolis Labor Review editor

MAPLE GROVE – Building Trades Credit Union has named a new president and CEO, Rick Odenthal. He follows Bill Daehn, BTCU president and CEO since 2013, who retired.

Odenthal previously served as president of Central Minnesota Credit Union, where he worked for 18 years.

At BTCU, "I see a lot of potential to expand and provide services to union trades people," Odenthal told the Labor Review. "I'm excited about the future and where things are going to go."

BTCU has three branches, 17,000 members and assets of \$162 million.

Credit unions in Minnesota have been merging and consolidating in recent years. But Odenthal said BTCU is financially stable. "The ties that we have and the connections that we have with the trades make us stronger than a credit union of similar size," he said.

"We understand the trades better than any other bank or credit union," Odenthal added. He said BTCU staff understand the ups and downs of the construction industry and, unlike a larger institution, "can customize things for our members and their situation."

"I'm a people person," Odenthal said. "A handshake means a lot. That personal connection is what drives me."

Odenthal grew up on a third-generation family farm in Le Sueur County.

His father also owned his own drywall business and was a member of the Painters union. "I know my way around a job-site," he noted.

As a young man, Odenthal looked to the future. "It was either drywall, farming or off to college," he recalled.

Odenthal earned a political science degree at St. John's University in Collegeville, and later completed an executive leadership certificate at the Graduate School of Banking at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Odenthal's first day on the job at BTCU was March 23, the day the state's COVID-19 lockdown began.

BTCU closed the lobbies at its three branches for several weeks but, with COVID-19 restrictions relaxing, staged a "soft opening" of the Maplewood and Shoreview lobbies June 29.

BTCU encourages members to continue to use online banking or the drive-ups at the Maplewood and Shoreview branches. At the Bloomington branch, the lobby remains closed, but members can get curbside service or appointments with lenders by calling ahead at 763-315-3888.

For more information, visit BTCU online at buildingtradescu.com.



Rick Odenthal

Zoom into your local labor assembly's monthly meeting

The St. Paul Regional Labor Federation's local labor assemblies bring working people and retirees together to exchange ideas and take action on issues that matter most in their communities.

Assembly meetings take place monthly and are open to all union members who live or work in one of the four counties included in the RLF's jurisdiction. All meetings are taking place remotely during the public health crisis.

For information about the Ramsey

or Washington county assembly meetings, contact Kera Peterson at kpeterson@stpaulunions.org.

For information about the Dakota or Chisago county meetings, contact Colleen Nocerini at cnocerini@stpaulunions.org.

Screening, endorsement notice

The St. Paul RLF may consider recommendations for endorsement in state legislative and local elections at its Sept. 9 delegate meeting. For more information, call 651-222-3787.

BAKERY, CONFECTIONERY, TOBACCO WORKERS & GRAIN MILLERS UNION LOCAL 22

For your next party or event, please buy Local 22-made products at your local union grocery store!

Fresh-baked cakes for special occasions and other goodies created by Local 22 members available at:

- Almsted's Fresh Market (Crystal)
- County Market (North Branch, Hudson)
- Cub Foods
- Driskill's Foods (Hopkins)
- Jerry's Foods
- Lunds & Byerlys



Quality grocery favorites produced locally by Local 22 members:

- Country Hearth & Lakeland (Pan-O-Gold Bakery)
- Dream Fields Pasta
- Old Dutch products
- Pearson's Candy Company
- Sara Lee buns & bread, Ballpark buns (Bimbo Bakeries USA)

Welcome back, students and SPFE members!

We are proud to continue to work side by side with our colleagues and our community, helping support the schools St. Paul families deserve.

St. Paul Federation of Educators Local 28 is affiliated with Education Minnesota, the American Federation of Teachers, the National Education Association and the AFL-CIO.

SPFE

— A message from the St. Paul Building & Construction Trades Council



**On Labor Day let us
remember the men
and women that have
fought tirelessly for
Workers Rights.**

United we Stand.

Happy Labor Day!



Minutes of the Saint Paul Regional Labor Federation

JULY 8, 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 Beedle B., Beissel, Edwards, Engeldorf, Faber, Froemke, Guertin, Luneberg, Madden, Maki-Green, Markham-Kocurek, McNamara, Meyer, Mullin, Peterson, Robles, Ryan, Schmidt, Slattery, St. Aoro, Terry, Vandassor, Varco and Weed. Excused were Beedle G., Gibbons, Michelson, Sansom and Seath. Absent were Dreyer, Gorman, Hoppe, and McCarthy.

GUESTS

Barb Galle, President, AFGE Local 3669, spoke to the delegation and gave a report/update on the VA Action. The union is being shut out of planning and meetings. Morale was bad before but now it is worse due to COVID 19, retaliation, personal protective equipment meeting standards. We need to educate during contract negotiations. We need your support to save our VA because it is on track to be privatized. Another rally will be scheduled.

COMMITTEE ON POLITICAL EDUCATION (COPE) MINUTES JULY 8, 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, Beedle B., Beissel, Edwards, Engeldorf, Faber, Froemke, Guertin, Hoerth, Luneberg, Madden, Maki-Green, Markham-Kocurek, Mayer, McNamara, Meyer, Mullin, Naseth, Peterson, Robles, Ryan, Schmidt, Slattery, St. Aoro, Terry, Vandassor, Varco, Weed and Wise. Excused were Beedle G., Gibbons, Michelson, Sansom and Seath. Absent were DeRoy, Dreyer, Gorman, Hoppe, Krey, Lohmann and McCarthy.

Items to come before this committee included:

- The Chisago County Labor Assembly supports the Saint Paul Regional Labor Federation recommending that the MN AFL-CIO grant labor endorsement of Joshua Fike, Senate District 32, and Katie Malchow, House District 32B, with the stipulation that we reach out to teach them about labor issues.

- President Peterson reported on:
 - The June Board Meeting slate for the Minnesota AFL-CIO endorsement has been completed.
 - There will be a Labor 2020 meeting tomorrow at the Minnesota AFL-CIO.
 - Thanked Jamie McNamara and IBEW Local 110 for making an early commitment to our Political Program.
 - Primary Elections will be on Tuesday, Aug. 11, 2020, with U.S. Senator Tina Smith, and U.S. Rep. Betty McCollum and state House and Senate districts on the ballot. Please consider the opportunity to vote by mail.
 - The Dakota County Labor Assembly will be screening for West Saint Paul Mayor and City Council. If you are interested, please let me know so that I can get you information.

- **M/S/C TO RECOMMEND THE MN AFL-CIO GRANT LABOR ENDORSEMENT OF JOSHUA FIKE, SENATE DISTRICT 32, AND KATIE MALCHOW, HOUSE DISTRICT 32B, WITH THE STIPULATION THAT WE REACH OUT TO TEACH THEM ABOUT LABOR ISSUES.**
 - **M/S/C FOR THE RLF TO MAKE A \$500 CONTRIBUTION TO THE HOUSE DFL CAUCUS AND A \$500 CONTRIBUTION TO THE SENATE DFL CAUCUS FOR THE POST-SPECIAL SESSION FUNDRAISER BEING HELD ON THURSDAY, JULY 16, 2020, FROM 4:00 – 5:00 PM VIA ZOOM.**

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

EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES JULY 8, 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 HERO's Act and Moving Forward Act
 - June National Day of Action set up with the Postal Service to call attention to the Postal Service needs.
 - AFGE
 - Tenant's Rights Ordinance with the City of Saint Paul passed the City Council unanimously today. The Saint Paul Regional Labor Federation would like to thank the Teachers and the Teamsters for their help.

- The AFL-CIO will be reaching out to unions to get information as to who your union's contact will be regarding political election issues.
- The RLF donated \$500 towards "Moms Food Shelf," which recently provided food support to more than 2,000 families in a few hours time. They are looking for matching gifts from Cub Foods.

- The Political Organizer and AFL-CIO Community Services Liaison jobs have been posted on our website.
- **ORGANIZING UPDATES/CAMPAIGNS:** IBEW Local 110, SEIU 26, SEIU Healthcare Minnesota and United Steelworkers gave an update on their organizing activities.

- Twin Cities Pride at Work, which will be a local chapter of the AFL-CIO constituency group Pride at Work, is being formed. Please watch for updates.
- **M/S/C FOR THE RLF TO APPROVE STRIKE SANCTION TO SEIU HEALTHCARE MINNESOTA.**

- **M/S/C FOR THE RLF TO MAKE A \$2,500 CONTRIBUTION TO THE EAST SIDE FREEDOM LIBRARY.**

- **M/S/C FOR THE RLF TO MAKE A \$500 CONTRIBUTION TO IAMAW'S JOHN MASSETTI MEMORIAL CHARITY GOLF TOURNAMENT BEING HELD ON MONDAY, AUGUST 3, 2020, AT APPLEWOOD HILLS GOLF COURSE IN STILLWATER MINNESOTA.**
- **M/S/C FOR THE RLF TO MAKE A \$500 CONTRIBUTION TO IUPAT'S PATCH GOLF TOURNAMENT BEING HELD ON THURSDAY, AUGUST 27, 2020 AT THE MAJESTIC OAKS GOLF CLUB.**

- **M/S/C FOR THE RLF TO MAKE A \$500 CONTRIBUTION TO TEAMSTERS LOCAL 120'S ANNUAL HOME FOR OUR TROOPS CHARITY GOLF TOURNAMENT BEING HELD ON MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 2020.**

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 June 2020. The report was accepted as read.

PRESIDENTS REPORT

President Peterson reported on:

- The Saint Paul Regional Labor Federation has two job postings on their website. One for Political and one for AFL-CIO Community Services Liaison for the St. Paul Labor Studies and Resource Center. Lynne Larkin-Wright retired last month. We wish her a Happy Retirement.

- The Primary is Tuesday, August 11, 2020. Tina Smith and Betty McCollum and state legislative candidates have primary challenges. Members are encouraged to request an absentee ballot.

- Discussed the HEROES and Moving Forward acts. They passed in the House but stalled in the Senate.
- The Senate is looking for protections for employees from issues regard-

ing employees returning to work in unsafe conditions.

- The Labor 2020 program.
- The City of Saint Paul passed the Tenants' Rights Ordinance.

REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES

- Theresa St. Aoro reported on behalf of the Ramsey County Labor Assembly. Their next meeting will be on the fourth Monday of the month at 6:00 p.m.

- Brian Beedle reported on behalf of the Washington County Labor Assembly. No meeting has been scheduled.

- Michael Madden reported on behalf of the Chisago County Labor Assembly. At some point they will be screening County Commissioners.

- Connie Beissel reported on behalf of the Dakota County Labor Assembly. They will be screening on Thursday, July 9, 2020. They meet on the second Thursday of the month.

STAFF/LABOR LIAISON REPORTS

- The Union Advocate has a Labor Day issue around the corner. If you would like to advertise in that edition, please contact Michael Moore. We are also encouraging businesses you work with to advertise as well.
- Tenth Annual Labor Bowl will be held Aug. 6. This is the Labor Studies and Resource Center's annual fundraiser.
- NALC Annual Food Drive will be a Cash Drive this year with donations going to the local food shelf, Second Harvest Heartland.

NEW BUSINESS

- President Peterson called for a floor vote on the COPE Committee recommendation for the MN AFL-CIO to grant labor endorsement.

- **M/S/C TO RECOMMEND THE MN AFL-CIO GRANT LABOR ENDORSEMENT OF JOSHUA FIKE, SENATE DISTRICT 32, AND KATIE MALCHOW, HOUSE DISTRICT 32B, WITH THE STIPULATION THAT WE REACH OUT TO TEACH THEM ABOUT LABOR ISSUES.**

GOOD AND WELFARE

If you have any questions regarding Alliance for Retired Americans, please reach out to Michael Madden.

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

Submitted by,
BERNADINE ENGELDOFF
Secretary-Treasurer

AUGUST 12, 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 Beedle B., Beissel, Dreyer, Edwards, Engeldorf, Froemke, Gibbons, Guertin, Luneberg, Madden, Maki-Green, Markham-Kocurek, McCarthy, McNamara, Meyer, Peterson, Robles, Schmidt, Seath, Slattery, St. Aoro, Varco and Weed. Excused were Beedle G., Faber, Michelson, Mullin, Ryan, Sansom, Terry and Vandassor. Absent were Gorman and Hoppe.

CREDITIALS

Credentials were received from IUOE Local 49. President Peterson administered the Oath of Obligation to those new delegates and alternates present on-line.

MINUTES

- **M/S/C TO APPROVE MINUTES OF JUNE 10, 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 AUGUST 12, 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, Beedle B., Beissel, Dreyer, Edwards, Engeldorf, Froemke, Gibbons, Guertin, Hoerth, Luneberg, Madden, Maki-Green, Markham-Kocurek, Mayer, McCarthy, McNamara, Meyer, Naseth, Peterson, Robles, Schmidt, Seath, Slattery, St. Aoro, Varco, Weed and Wise. Excused were Beedle G., Faber, Gibbons, Michelson, Mullin, Ryan, Sansom, Terry and Vandassor. Absent were DeRoy, Gorman, Hoppe, Krey and Lohmann.

Items to come before this board included:

- The Dakota County Labor Assembly (DCLA) requested consideration of granting Labor Endorsement of Robyn Gulley, West St. Paul City Council Ward 2. DCLA also screened for Mayor of West St. Paul and West St. Paul City Council Wards 1 and 3, but there was no recommendation.

- President Peterson reported on yesterday's primary. All the labor endorsed candidates were successful with the exception of John Lesch. We would like to thank John for his support of Labor during his tenure. Labor 2020 plans were discussed. On August 25 from 5 to 7 p.m. the St. Paul RLF and the Minnesota AFL-CIO will have a Campaign School training where you will learn how you can be an effective messenger for the Labor 2020 political program.

- **M/S/C FOR THE SAINT PAUL RLF TO SETUP A CANDIDATE SCREENING WITH ATHENA HOLLINS.**

- **M/S/C TO GRANT LABOR ENDORSEMENT OF ROBYN GULLEY, WEST SAINT PAUL CITY COUNCIL WARD 2.**

- **M/S/C FOR THE RLF TO MAKE A \$1,250 DONATION TO THE HUMPHREY-MONDALE VIRTUAL EVENT BEING HELD IN SEPTEMBER.**

- THANK YOU NOTES received from the Minnesota House DFL Caucus for the RLF's \$500 contribution for a Post-Special Session Fundraiser held on July 16 via Zoom.

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

EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES AUGUST 12, 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 the board included:

- President Peterson's report:
 - Due to COVID-19 we unfortunately had to cancel our 10th Annual Labor Bowl. Sun Ray Lanes was very accommodating.

- The Fifth Annual Union Job and Resource Fair will still be held on Thursday, Aug. 20, 2020, at the IBEW Local 110 union hall with safety precautions such as masks, hand sanitizer and social distancing.

- Just before the special session closed, Senate Republicans held a confirmation vote on Department of Labor and Industry Commissioner Nancy Leppink. With one Republican not voting the result was 32-34, and Commissioner Leppink was not confirmed.

- There will be no Labor Day Parade this year. The AFL-CIO is organizing a virtual bingo fundraiser for the Twin Cities Hospitality Fund, which may be held on Labor Day.

- **ORGANIZING UPDATES/CAMPAIGNS:** OPEIU Local 12, SEIU 284, UNITE HERE Local 17 and USW Local 11-418 gave an update on their organizing activities.

- The new postmaster general for NALC and APWU Postal Workers is making changes to reorganize the whole

post office. He is invested in companies in direct conflict with USPS. A new bill is being introduced aiming at reversing the changes.

- **M/S/C FOR THE RLF TO MAKE A \$2,500 CONTRIBUTION TO THE SCHOOL AND CHILD CARE WORKER RELIEF FUND.**

- **M/S/C FOR THE RLF TO MAKE A \$500 CONTRIBUTION TO THE 2020 LIUNA FAMILY FUN-RAISER BEING HELD ON AUG. 22, 2020, AT COMO REGIONAL PARK.**

- **M/S/C FOR THE RLF TO MAKE A \$250 CONTRIBUTION TO THE JEAN JONES SCHOOL SUPPLIES INITIATIVE.**

- THANK YOU NOTE received from Guide Dogs of America Minnesota Chapter for the RLF's \$500 contribution to the John Massetti Memorial Charity Golf Tournament.

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

REPORT OF THE TREASURER

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

PRESIDENTS REPORT

- President Peterson reported on:
 - The cancellation of the Tenth Annual Labor Bowl.
 - The Fifth Annual Union Job and Resource Fair being held on Thursday, Aug. 20, 2020.
 - Participation in a number of events, Black Lives Matter, closure of clinics and hospitals.
 - There will be no Labor Day Parade this year, but the State Federation will do a fundraiser.
 - The new postmaster general's changes.
 - Excited about the Labor 2020 Campaign. Our work will look different this year due to COVID-19.
 - Fifteen slots still remain for the upcoming Campaign School on Aug. 25.
 - I have also been involved in several events with the RLF's affiliates.

REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES

- Theresa St. Aoro reported on behalf of the Ramsey County Labor Assembly. Their next meeting will be on the fourth Monday of the month at 6 p.m. and they will be looking into potential screenings.

- Brian Beedle reported on behalf of the Washington County Labor Assembly. They have just started having zoom meetings.

- Michael Madden reported on behalf of the Chisago County Labor Assembly. Upcoming screenings were discussed.

- Connie Beissel reported on behalf of the Dakota County Labor Assembly. They have been having limited meetings. Screening has been completed.

STAFF/LABOR LIAISON REPORTS

- Colleen Nocerini, political organizer, requested phone bank volunteers.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- The Saint Paul RLF will assist members who need to use technology for virtual phone banking.

NEW BUSINESS

- President Peterson called for a floor vote on the COPE Committee recommendation to grant labor endorsement of Robyn Gulley, West St. Paul City Council Ward 2.

- **M/S/C TO RECOMMEND GRANTING LABOR ENDORSEMENT OF ROBYN GULLEY, WEST ST. PAUL CITY COUNCIL WARD 2.**

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

Submitted by,
BERNADINE ENGELDOFF
Secretary-Treasurer

Essential workers deserve a good contract, Cottage Grove Steelworkers tell 3M

By Michael Moore

Union Advocate editor

Steelworkers at 3M's Cottage Grove plant agreed this week to a two-month extension of their previous union contract, but members put the company on notice Aug. 19 that the fight for a contract rewarding their essential work has just begun.

Informational picketing outside the plant, where some 370 members of United Steelworkers Local 11-00418 work, drew a large crowd during an early-morning shift change, and union members were back outside for another picket in the afternoon.

"Everyone's together on this," John Helkamp, the local's financial secretary, said. "We're essential workers. We'd like a fair contract."

Talks between the two sides got off to a bitter start.

First, Helkamp said, management took a combative stance over supplying workers with masks during the COVID-19 pandemic. Non-union workers at the plant received free masks, but 3M pushed local union leaders to sign a memorandum of understanding before it would issue masks to union members – a stance 3M, a global supplier of masks, later walked back, Helkamp said.

Around the same time, union leaders approached management about an accommodation for workers whose premium pay on weekends was scheduled to disappear abruptly.

A provision in the previous contract included premium pay rates for workers who clock 12-hour shifts on Saturdays and Sundays. But it also included a sunset clause, calling for the premium pay to disappear when the contract expired.

That happened this week, and some union members soon will lose as much as 18 hours' worth



Steelworkers Local 418 holds informational picketing outside 3M's plant in Cottage Grove. Union Advocate photos

of wages from their paychecks.

"We asked about some kind of an accommodation," Helkamp said "The company first said it had to be done in negotiations. Then we got to negotiations, and they said it's not something they're going to negotiate."

Now, Steelworkers are resisting several of 3M's contract demands, Helkamp said. Management wants the power to change start times and shift lengths at will, which could move all workers into 12-hour shifts. And 3M wants the power to eliminate job classifications unilaterally, an issue that bogged down negotiations four years ago, when management sought to kick custodians out of the bargaining unit.

In all, 3M brought 100 stipulations to the bargaining table, according to the union. The two sides have reached agreement on roughly 30, with 30 others being set aside for economic talks.

Those have yet to begin, but local leaders say their talks in Cottage Grove are progressing at about



the same pace as negotiations at comparable facilities across the U.S. have taken.

The two sides have scheduled 11 bargaining sessions during the contract extension, which runs through Oct. 16.

The Cottage Grove facility produces chemicals, tape, film, abrasives and other products.



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