



# The St. Paul Union Advocate

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

March 2021

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Connecting union members in Ramsey, Washington, Dakota and Chisago counties.

**“We’re on the wrong side of the fence to make sure this place stays safe.”**  
– Tylor Sardeson, crude operator at Marathon’s St. Paul Park refinery

## MINNESOTA AGAINST MARATHON

*Labor, community, elected officials rally behind locked-out Teamsters at the St. Paul Park refinery*

By Michael Moore  
Union Advocate editor

**ST. PAUL PARK** – As picketing at the refinery in this small, suburban community entered a third week, members of Teamsters Local 120 and Gov. Tim Walz ratcheted up the pressure on Marathon Feb. 4 with a rally highlighting workers’ safety concerns.

Each day the lockout continues, Local 120 steward Tylor Sardeson warned, Marathon is putting its workers and surrounding communities at risk.

“We’re on this side of the fence,” said Sardeson, a crude operator at the facility. “It’s the wrong side of the fence to make sure this place stays safe.”

When The Union Advocate went to press Feb. 22, nearly 200 Teamsters remained locked out at the St. Paul Park refinery.

Workers have stood together to resist the company’s demand for dramatically different staffing inside the refin-



Gov. Tim Walz rallies with locked-out workers in St. Paul Park, calling on Marathon to get back to the bargaining table and prioritize worker and community safety.  
Union Advocate photos

ery, including the ability to replace union members with workers from lowest-bidder subcontractors.

“They’re going to add more jobs to my plate, and I don’t even feel comfortable with the ones I have right now,” Local 120 steward Dean Benson said.

“Safely, it’s just not possible.”

Walz listened as workers and their family members laid out the stakes of contract negotiations with Marathon.

Rhiannon Sklavenitis fought back tears as she recalled a serious burn injury her husband suffered at the refinery,

leaving her more afraid for his safety than when he was deployed into combat with the Navy.

The governor then took the stage and called on Marathon “to get back to the table” and “make sure safety is at the cen-

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 9)

## Labor in the Community

### As food insecurity rises, unions take on new role getting fresh food to families

By Michael Moore  
Union Advocate editor

Local unions are stepping up this winter to connect thousands of Minnesotans with free, fresh food available through the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Farmers to Families Food Box program.

The St. Paul Regional Labor Federation, which brings together over 100 local unions in Chisago, Dakota, Ramsey and Washington counties, is spearheading the effort, working in partnership with local unions and labor

councils to plan and stage distribution events outside union halls and training centers – and even blocks away from a picket line.

The distribution events are open to all, and with food-shelf visits at an all-time high in Minnesota, they are drawing a lot of interest.

Unions like Local 110 of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) are eager to help meet the growing need for food, Business Manager Jamie McNamara said.

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 10)



Dave Hallas (L) of United Steelworkers Local 7263 and Tom Edwards, a retired Postal Worker from St. Paul, wave cars through the contactless food distribution event in St. Paul Park, where nearly 200 refinery workers are locked out.  
Union Advocate photo



## Go Figure

**21%** Share of U.S. workers who would see wages increase under the Raise the Wage Act, which would increase the federal minimum wage to \$15 by 2025

**\$3,300** Average annual earnings hike for workers impacted by the higher minimum wage

**\$13 to \$31 billion** Projected annual savings to public assistance programs like SNAP if the federal minimum wage increases to \$15 by 2025

Source: Economic Policy Institute



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Huck

## Labor Voices: Bill McCarthy

## As pandemic continues, keep working Minnesotans safe

The nearly year-long COVID-19 pandemic has impacted nearly every working Minnesotan. Thousands of workers saw their jobs disappear, some were forced to work from home while caring for their children and many more workers continue to report in person to do essential, frontline work in health care, grocery stores, food service and production, transportation and countless other industries.

While this critical work has continued, countless Minnesotans have depended on Gov. Tim Walz's executive orders to stay safe at work and pay the bills. While the vaccine has provided a light at the end of the tunnel, we still face many more months before we can declare victory over COVID-19. That's why it's so disheartening to see some state lawmakers continue to call for a premature end to the peacetime emergency while we're still fighting this pandemic.

Contrary to the noise that a small minority of people continue to make, Minnesota's peacetime emergency and Gov. Walz's executive orders are about more than what's open and closed. For example, the statewide mask requirement is protecting healthcare workers from being overwhelmed with COVID patients and protecting all workers who interact with the public on a daily basis. Furthermore, because of Gov. Walz's executive actions, many working Minnesotans who lost work due to COVID-19 and would otherwise be ineligible for unemployment insurance became eligible for help staying afloat. Most of the protections that workers have been depending on for the last year would disappear if lawmakers decided to end the peacetime emergency.

Since the executive order allowing Minnesotans to report and refuse to work under unsafe working conditions without retaliation, the Minnesota AFL-CIO has been fielding reports from workers who don't have the protection of a union contract and connecting them with state OSHA investigators. We've received reports of employers failing to produce any COVID-19 mitigation plans, refusing to provide workers with masks and other PPE, not observing social distancing, disciplining workers who miss work due to COVID exposure and other unsafe

**"While the vaccine has provided a light at the end of the tunnel, we still face many months before we can declare victory."**

– Bill McCarthy



situations. In most cases, the Department of Labor and Industry intervened to make sure these employers fixed the problems and workers were able to safely return to their jobs. Had it not been for Gov. Walz's executive orders, these workers would have had to choose between unsafe working conditions and losing their jobs.

Despite the fact Gov. Walz's executive orders are keeping workers safe, Republicans in the Minnesota House and Senate continue to stage votes to end the peacetime emergency without any concrete plans or policies to keep workers safe. We can only assume they are either playing games to score political points or genuinely don't care about working Minnesotans' safety. Both scenarios demonstrate a complete lack of leadership during a pandemic that has killed more than 6,000 Minnesotans.

Unlike the GOP's months of political theater, these safety protections didn't come out of thin air. Workers spoke up and demanded safer conditions, and Gov. Walz listened to their concerns and took action. The workers of Minnesota's labor movement are committed to protecting and expanding these worker safety protections – both for the remainder of the pandemic and beyond. We will not be deterred by PR stunts or wealthy conservative interests who put their own profits ahead of worker safety and well-being.

We will oppose any attempt to put workers at risk by prematurely ending the peacetime emergency.

– Bill McCarthy is president of the Minnesota AFL-CIO, representing over 300,000 members of over 1,000 local unions throughout Minnesota. Learn more about the federation and its work online at [mnafclcio.org](http://mnafclcio.org).

# Letters

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

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Phone 651-222-3787 x112; fax 651-293-1989;  
e-mail: [mmoore@stpaulunions.org](mailto:mmoore@stpaulunions.org)

Editor: Michael Moore

**ST. PAUL REGIONAL LABOR FEDERATION**  
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Website: [www.stpaulunions.org](http://www.stpaulunions.org)

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**Erica Dalager Reed**, Liaison



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## Expo to connect women with pathways into trades

Women in Construction Week runs from March 7 to 13, and local tradeswomen, in partnership with the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry (DLI), will celebrate with a virtual event showcasing career opportunities available in the unionized trades.

The Women Building Success Info Expo is open to women statewide who are interested in learning more about construction careers. The free event will run from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. March 11, and participants can join by phone, mobile device or a computer with internet access.

The expo will begin with a panel discussion featuring representatives from the DLI, Apprenticeship Minnesota, Building Strong Communities and Women Building Success. Local tradeswomen will share their firsthand experiences with the earn-as-you-learn apprenticeship model and working in the construction industry.

After the panel, guests will connect individually with registered apprenticeship programs and event sponsors using interactive chat or video technology. They can even apply for an apprenticeship on the spot.

Registration is required. Find a link at [metroregioninteractive.easyvirtuallfair.com](http://metroregioninteractive.easyvirtuallfair.com).

## Labor Education Service rolls out spring courses

Enrollment is open for spring courses offered by the University of Minnesota's Labor Education Service.

Offerings include "Basic Steward Training" and "Bargaining from Margin to Center," as well as an abolitionist study group.

Registration is required. Learn more at [carlsonschool.umn.edu/faculty-research/labor-education-service](http://carlsonschool.umn.edu/faculty-research/labor-education-service).

## History comes alive at the Freedom Library

The nonprofit, independent East Side Freedom Library in St. Paul is a hub of labor-history programming. To receive event notifications in your inbox, sign up for the newsletter at [eastsidefreedomlibrary.org/mailling-list](http://eastsidefreedomlibrary.org/mailling-list).

Of note this month is a March 6 virtual discussion of Donna Haverty-Stacke's book "The Fierce Life of Grace Holmes Carlson: Catholic, Socialist, Feminist." It's part of the ESFL's History Revealed series, a partnership with the Ramsey County Historical Society.

Additionally, the ESFL is connecting students working on National History Day projects with mentors. To line up a Zoom session, email [info@eastsidefreedomlibrary.org](mailto:info@eastsidefreedomlibrary.org).

# Minnesota unions prevail in 'fair share' lawsuits

AFSCME Council 5 and Education Minnesota prevailed in federal court last month after a judge ruled that they do not have to return so-called "fair share" dues retroactively.

U.S. District Court Judge Susan Nelson dismissed three Minnesota-based cases related to fair share.

Similar cases were filed all over the country after the U.S. Supreme Court handed down its devastating Janus v. AFSCME decision, which found that public sector unions were limited in their ability to collect fair-share fees from workers who benefit from a union contract but choose not to join.

No plaintiffs have prevailed in trying to claw back dues retroactively.

Council 5, which represents public service workers across Minnesota, was facing two lawsuits.

In Brown v. AFSCME Council 5, anti-worker forces contended that AFSCME Council 5 ought to repay all fair share fees that were collected prior the Janus decision. Council 5 filed and argued a motion to dismiss the case for the plaintiff's failure to

make a legal claim on this case. The judge upheld AFSCME Council 5's legal arguments, agreed to the motion and ordered the case be dismissed.

Piekarski v. AFSCME Council 5 sought to rule that contract language contained on membership cards was unlawful. AFSCME Council 5 filed and argued a motion for summary judgment against the plaintiffs, which the judge granted, holding that unions are not liable to repay fair share fees collected prior to the Janus decision.

Plaintiffs in a suit involving Education Minnesota had originally petitioned to make it a class action, but were rebuffed by Nelson last year.

The case, Hoekman v. Education Minnesota, made similar claims to the AFSCME cases, leaning heavily on the implication that actions taken by Education Minnesota were made in bad faith. But Nelson's ruling said there is no evidence indicating that the dues were collected with malice or in bad faith.

Before Janus v. AFSCME, unions collected fair share fees – a lower

amount than full dues – to pay for contract negotiations, grievance representation and other services. Unions are legally required to represent all workers in a bargaining unit, regardless of whether they choose to join.

"Labor unions and the rights of the working class are constantly under assault by those who wish to decimate our right to collectively bargain to improve our wages, hours, working conditions and terms of employment," Council 5 Executive Director Julie Bleyhl said. "While these two court rulings are a significant victory for working people, we are prepared for more to come."

"With our union united, working collaboratively together, and steadfast in our pursuit of racial, social and economic justice for all, we will continue to secure victories in our workplaces, the halls of power and court rooms."

Plaintiffs in the Education Minnesota case say they plan to appeal.

– Duluth Labor World

## New labor commissioner is no stranger to her department

By Steve Share

Minneapolis Labor Review editor

Roslyn Robertson, the new commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry, regards its mission as "noble work."

"We are a big part of the lives of working people," said Robertson. She's a career employee at DLI who over her 30-plus year career has worked in or led all of the department's business units, including apprenticeship, labor standards, OSHA compliance and consultation, workers compensation and construction licensing.

"What's kept me going? When I began my work in labor standards, engaging with working people and seeing the actions I took actually made a difference in the lives of the people on the other end of the phone," Robertson told the Labor Review. "I found my space."

"If I can make a difference in whether someone gets a paycheck, I'm

making a difference in whether a family eats for the day, whether they can keep their housing secured. That is all the work of the agency," Robertson said.

Gov. Tim Walz named Robertson as DLI commissioner Jan. 22. She had been serving as acting commissioner since August of last year, when the Republican-controlled Senate took a surprise vote to reject the confirmation of Commissioner Nancy Leppink.

After her nomination to the post in 2019, Leppink tapped Robertson as her deputy commissioner, bringing Robertson out of a three-year retirement to return to DLI.

Robertson is very familiar with unions, having been a member of both AFSCME and MAPE. Her son Rasheed Wade is a member of the Heat and Frost Insulators.

As Robertson moves into her new role as DLI commissioner, "there are many challenges ahead," she said.

The department's response to



Commissioner Roslyn Robertson

COVID-19 is foremost.

"Labor and Industry has been incredibly important to the state's COVID response, particularly as it relates to the safety of workers," Robertson said. "We say we value front-line workers but we value them by protecting them, keeping them safe and keeping them financially secure if their work is interrupted."



## Let's get together, union members!

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

### Chisago County Assembly

March 25, 4:30 p.m.

To register for the Zoom meeting, email [cnocerini@stpaulunions.org](mailto:cnocerini@stpaulunions.org)

### Dakota County Assembly

March 11, 7 p.m.

To register for the Zoom meeting, email [cnocerini@stpaulunions.org](mailto:cnocerini@stpaulunions.org)

### Ramsey County Assembly

March 22, 6 p.m.

To register for the Zoom meeting, email [jkitto@stpaulunions.org](mailto:jkitto@stpaulunions.org)

### Washington County Assembly

March 24, 6 p.m.

To register for the Zoom meeting, email [jkitto@stpaulunions.org](mailto:jkitto@stpaulunions.org)



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# 49ers' courses offer high schoolers '3-for-1' credit opportunity

By Michael Moore  
Union Advocate editor

Operating Engineers Local 49 is hoping a new partnership with Minnesota Virtual Academy will draw more high-school graduates into the union's registered apprenticeship program – and help meet future demand for skilled, trained workers in the heavy-equipment industry.

At the start of this school year, instructors from Local 49 began teaching for-credit courses open to high-school students statewide through the online, public school's Destinations Career Academy.

Fifty-three students signed up in the first semester, and interest in the program has only grown since then. This semester 117 students from 66 school districts in 39 counties are enrolled, with notably high participation among girls.

"I think there really is an appetite not only from students but from parents and schools to really provide a relevant, meaningful career opportunity," said Jenny Winkelaar, Local 49's director of workforce and development. "Most schools who learn about it are promoting it because they don't have the resources to operate this kind of pathway on their own."

Like other career-pathway programs in the construction trades, Local 49's courses introduce students to work in the industry, with a focus on concepts and skills that will prepare them for success as an apprentice heavy-equipment operator.

Offerings include construction exploration, basic grade and construction math, and construction-equipment maintenance and fundamentals. A prep course for getting a commercial driver's license is in the works for next fall.

## Triple the credit

But what makes Local 49's partnership with Minnesota Virtual Academy unique among pre-apprenticeship programs is the potential to earn credit not just toward high school graduation, but also toward a post-secondary degree and journey-level certification. Minnesota Virtual School's Leslie Lewandowski called it a "three-for-one" deal.

"They get high school elective credit, college credit and also credit toward their registered apprenticeship program if they sign on with a signatory contractor," she said.

That's a draw for students like Cole Snidarich, who was among the high schoolers enrolled in first-semester courses.

"The courses were a great opportunity for me to learn if I would be interested in a career in the construction field," he said. "I would definitely recommend these courses for other high school kids considering working in the construction industry."



Apprenticeship as a heavy-equipment operator is a pathway toward a family-sustaining career in an in-demand field. Local 49's first-year apprentices earn anywhere from \$24 to \$34 per hour plus benefits, and receive their education at the union's sprawling Hinckley training site, pictured above, at no charge.

file photo

Enrollment is open to students from any school district in the state. They can participate from anywhere they find an internet connection, at any time and at no cost to the student.

Rich Krohn, an instructor for the program, said he has enjoyed introducing students to careers operating the heavy equipment that builds communities.

"Fourteen weeks into the class and I still get comments from my students saying what a great experience it has been," Krohn said. "I encourage all high-school students to sign up for the class and see what a career as an operating engineer has to offer."

## Virtual, with a hands-on twist

In addition to online classes, students participating in Local 49's course will have opportunities to try out the union's heavy equipment simulators, putting the concepts they learn in the classroom to the test. Winkelaar said COVID-19 has put in-person events on hold for now, but the union and its industry partners are working on plans to stage hands-on learning events across the state.

That level of investment shows just how serious Local 49 and its signatory contractors are about recruiting the next generation of heavy-equipment operators. For the Minnesota Virtual Academy, the program is an opportunity to showcase a career with good wages and benefits that many students might not otherwise consider.

Local 49's first-year apprentices earn anywhere from \$24 to \$34 per hour plus benefits, and they receive

their training at the union's sprawling Hinckley facility at no charge.

"As we're looking at pathways we want to offer students, we want them to be in high-demand jobs, so we're spending our resources on career paths that warrant the investment," Lewandowski said. "There's need in this industry."

"Historically, we have known that unless you knew somebody in the industry or came from a rural area, you might not have a lot knowledge about what opportunities look like in the heavy-equipment operating industry," Winkelaar added.

Making an informed choice is an important first step, said Tom McCrossan, a contractor who sits on the Local 49 apprenticeship board.

"It is critical that students in high

## Learn more

- Visit [local49.org/operating-engineers-career-pathway-program](http://local49.org/operating-engineers-career-pathway-program).
- School districts interested in arranging a virtual meeting with Lewandowski and Winkelaar to discuss the program should email [llewandowski@mnva.org](mailto:llewandowski@mnva.org) or [jwinkelaar@local49.org](mailto:jwinkelaar@local49.org).

school learn about our industry early to see that this industry has many career pathways to different areas in the construction field," he said. "Taking these courses gives students a great foundation for being a heavy equipment operator as well as other facets of our industry."

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## Labor News in Review



Mary Turner



Jessica Looman

### BIDEN TAPS TWO LOCAL LEADERS

Two local labor leaders recently accepted appointments to serve in President Joe Biden's administration.

The president personally selected Minnesota Nurses Association President Mary Turner to serve on the administration's COVID-19 Health Equity Task Force. Turner is the only registered nurse on the board, which will advise the White House on how to ensure all Americans have access to COVID-19 resources.

Turner works as an intensive-care nurse in the COVID-19 unit at North Memorial Health Hospital in Robbinsdale. She was re-elected president of MNA in November.

"I'm both honored and humbled to serve the country," Turner said. "The voices of the nation's registered nurses need to be part of the conversation on how we end the effects of this vicious virus."

Turner said she was contacted by Dr. B. Cameron Webb, Biden's senior policy advisor for COVID-19 equity. Turner was part of a public roundtable discussion Biden held in November, and since then she has also had discussions with Dr. Marcella Nunez-Smith, who will chair the task force. Nunez-Smith said she was moved by Turner's testimony that day, as was Biden.

"I've seen how this pandemic has disproportionately hurt people in our community," Turner said. "At my hospital, we have a diverse patient population, and as nurses we can see what the data is telling us. More patients in our communities of color. More effects of the virus. We have to end this by fairly distributing our resources to everyone."

MNA is an affiliate of National Nurses United. The organization's executive director, Bonnie Castillo, credited Biden for valuing the input of health care workers on the front lines of the pandemic. Castillo said Turner "will be an incredible voice of patient advocacy" on the advisory board.

#### Looman to Department of Labor

Earlier this year, the Minnesota Building and Construction Trades Council announced that its executive director, Jessica Looman, would be leaving her post to accept an appointment in the U.S. Department of Labor. Looman began work as the deputy administrator of the wage and hour division Jan. 20.

"Jessica has dedicated her life to the labor movement and has been a pivotal voice in fighting for working families in Minnesota," said Harry Melander, president of the statewide council. "While we will miss her dedication and leadership at the State Building Trades Council, we are proud of her accomplishments and look forward to watching her bring that same passion and leadership to the Department of Labor."

The council represents 70,000 skilled union construction professionals working in 15 trades.

### HOME CARE WORKERS VOTE 'YES'

Home care workers with SEIU Healthcare Minnesota voted overwhelmingly to ratify their tentative agreement on a new union contract with the state last month. If ratified and funded by the Legislature, the contract will bring over \$350 million in additional state and federal funding over the next four years for services for seniors and people with disabilities.

The contract, the fourth between the state and the home care workers' union, also includes gains for workers, like a \$15.25 minimum wage starting in July 2022, more paid time off and holidays, and stipends for workers who complete training opportunities.

"The pay raise will help immediately, and a tiered system of pay that provides a reward for people who make home care their career would help retain high-quality PCAs for the long haul," said Dawn Burnfin, a home care worker from Chisolm who served on the SEIU bargaining team.

Now that union members have signed off, the tentative agreement heads to the Legislature for approval and funding before, workers hope, it lands on Gov. Tim Walz's desk.

### SMITH PUTS AMAZON ON NOTICE

After a historic organizing campaign, full- and part-time workers at an Amazon warehouse in Alabama are voting on union representation with the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union. If the vote succeeds, they will become the first Amazon warehouse workers to unionize in the U.S.

Ahead of their vote, a group of federal lawmakers, including Minnesota Sen. Tina Smith, put the company on notice that they support workers' right to organize freely and fairly. And given Amazon's track record of hostility toward unions, they "are paying close attention to the way Amazon conducts itself during this vote."

In the letter, sent to CEO Jeff Bezos and his successor, Andy Jassy, Smith and other lawmakers also urge the executives to approach the organizing election as opportunity to recognize the true value of its workers and treat them as such.

"Amazon's profits have soared by 70 percent over the last year because of the hard work of your employees," they wrote. "They have put in long hours and risked their own health during the COVID-19 pandemic to meet increased demand, and they deserve to share in the success they have made possible."

### SHINING A LIGHT ON OFFSHORING

Walmart's supplier of LED light bulbs has announced plans to shift production to China, a move that will cost some 80 members of IUE-CWA Local 84704 in Bucyrus, Ohio, their jobs.

The GE-Savant plant has had a presence in the Ohio community for nearly a century, and union members aren't going down without a fight.

They've enlisted the support of fellow IUE-CWA members, who are staging protests outside Walmart stores across the country, including in the Twin Cities.

The most recent day of action, Feb. 20, saw actions at 80 stores nationwide. Outside the West St. Paul Walmart, IUE-CWA Local 1140 President Howard Terry and district representative Richard Shorter showed their solidarity.

"We all stand together when American jobs are at stake," Terry said. "It's a blatant slap in the face to force jobs overseas just to save a buck or two, especially for Walmart, which claims to be a



Rep. Angie Craig



Rep. Betty McCollum

### PRO ACT INTRODUCED

House Democrats have reintroduced the PRO Act, the most significant overhaul of federal labor law in 80 years, with two labor-endorsed congresswomen from the east metro signed on as co-sponsors of the legislation.

St. Paul Regional Labor Federation President Kera Peterson praised Rep. Angie Craig of the 2nd District and Rep. Betty McCollum of the 4th for making the PRO Act a priority in the new Congress. Both of the state's senators, Amy Klobuchar and Tina Smith, have signaled support for the measure as well.

"The rules that are supposed to protect our freedom to organize for better wages and working conditions have long been rigged against us, and it's encouraging to see our federal lawmakers step up to fix the problem," Peterson said. "President Biden has pledged to lead the most pro-labor, pro-worker administration ever, and that gives us a real chance at lasting reform of this broken system."

The PRO Act would make several changes to give workers more bargaining power on the job. It would put teeth into rules prohibiting employers from retaliating against workers who try to form a union. It also would ban states from passing right-to-work laws that weaken working people's bargaining power.

Employers would be required to disclose payments to union-busting law firms and consultants hired to stifle workers' voices. And the PRO Act would speed up the organizing-election process and establish a mechanism for workers and employers to settle a first contract quickly.

House Democrats passed the PRO Act last February, but it stalled in the Republican-controlled Senate.

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 7)



Outside the West St. Paul Walmart, Local 1140's Howard Terry (L) and district rep Richard Shorter show solidarity with Ohio workers. Union Advocate photo

supporter of American manufacturing."

Sign a petition in support of the Bucyrus workers online at [bit.ly/WalmartKeepUSABulbs](https://bit.ly/WalmartKeepUSABulbs).



(Continued from Page 6)

## GROCEER OWES WORKERS \$212,000

Supermercado Lomabonita failed to pay overtime as required by law to cooks, butchers, bakers and cashiers at its five Twin Cities locations, an investigation by the U.S. Department of Labor found. Now, the grocer is on the hook for over \$212,000 in back pay to 81 employees.

Investigators found the grocer violated the Fair Labor Standards Act by paying employees “straight-time” for all the hours that they worked, including overtime hours that the employer should have paid at time-and-one-half pay.

Supermercado Lomabonita also failed to maintain adequate records of workers’ hours, and failed to combine hours that employees worked at differ-

ent store sites during the same workweek, reducing their eligibility for overtime pay.

And the grocer erroneously declared some workers exempt from overtime, allowing them to work up to 70 hours per week for a flat salary.

Kristin Tout, acting director of the department’s Wage and Hour Division, said overtime violations “are all too common in the grocery industry.”

“Shorting low-wage workers’ pay prevents them from meeting their basic needs,” Tout added.

Of the 81 workers due to receive back pay, 17 work at Lomabonita’s St. Paul location. They will receive a combined \$33,202.

Supermercado Lomabonita is not a union shop. For a list of union grocers, where collective bargaining agreements are in place to prevent worker exploitation, go to [ufcw1189.org](http://ufcw1189.org).



Protesters greet school board members as they arrive at the West St. Paul-Eagan-Mendota Heights school district’s meeting space in Thompson Park, urging them to back away from plans to lay off special-ed paras.

Union Advocate photo

## Budget axe falls on School District 197’s frontline workers

Despite putting their health at risk while providing essential care during the pandemic, paraprofessionals in the West St. Paul-Mendota Heights-Eagan Area Schools learned last month that the district will lay off up to 12 full-time workers from their ranks and replace them with temporary hires.

Members of ISD 197’s school board signed off on the cost-cutting measure at a meeting Feb. 16 over pleas from teachers, parents and paraprofessionals to reconsider.

Protesters greeted school board members as they arrived at the district’s meeting space in Thompson Park. During a public-comment session, several speakers said special-ed students and their families deserve better than the abrupt layoffs, and so do paraprofessionals.

Lauren Kress, a site supervisor with the district’s School Age Care program, called paraprofessionals the “backbone of our children’s education,” and she urged board members to do better by the workers who “have been risking their own health and the health of their families.”

Marilee Erickson, a special-ed paraprofessional who works with the district’s early learners, said the cuts couldn’t come at a worse time for students, many of whom are returning to school after distance learning.

“The timing is troublesome,” she said. “Paraprofessionals know students throughout their buildings, and they know their needs. A temporary worker will not.”

Congress authorized \$54.3 billion in emergency funding for public school districts across the country in the last round of COVID-19 relief.

But some lawmakers say more federal aid is necessary to prevent widespread layoffs in school districts, municipalities and other local governments. President Joe Biden’s proposed \$1.9 trillion recovery plan includes \$600 billion to protect public services – and jobs for people who provide them.

At the meeting in West St. Paul, Alex Barba-Cook told board members she expects to be among the paraprofessionals laid off as a result of the cuts. She has been on the job for just a year, but already, she said, “my heart is in this school.”

“The foundation of my job is having a good personal relationship with the kids,” Barbra-Cook said. “It takes a lot to build that trust over time. Now, I worry a lot of things are going to fall through the cracks.”

Paraprofessionals in West St. Paul are members of Local 284 of the Service Employees International Union.

– Michael Moore, Union Advocate editor

## NEW DIRECTOR AT OPEIU LOCAL 12

Office and Professional Employees International Union Local 12 announced Jim Niland as its new business manager last month. Niland has served as a union organizer and representative at Local 12 for the last two years.

“I am excited to help lead Local 12 as it takes the next steps to becoming a local committed to building member activism and power to win better contracts, as well as ensuring workers have an effective voice in their workplaces,” Niland said. “I also want to continue growing our local and bringing new members in through external organizing drives.”

Local 12 has supported several organizing drives in recent months, bringing over 160 new members into the union from Augsburg University, MN Voice, Jewish Community Action and MN Youth Collective.

## WORK INJURY?

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## After leaving the auto industry, retired Machinist now preps others for entry-level work

By Michael Moore  
Union Advocate editor

Greg Kinne isn't letting the knowledge he gained over nearly five decades in the automotive industry go to waste in retirement. The former Machinist is sharing what he knows with a new generation of workers at the Twin Cities School.

Kinne, a longtime member of Local Lodge 737, has signed on as a volunteer at the school, housed in founder Jerry L. Griffis' detailing shop in Columbia Heights. Together, Kinne and Griffis teach the basics of auto detailing and maintenance to young adults struggling to find their career paths.

The free, 12-week course includes opportunities for paid work in Griffis' shop. The goal, Kinne said, is to give students enough training to land an entry-level job.

"They're going to know enough about detailing that a shop could take them on and not have to explain everything to them," he said. "They're still going to have to learn some things. But I worked 50 years, and I was still learning things when I was done."

In the classroom, students follow a curriculum developed by Griffis, a former service manager at the White Bear Lake Superstore dealership. He takes the lead teaching auto detailing, and Kinne takes the lead teaching basic mechanics, like changing the oil, rotating the tires and how parts of the car work together.

While detailing is the program's focus, an introduction to "the other stuff," Kinne said, makes students more attractive to potential employers, and may spark an interest in pursuing more training to climb the career ladder.

"You wouldn't be hired out of our program as a technician, but it might give you the idea that you want to go to school and learn more about it," Kinne said.

But Kinne and Griffis try to offer students more than just garage knowledge.

The Twin Cities School emphasizes so-called "soft skills" necessary for success on the job, and Griffis and Kinne have tapped into their connections



Greg Kinne offers hands-on instruction in the basics of auto mechanics to students at the Twin Cities School.

submitted photo

in the local auto industry to help find interested students work. Those connections include Local Lodge 737 and union dealerships.

"Union shops, that's what I push," Kinne said. "Jerry was a manager – one of the few African American managers in our area, but he worked in a union shop. And I know he's sat down with Local 737 and talked about the school with them, and they've been supportive."

"The union leads the way in this industry. The union contract prices go out, and if the other dealerships don't pay similar to them, they don't get people."

That's not to mention the union benefits, which include the defined-benefit pension that allowed Kinne to retire five years ago.

Kinne's career in the automotive industry began in 1972, when he went to work behind the parts counter at Royal Datsun, a union shop on Grand

Avenue in St. Paul. His father was the parts manager, and Kinne thought of the opportunity as a stopgap.

But when the business moved to Maplewood in 1981, Kinne moved with it. By 1989, he'd been promoted to parts manager. He left that job in 1997 and worked briefly for a Luther dealership in Minneapolis before taking a position at the White Bear Lake Superstore as a technician.

"I'd kind of burned out on the parts stuff by then," Kinne said.

He began working as a Hyundai mechanic in 2000, and by the time he retired in 2016, Kinne was one of just a few certified platinum Hyundai technicians in the Buerkle organization, having completed weeks of trainings and passed several evaluations.

Willingness to put in the time and effort it takes to learn new skills is a big part of what made Kinne successful in his career, and he makes a point of emphasizing as much to students at

### Yes, auto technicians are union members!

- Machinists Local Lodge 737 represents over 900 mechanics, parts personnel, body workers and service technicians at dealerships in the east metro. Find a list of union shops at [iamdev.iam4.me](http://iamdev.iam4.me).

the Twin Cities School, he said.

"I'm not a teacher but I can certainly share experiences – good and bad – with the young men," Kinne said.

But Kinne added: "I try not to place my history upon their stuff because it's different."

Kinne had a father who steered him into a career field, while most students at the Twin Cities School struggled to complete high school or have had run-ins with law enforcement.

"It's a short program designed to build an interest in working on cars, maybe a career working on cars and a path to livability," Kinne said. "But it's just one step. It's a small niche in a bigger education outreach effort by the community."

Others are taking notice of the school's approach. Ramsey and Hennepin counties have referred students to Griffis' program, which also includes an aviation module. And the school has developed a partnership with St. Paul's Ujamaa Place, which offers programming to men 17 to 28 years old. (Twin Cities School is open to both men and women.)

Automotive work might not be for everyone who completes the program, but reaching the finish line comes with a sense of accomplishment, Kinne said, both for students and for their instructors.

"It's a good challenge, and I do enjoy it," he said. "There are a lot of hurdles to getting guys interested, but the best is having someone who's been in the class and running into them."

"One guy came up and thanked me for teaching him how to solder. It's a simple thing, but he came up and wanted to make a point of thanking me for teaching him that. I had to laugh."

## Labor partnership helps keep trades apprentices healthy during COVID-19

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, life changed for all Americans. For Minnesota's construction trades apprentices, work while continuing to learn a career took on new challenges.

"We ate in our cars, constantly cleaned our tools and kept our distance from each other," said Heather Oehrlein, a third-year pipefitter apprentice from the Twin Cities, who was helping build a new addition to a factory when the pandemic hit.

As the pandemic continued and

Gov. Walz designated construction as a critical industry, Minnesota's labor movement came together to look for solutions to help apprentices continue to do their on the job training safely.

To help apprenticeships stay on track, the Minnesota Training Partnership (MTP), the educational arm of the Minnesota AFL-CIO, partnered with Lincoln Electric and the American Association of Community Colleges, via a Department of Labor Grant, to provide free personal protective equipment to

more than 1,000 apprentices.

"During a very tough time for the apprentices we work with, our ability to provide them with PPE has been a game changer," MTP Executive Director Jerome Balsimo said. "They now have top of the line safety gear and don't have to worry about the cost of that equipment."

"Probably the biggest difference that it's made is not having to share as much of my equipment with other people," said Oehrlein, who is now working

on a hospital expansion. "I have more control over how my tools and my hood are stored and used so I can make sure that they're cleaned and kept in good condition. I think it has also helped provide a little piece of mind, knowing that I have to go out and spend my own money in an unsure economy."

MTP's partnership with Lincoln Electric will continue into the fall and is expected to provide PPE to at least 1,500 Building Trades Apprentices.

– Reprinted from [mnaflcio.org](http://mnaflcio.org)



# Labor, community rally support for locked-out Teamsters at Marathon refinery

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

ter” of talks. He praised union members for taking a stand.

“It’s about the safety of this community,” Walz said. “I can’t tell you how grateful I am for that.”

Elected officials have tread a beaten track to St. Paul Park since the work stoppage began, offering their support to Teamsters on the picket line. Some have taken managers at the refinery to task for locking out experienced workers.

U.S. Rep. Betty McCollum, in a letter to local Marathon executive Amy Macak, noted ownership of the refinery has changed multiple times in recent years, but its “dependable, highly-skilled, local union-represented workforce” has been a constant presence.

“The breakdown of contract negotiations and use of outside contractors by Marathon raises serious questions about safety,” McCollum wrote, adding that the 2018 explosion at Husky Energy’s refinery in Superior, Wis., serves as a “grave reminder of the need to maintain the highest standards for safety.”

Members of other local unions are showing their solidarity with locked-out Teamsters as well, joining them on the picket line, providing food and firewood, and contributing to workers’ defense fund.

“There are a whole bunch of unions in this crowd,” Kera Peterson, president of the 66,000-member St. Paul Regional Labor Federation, told locked-out workers during the rally. “This fight is Minnesota’s fight, and we are with you in this for the long haul, as long as it takes.”

Teamsters who work at the St. Paul Park refinery – electricians, operators, maintenance and other workers – originally went on strike Jan. 21, three weeks after their union contract expired.

After 24 hours on the picket line, striking workers offered to return to their jobs, but they were turned away at the gate – a move Local 120 President Tom Erickson called the most reckless he’s seen in 30 years of negotiating contracts.

The two sides have held at least one bargaining session since the lockout began. But like the 24 sessions leading up to the lockout, it was “negotiations” in name only, union members said.

Jim Swanson, an electrician at the refinery, told U.S. Sen. Tina Smith on the picket line that union members make sure to bring their phones into bargaining, so they have something to read after the company’s negotiators walk out of the room.

“They just haven’t negotiated at all,” Swanson said. “It seemed like they had an agenda right from the beginning. I think they planned to not even negotiate and have us go on strike.”



Supporters from the local labor movement drive by the Teamsters’ picket line outside Marathon’s St. Paul Park refinery, honking their horns and waving signs of solidarity. Parking near the picket line is limited, and the sub-zero temperatures during the polar vortex made walking the picket line a challenge, prompting supporters to organize a car caravan Feb. 14.



Local 120 members Luke Naber and Tyler Sardeson demonstrate outside the Speedway in St. Paul Park, informing potential customers about the lockout.

Union Advocate photos

“We never brought up money once,” he added. “I don’t think anybody here is concerned about money. It’s issues in the refinery – safety stuff and trying to eliminate positions.”

As the lockout drags on, Local 120 members have begun following trucks from the refinery to local freight yards and Speedway gas stations, looking to raise awareness of the lockout.

While they cannot legally call for a boycott of Speedway, workers can

advise potential customers that the fuel being sold crossed a picket line, and that the company has locked out workers whose training and experience keeps St. Paul Park and its surrounding communities safe.

“We don’t want the Husky incident to happen here,” Sardeson said. “I live in Cottage Grove. My children go to school here in Cottage Grove. It’s very important to me that the facility stays running and stays safe.”

## Four ways to support locked-out Teamsters

- Join them on the picket line.
- Spread the word that Speedway and Sam’s Club are continuing to source their gas from Marathon’s St. Paul Park refinery, despite safety risks posed by the lockout.
- Donate to the Marathon Refinery Teamsters Assistance Fund: [www.workingpartnerships.betterworld.org](http://www.workingpartnerships.betterworld.org)
- Call or email Marathon exec Amy Macak, and tell her Minnesota safety matters. She’s at 618-554-2062 or [amacak@marathonpetroleum.com](mailto:amacak@marathonpetroleum.com)





# St. Paul labor federation partners with unions to get free, fresh food into communities statewide

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

The union hosted a distribution event at its facility on Conway Street Feb. 20, one of 12 organized by the Regional Labor Federation and its partners last month.

“We’re extremely honored to be able to provide food to the East Side of St. Paul,” McNamara said. “The IBEW has a great partnership with the community here, and we’re very grateful to be of service to a community that’s been so good to us. We look forward to doing another one of these in the future.”

Each distribution site that participates in the Farmers to Families program receives a truckload of around 1,300 food packages. Each package contains 25 to 30 pounds of fresh fruits, vegetables and meat and dairy products, including a gallon of milk.

The events are opportunity to restock the refrigerator, whereas food pantries mostly offer non-perishable, shelf-stable goods.

Erica Dalager Reed, an AFL-CIO Community Services liaison with the Regional Labor Federation, said the fresh food boxes help families struggling with food insecurity to “supplement what they are getting from other resources,” like food shelves.

But offering fresh food comes with unique challenges for Dalager Reed and the federation’s partner organizations.

Timing is everything. When a truck arrives at a distribution site, volunteers must be ready to unload and sort the food for contactless pickup. Distribution must begin – and end – shortly after the food leaves the truck to prevent it from spoiling.

It’s a labor-intensive process, which makes unions uniquely qualified for the job. And through their training centers and industry connections, unions can usually access a pallet jack or forklift to unload the trailer, too.

“When we first hosted a food distribution site at the Labor Center last October, it gave us a real sense of the need that exists in our community,” Regional Labor Federation President Kera Peterson said. “Since then, our affiliate unions and volunteers have given their time and talents generously at event after event, outside and in the cold. I am deeply appreciative.”

The Regional Labor Federation’s nonprofit arm, the St. Paul Labor Studies and Resource Center, plays a key role in accessing the USDA program, which allows only registered nonprofit organizations to arrange for delivery of a Farmers to Families truckload.

The program has been so popular that union groups statewide – and even in North Dakota – have reached out to Dalager Reed about setting up distribution events in partnership with the St. Paul federation and the LSRC.

“We’re just looking to help the community,” Tony Poole, business manager of St. Paul Pipefitters Local 455, said during an event Feb. 16 at the union’s training center in the North End. “We’ve got a lot of low-income families around this neighborhood, and we just want to help. It worked out really well.”

It’s gone over well with the public, too.

Dalager Reed said she saw several comments on social media after the Pipefitters’ event, with some users thanking the union and others expressing surprise. One person, she said, wrote: “That’s my dad’s union! I didn’t know unions did stuff like that.”

St. Paul Building Trades Executive Secretary Don



Officers, staff and volunteers from Pipefitters Local 455 pause for a photo during a food distribution event at their North End facility last month.

Union Advocate photos



Union volunteers are eager to support food distribution events like this one at IBEW Local 110 last month, said Erica Dalager Reed, an AFL-CIO Community Services liaison with the St. Paul Regional Labor Federation. “They want to be a part of serving the community, meeting that need and helping people with food insecurity.”

## The basics

- What: Free, fresh food distribution events sponsored by local unions.
- When: Several dates are in the works for March and April. When confirmed, details are posted at [facebook.com/SaintPaulRLF/events](https://facebook.com/SaintPaulRLF/events).
- Learn more: For information about hosting an event or volunteering, email Erica Dalager Reed at [edalager@stpaulunions.org](mailto:edalager@stpaulunions.org).

Mullin, whose council co-hosted a distribution event Feb. 3 at the St. Paul Labor Center, said that while unions and union members have a long history of giving back to their communities, they aren’t always good at taking credit for it.

“This has been a great opportunity to provide



The St. Paul Regional Labor Federation and St. Paul Building Trades teamed up for a distribution event at the Labor Center Feb. 3.

meals to the community, and it really speaks to everything labor does as a whole,” Mullin said. “We help out. We work with the community. And we’re showing the community what we’re all about.”





# Minutes of the Saint Paul Regional Labor Federation

## FEBRUARY 10, 2021

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, Madden, Markham-Kocurek, McCarthy, McNamara, Michelson, Mullin, Peterson, Ryan, Seath, Slattery, Vandassor and Varco. Excused were Roth, Sansom, Schmidt, and St. Aoro. Absent were Beedle G., Faber, Gorman, Hoppe, Jones, Luneburg, and Terry.

President Peterson called for a Moment of Silence Emeritus, John Sweeney and Lindsay Overbay.

## GUESTS

- David Langley, Outreach Coordinator, Prepare + Prosper, appeared before the delegation via zoom to give a presentation about Free Tax Prep, one-on-one support with a financial coach and banking products available.
- Robyn Gulley, Director, New Brookwood Labor College, appeared before the delegation via zoom to speak about the classes that will be held online beginning on March 15.

Tuesdays – Campaign and Organizing Strategies, Wednesdays – Labor and Film, Thursdays – Economics and Fridays – Leadership and Working-Class History. New Brookwood Labor College is connecting with unions and asking for support.

## MINUTES

**M/S/C TO APPROVE MINUTES OF DECEMBER 9, 2020, AND JANUARY 13, 2021, 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 FEBRUARY 10, 2021

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, Madden, Markham-Kocurek, McCarthy, McNamara, Michelson, Mullin, Naseth, Peterson, Ryan, Sansom, Seath, Slattery, Vandassor, Varco and Wise. Excused were Roth, Schmidt, and St. Aoro. Absent were Beedle G., DeRoy, Faber, Gorman, Hoppe, Jones, Krey, Lohmann, Luneburg, Mayer, and Terry.

The PRO Act, MN House File 39 and SEIU contract bill were discussed.

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

## EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES FEBRUARY 10, 2021

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 SPRLF 2021 Budget; USDA Farmers to Families Food box program; appointing Doni Jones, ATU Local 1005, to replace Dorothy Maki-Green; ATU Local 1005 to the RLF Executive Board; and Mike Dreyer, UFCW Local 1189 resignation due to retirement.

### ORGANIZING UPDATES/CAMPAIGNS:

The Minnesota Nurses Association, SEIU Healthcare Minnesota, SEIU Local 284, Teamsters Local 120, and United Steelworkers gave an update on their organizing activities.

The following resolution:  
**H81 FCXJF JF 640C 9FH KEBM4E7  
FH: 4EBE: F9JA8  
KE8D GCFM7**

WHEREAS it is expected that the COVID-19 killer pandemic, raging in large parts of the country, including Minnesota environs, will result in continued large-scale unemployment, creating a crisis for the 300,000 workers relying on unemployment insurance, their unions, and communities, as well as approximately 50,000 households of immigrant workers without documents who are unemployed but not eligible to file and hospitality and food service workers hardest hit, and

WHEREAS this crisis approaches the scale of massive unemployment that swept the nation during the Great Depression of the 1930s, leading to the formation of Unemployed Councils that organized millions of people leading to the creation of the jobs in the Works Progress Administration, passage of unemployment insurance and Social Security, and organizing the unorganized into unions, and

WHEREAS the Trump administration and Republican leadership tried under the cover of the COVID-19 crisis to undermine Social Security by suspending the payroll tax that funds the Social Security Trust Fund, and

WHEREAS the impact of this crisis is increasing racial disparities and inequality in our state and nation as workers of color are both disproportionately out of work and filing for unemployment, and are disproportionately low-wage essential workers forced to work in often unsafe conditions, and

WHEREAS it is widely predicted that there will be "tsunami of evictions" with the ending or reduction of Pandemic Unemployment Insurance, combined with the expiration of the eviction moratorium and the consequent coming due of several months' back rent for many families and a resulting widespread inability for working class homeowners with tenants to pay their mortgages is predicted, resulting in a foreclosure crisis, comparable to, or worse than, the 2007-2009 recession, and

WHEREAS, the loss of Pandemic Unemployment Insurance and other federal assistance, as well as state and local government cutbacks due to pandemic-related budget shortfalls, will lead to a massive loss of purchasing power to the detriment of local business, which will result in further layoffs, contributing to a downward economic spiral, and

WHEREAS the pandemic cannot be fought if unsafe workplaces act as incubators and spread the virus to workers and their families, if people



U.S. Sen. Tina Smith and St. Paul Regional Labor Federation President Kera Peterson support locked-out members of Teamsters Local 120 on the picket line outside Marathon's St. Paul Park refinery. Delegates to the Regional Labor Federation approved a \$2,500 contribution to the workers' defense fund during last month's meeting.

Union Advocate photo

are being evicted from their homes and forced to double up with friends or relatives or to live in shelters, if those who have been exposed are afraid to quarantine at home for fear of loss of jobs and income, or if they have no home to stay in, and

WHEREAS, the highest priorities must be to public health, maintaining essential economic activity while protecting the health of workers, protecting families suffering from job loss and/or loss of health insurance and economic support for all workers who are laid off or unable to work safely, so

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Saint Paul Regional Labor Federation, AFL-CIO, oblige our Minnesota Congressional delegation to be champions in the fight to continue and greatly expand pandemic relief and large scale public investment in workers and their communities for the duration of the pandemic, prioritizing the AFL-CIO's five economic essentials: keep frontline workers safe and secure; keep workers employed and protect earned pension checks; keep state and local governments, public schools and the U.S. Postal Service solvent and working; keep America healthy – protect and expand health insurance for all workers; keep America competitive – hire people to build infrastructure, and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that in the spirit of the Unemployed Councils that won far-reaching legislation in the 1930s, to meet today's challenge, union-community alliances be built between union members facing layoff, union members working on the front lines, retirees, youth and community groups of unemployed workers for the purpose of building solidarity in the fight to win large scale public investment to provide a strong safety

net for laid off workers, safe conditions and union rights for workers on the job.

### M/S/C TO RECOMMEND SUPPORT OF THE RESOLUTION TO CALL FOR UNITY AND ORGANIZING OF THE UNEMPLOYED TO THE RLF DELEGATION

**M/S/C TO APPROVE THE 2021 SAINT PAUL REGIONAL LABOR FEDERATION OPERATING BUDGET.**

### M/S/C TO APPROVE THE APPOINTMENT OF DONI JONES, ATU LOCAL 1005, TO THE SAINT PAUL REGIONAL LABOR FEDERATION EXECUTIVE BOARD, REPLACING DOROTHY MAKI-GREEN, ATU LOCAL 1005.

**M/S/C TO MAKE A \$2,500 CONTRIBUTION TO THE MARATHON TEAMSTERS ASSISTANCE FUND.**

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 January 2021. The report was accepted as read.

### PRESIDENTS REPORT

President Peterson reported on the Teamsters Lockout, food distribution, keeping up with affiliates contract campaign and strike struggles. Please call your representatives call your Congressional Representatives in support of the PRO Act.

### STAFF/LABOR LIAISON REPORTS

Erica Dalager Reed, AFL-CIO Community Services Liaison, announced that we have done three food distribution events in February and one last October. Two were held at the Labor Center and two were held in St. Paul Park. We had to

reschedule three events due to the cold weather. These events are on our website as well as Facebook. We are looking for volunteers and spread the word to your neighbors, friends, etc.

President Peterson thanked Erica for all her work on putting together the food distribution as there is a great need in our community.

### REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES

Brian Beedle reported on behalf of the Washington County Labor Assembly. Members participated in volunteer events and organized a food bank. Our next meeting will be the fourth Wednesday of the month at 6:00 p.m. via zoom.

Michael Madden reported on behalf of the Chisago County Labor Assembly. We are continuing to seek to build the labor movement. Our next meeting will be the fourth Thursday of the month at 4:30 p.m. via zoom.

Connie Beissel reported on behalf of the Dakota County Labor Assembly. We are in the process of organizing our Worker's Memorial Day event in April. Our next meeting will be the second Thursday of the month at 7:00 p.m. via zoom.

### NEW BUSINESS

President Peterson read the Resolution Calling for Unity and Organizing of the Unemployed and called for a floor vote to approve the Resolution.

### M/S/C TO SUPPORT THE RESOLUTION IN CALLING FOR UNITY AND ORGANIZING OF THE UNEMPLOYED.

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

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



## Fair State, Schell's brew together to celebrate solidarity

By Michael Moore

Union Advocate editor

Minnesota's oldest and newest union breweries have teamed up to craft a beer celebrating solidarity in the workplace.

Union Lager is a collaborative brew by Fair State in the Twin Cities, where workers formed a union with UNITE HERE Local 17 last summer, and August Schell in New Ulm, where union members have been brewing beer since the 1930s. They currently are represented by the Steelworkers union.

The beer is crisp and moderately hoppy – a “crusher,” Fair State says on its website. Local 17 member Ian Sutherland, who uses plural pronouns, said the Union Lager is moving steadily in Fair State's northeast Minneapolis taproom, where they work behind the bar.

“It's beautiful,” Sutherland added. “It's a good blend of hoppy and malty. It has a little of the hard-water profile, a little minerally. It's a very good sessionable lager.”

Crafting lagers is a passion shared by the brewers and friends behind the collaboration, Fair State's Niko Tonks and Schell's Jace Marti.

When he saw the news Fair State workers had unionized last September, Marti quickly fired off a text message to Tonks. “I said congratulations on being unionized,” Marti said. “Let's do a collaboration.”

It's not often management celebrates its workers' decision to form a union, let alone markets a new product around the news. But Fair State's historic union drive was unique from the start.

Organizing was already afoot when Sutherland began bartending in June of last year. Within three months, enough workers at the taproom and Fair State's St. Paul brewery were on board to petition

management for voluntary recognition of their union, which they did the morning after Labor Day.

“Our brewer is kind of a neighborhood brewery now, but it's starting to do some national distribution,” Sutherland said. “Our thinking was maybe it was time to cement some power in a union as we start to make the trek toward a larger-scale brewery.”

Fair State's chief executive, Evan Sallee, immediately embraced the idea, Sutherland said. A day later, after consulting with the board of member-owners, Sallee celebrated Fair State becoming the nation's first unionized microbrewery in an open letter on the cooperative's website.

Sutherland said workers have been pleasantly surprised to see their union “become so integral” to Fair State's identity. “It's a cool thing that cements our place in the workplace,” they said.

Even better, Fair State has backed up its branding both at the table and on the shop floor.

Progress toward a first contract covering the union's 20-plus members has been steady. Sutherland credited Local 17 Secretary-Treasurer Sheigh Freeberg with “playing the role of advocate for us and educator for both sides” as Fair State workers and managers familiarize themselves with the process.

The question everyone is trying to answer in bargaining, Sutherland said, is how to balance “the nimbleness required of a craft brewery” with a union contract.

“That's the challenge, but it's definitely headed in a direction that feels really healthy,” Sutherland added. “People are realizing if you want something to change, we have real power to try to make that happen.”

Whether the Union Lager will be available for a



Fair State Brewing's Union Lager is moving quickly in the taproom and in liquor stores – and in this reporter's refrigerator, too.

Union Advocate photo

toast to Fair State workers' first contract, whenever it's settled, remains to be seen.

The two breweries developed their own batches and labels for the beer. Fair State's product hit shelves first, and Tonks, Fair State's founding brewer, said liquor stores snatched up their local distributor's allotment in about a week.

“That's fast,” Tonks laughed. “Response has been strong, and it's pretty much gone.”

Fortunately for anyone who missed out, Schell's batch should be ready for sale sometime this month. And Tonks said both brewers are looking for an excuse – ratification, perhaps? – to brew it again.

Marti said he isn't surprised by the Union Lager's success. The collaboration seemed to him charmed from Day 1, when he and Tonks decided to take their inspiration from the Westphalian Pale Lager, a German beer made famous by the now-defunct Dortmunder Union Brewery.

“It was known as a hard-working beer, a blue-collar drinking beer,” Marti said. “It all fit perfectly.”

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