

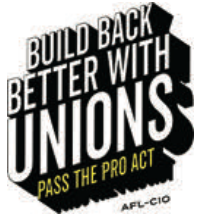
# The St. Paul Union Advocate

125th Year, No. 2, Issue 5448

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

July 2021

## Do Something!



### Help pass the PRO Act

Stronger unions mean higher wages, safer working conditions and dignity for all people who work. The PRO Act, short for Protecting the Right to Organize, is the first step to get there.

The cornerstone of unions' agenda in Washington, the PRO Act would empower workers to organize and bargain, hold corporations accountable for union-busting and repeal "right to work" laws.

But after passing the U.S. House March 9, the measure has since stalled in the Senate.

Minnesota's senators have pledged support for the PRO Act. Now, we need them to make it a priority. Tell them as much by using a form at [aflcio.org](http://aflcio.org), or by calling 866-832-1560.

## In This Issue

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[www.stpaulunions.org](http://www.stpaulunions.org)  
Connecting union members in Ramsey, Washington, Dakota and Chisago counties.



Members of the Minnesota Nurses Association put 40 sets of scrubs and 26 photos of hospital beds on the informational picket line, representing the nurses reassigned and services cut at Children's Hospital in St. Paul.  
Union Advocate photo

## CHILDREN'S NURSES SOUND ALARM

*Union members fear restructuring will leave patients without care*

**By Michael Moore**  
*Union Advocate editor*

Pediatric nurses held informational picketing outside Children's Hospital campuses in Minneapolis and St. Paul last month, raising public awareness about their fight for enough staffing and beds for patients at the facilities.

Although they have raised those concerns with management repeatedly, members of the

Minnesota Nurses Association said, the situation continues to worsen as the hospitals push forward with a system-wide restructuring plan.

Sydney Pederson, a nurse at Children's St. Paul and leader in the bargaining unit, said frustrations boiled over when more patients began seeking care at the hospital, as schools and other youth programs resumed in-person activities.

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 7)

## With Building Trades in 'good position' statewide, Melander steps down as council president

**By Steve Share**  
*Minneapolis Labor Review editor*

President of the Minnesota State Building and Construction Trades Council since 2009, Harry Melander retired effective June 4.

"I think the Building Trades are in a good position moving forward," Melander told the Labor Review. "They certainly have gained a measure of respect in the legislative process."

Melander said challenges will continue, however, to preserve the eight-hour workday, protect prevailing wage and oppose so-called 'Right to Work' legislation.

"I think the opportunity for the Building Trades is our membership is starting to reflect how our community looks," Melander added. "Are we there yet? No. We're working towards it."

Melander noted that his grandfather  
(CONTINUED ON PAGE 9)



Former Minnesota Building Trades President Harry Melander led a 2014 rally for jobs in the Capitol rotunda.  
file photo

## Teamsters reject refinery's contract offer, keep up fight for safe jobs, communities

**By Michael Moore**  
*Union Advocate editor*

Marathon refinery workers in St. Paul Park aren't backing down from their fight for local jobs and safe communities, and with support from the Twin Cities and beyond, members of Teamsters Local 120 are not fighting alone.

Striking Teamsters voted resoundingly last month to reject a "last, best and final" contract proposal from the company, extending a work stoppage at the facility that began Jan. 21.

Union representatives said the company's offer did not address workers' safety concerns, both for themselves and communities surrounding the refinery. Marathon has demanded new language allowing management to overhaul staffing and replace union members with workers from lowest-bidder subcontractors, including firms from outside Minnesota.

"It's all about the dollar," Local 120 member Ben Edstrom said of the company's hardline approach to negotiations. "You get a subcontractor in there for half the price of people who were skilled and trained and working

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 10)



## Go Figure

## \$10 per hour

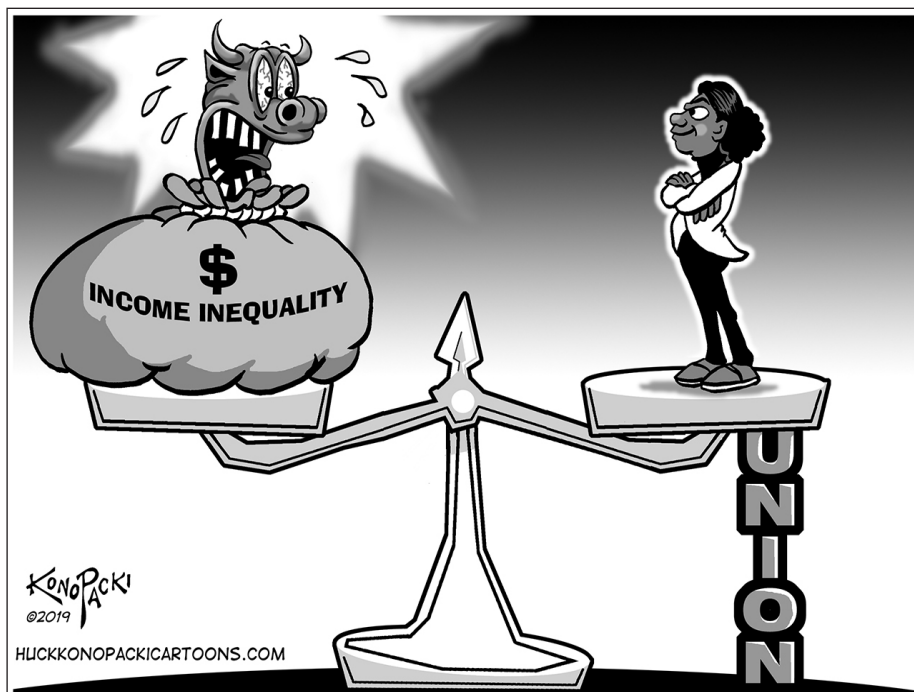
Wages lost by the typical worker as a result of U.S. employers' successful efforts to keep wage growth down over the past 40 years

**160%** Wage growth among the top 1% of U.S. workers over the past 40 years

**345%** Wage growth among the top 0.1%

**26%** Wage growth among the bottom 90%

Source: Economic Policy Institute



## Community Voices: Peter Rachleff

## Infrastructure, the arts and puppets: A conversation between past and present

President Biden's proposed American Jobs Act has kick-started debates about how to revive the U.S. economy in the aftermath of the pandemic, including disagreements about what "infrastructure" is, exactly. Here at the East Side Freedom Library, we think these debates could benefit from a consideration of New Deal projects, funded by the Works Progress Administration, that invested in the arts. One such program we find inspiring is the Buffalo Historical Marionettes of the WPA's Federal Theatre Project, which created more than 200 jobs and encouraged a diverse community to explore and engage history, including the ways that racism had shaped the present.

Buffalo's history was shaped by its location on "the Niagara Frontier," making it a transportation and manufacturing center by the early 20th century. Immigrants from southern and eastern Europe worked on the city's docks, railways and ships, and later in its booming steel mills, auto plants and machine shops. When World War I and new laws disrupted this immigration, thousands of African Americans moved from the South to fill the demand for industrial and service labor. By the end of the 1920s, two-thirds of Buffalo's white working class were immigrants and their children, while two-thirds of its Black workers were Southern-born. Both of these groups faced the scorn and hostility of an energized Ku Klux Klan, which blended racism, xenophobia and prohibition into a noxious brew.

Buffalo's diverse working class was hard hit by the Great Depression, as unemployment grew beyond 20%. In 1935, the federal government created the WPA, giving new hope to the city's unemployed and impoverished. One WPA project was the Buffalo Historical Marionettes, under the direction of Esther Wilhelm. Their creative plays, featuring marionettes animated by White and Black puppeteers, not only put carpenters, painters, seamstresses, truck drivers and musicians to work, but also encouraged children and adults alike to reconsider American history at a critical time.

African American performers in the Jubilee Singers played three shows in repertory: "Eli Whitney and the Invention of the Cotton Gin," "The Life of Stephen Foster" and "Uncle Tom's Cabin." Connected by tradition to the original Fisk University Jubilee Singers, the Buffalo group was part of a nationwide network of quartets that emerged out of the WWI-era migration northward, adapting southern musical styles and practices.

The group's members brought their experiences and perspectives into the shaping of the plays performed in Buffalo.

**"Infrastructure can create contexts for conversations between past and present – and help us chart a course to a better future."**

– Peter Rachleff



Two featured white protagonists, Whitney and Foster, who made their fame and fortune at the expense of African Americans, only to lose it all through their own foibles, the chicanery of other white people and the property rules – patents and copyrights – of a capitalist economy.

The adaptation of Uncle Tom's Cabin, meanwhile, included a notable departure from the original text. The Buffalo play added a scene after Tom's heartbreaking death in which a puppet of Abraham Lincoln floats over Tom's crumpled body, reciting the Emancipation Proclamation, voiced by a Black performer. The revision spotlighted enslaved people's resistance and their vital role in emancipation. Tom has not died in vain. With audiences left to contemplate this image, the Jubilee Singers closed the curtain and descended from the bridge to take their bow, revealed at last, large as life, as WPA workers, citizens of the Buffalo community and African Americans who embodied what those miniature figures had represented. And they had controlled the strings.

This rarely told story suggests that federal funding of "infrastructure" can not only build much-needed bridges and broadband cables. It can not only create a wide range of jobs for a wide range of working people. Infrastructure can also create the contexts for conversations between the past and the present to help us chart our course to a better future for all of us.

The East Side Freedom Library is committed to hosting and convening these conversations, online and in person. And sometimes we even host puppet plays as conversation starters!

– Peter Rachleff is co-director of the independent, non-profit East Side Freedom Library in St. Paul. Learn more about the ESFL's programming and events, and sign up for a twice-monthly newsletter, at [eastsidefreedomlibrary.org](http://eastsidefreedomlibrary.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)

## The Union Advocate

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## Educators seek public support for expanding solar power in SPPS

In late 2018, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change gave the world a stark warning. The warning was that the world must take unprecedented, aggressive action to fight climate change to have even a chance at avoiding its most severe impacts.

In spite of that warning, most national governments have taken only moderate actions, and some have taken steps to increase greenhouse gas emissions. This level of national government climate inaction is unacceptable if our goal is a healthy future for our children and grandchildren.

During this void of national leadership on climate action, one positive trend has developed. In the U.S. and throughout the world, cities, towns and organizations have taken their own steps to act on climate. These localities and groups have acknowledged that we cannot wait for national leaders, and they have developed a groundswell for climate action from the local level. Now our national leaders and governments must catch up.

I am proud to say that local action is growing within our home town of St. Paul. One specific local effort to combat climate change is being organized by the St. Paul Federation of Educators. In February, SPFE held a virtual town hall to promote efforts to push St. Paul Public Schools to be a leader in developing or using community solar energy. During that town hall and since, members of SPFE and partners throughout the community have learned how SPPS solar installations can benefit our students and families in a myriad of ways, including educational, environmental and financial benefits.

Now the time has come to turn that dream into a reality. SPPS students, SPFE members and St. Paul residents are organizing to reach the goal of making SPPS a climate action champion through solar. To achieve this goal, we must help members of the St. Paul school board and the district's administration by showing them how much support this effort has from community members, staff and, importantly, students.

This is where our fellow union members come in. I am hoping you will join this effort by signing our petition (at the link below) for "Solar in SPPS." As our numbers grow, we will get closer and closer to our ultimate goal: a clean, healthy and equitable future for our children and grandchildren.

Thank you!

**Tom Lucy,**

SPFE member, Como Park resident

(Editor's note: Review and sign the "Solar in SPPS" petition at [forms.gle/jd9cz1poZfmEVugX6](https://forms.gle/jd9cz1poZfmEVugX6).)



In Oakdale, Sen. Tina Smith meets with Minnesotans who rely on home care and the workers who provide it.

Union Advocate photo

## In meeting with Smith, home care workers, clients back Biden plan to fund 'caregiving infrastructure'

**By Michael Moore**

*Union Advocate editor*

OAKDALE — With Congress poised to take up President Joe Biden's infrastructure plan, workers, retirees and people with disabilities are teaming up to lobby in support of a provision that would provide \$400 billion in federal funding for in-home and community-based care.

It's a pitch home care worker Jacqueline Kelly delivered from her own backyard, along with other advocates, to U.S. Sen. Tina Smith at a listening session last month planned by SEIU Healthcare Minnesota, which represents over 20,000 home care workers statewide.

Home care investments in President Biden's proposal would create an estimated 1 million jobs and improve wages and benefits for workers in the industry. That would be a win for workers, Kelly told Smith, and for the clients they serve, like Kelly's 16-year-old son.

"I worry that if I can't offer living wages, benefits and a viable long-term career path, caregivers will choose to move into other employment situations that have more stability and less risk," Kelly said.

Kelly and other advocates at the event also noted that most home health care workers are women and people of color, who "have been left out or left behind for far too long."

"After COVID, I hope we all know better now," Kelly said. "Our communities, our families, our economy — we are all depending on the women doing this work to keep all of our lives going."

"And what could be more valuable than that?"

### Restoring the country

The home care measure is just one part of Biden's \$2 trillion infrastructure proposal. The American Jobs Plan also

calls for jobs-creating investments in roads, bridges, transit, schools, housing, manufacturing, research, climate change mitigation and more.

SEIU and other unions are backing the president's plan. AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka, the nation's highest ranking labor leader, called the "unprecedented federal investment" an important and necessary step toward "repairing, rebuilding and restoring our country."

"It's time for Congress to step up and deliver the funding we need to tackle the climate injustice, racial injustice and economic injustice facing working families while creating a new generation of well-paying union jobs," Trumka said.

Indeed, Biden's proposal includes "neutrality" language requiring projects funded through the legislation to offer workers a fair opportunity to form a union. That includes expanded support for home health care through Medicaid, which a White House fact sheet asserts would "put in place an infrastructure to create good middle-class jobs with a free and fair choice to join a union."

### An investment in independence

More than 90,000 people work as home health aides and personal care assistants in Minnesota, and home care workers here already have formed a union to improve their wages, benefits and training opportunities.

But advocates say the federal government must do more to stabilize and professionalize the industry's workforce, which is marked by high rates of turnover.

Lauren Thompson, who has cerebral palsy, told Smith that her struggle to find consistent, affordable home care has "impacted every aspect of my life." Over the last 10 years, Thompson said, she has bounced between in-home and

"facility-style" care, and now lives in a group home with three other people.

"I'm the safest I've been in years, but I've lost my freedom and my privacy," Thompson said. "Everyone needs to know that there's a large demographic of Americans who aren't truly living free because of this care crisis."

While some workers rely on roads or transit or internet access to get to work, millions of American workers with disabilities rely on home health care, Rob Wudlick, a clinical research project manager at the University of Minnesota's medical school, told the senator.

"Being able to live in the community allows me to work," said Wudlick, who suffered a life-changing injury as a teenager. "Having a strong health care workforce — those are my arms and legs. Without that, I am not able to get out of bed. I would have to live in a facility somewhere and wouldn't be able to work."

### 'Infrastructure for families'

Smith, a member of the Senate Health Committee, pledged to take the stories of workers and clients back to Congress as debate over Biden's American Jobs Plan begins. Funding home care is an investment in "infrastructure for families," she said.

"These jobs have been consistently undervalued, and that has often had devastating impacts, not only for families who need help, but also for the folks themselves that are doing this work and at the same time are often making poverty wages," Smith said.

The event at Kelly's home in Oakdale was the first in a series of town halls planned in 23 states, as home care workers, clients and advocates sought to use the power of their personal stories to boost support for Biden's proposal.



# Unions say state's new labor board is 'superior in every way,' but its funding comes under attack

As negotiations over a new, two-year budget came down to the wire last month, Minnesota lawmakers were poised to determine the fate of a newly opened state agency dedicated to keeping public-sector labor disputes out of court.

Public-sector workers and their unions pushed lawmakers to fully fund the Public Employment Relations Board, which began accepting unfair-labor-practice complaints from employers, unions and employees in July 2020.

Previously, those complaints would land in district court, where they might languish for a year or longer as parties on both sides racked up legal fees.

In a press conference June 9, union leaders and DFL legislators called the PERB a faster, more cost effective and accessible way to settle charges of unfair labor practices in the public sector.

"It is superior in every way to having to litigate a dispute about whether the district violated (labor law) in court," St. Paul Federation of Educators President Nick Faber said, noting that the district's legal fees take "resources out of the classroom."

When they established the PERB in 2014, state lawmakers modeled it after the National Labor Relations Board, charged with upholding federal labor law in the private sector. Rather than going to court, private-sector workers and employers file any charges of unfair labor practices with the NLRB.

Delores Flynn, a home care worker from Roseville, said members of her union filed a complaint with the PERB last year, after growing frustrated with a lack of clarity from state agencies over how a temporary pay increase related to the pandemic would be administered. Workers' complaint received a hearing in May.

"Whatever the ruling is, there was a fair process for both sides – the union and the state agencies – to make our legal arguments and be heard," said Flynn, a member of SEIU Healthcare Minnesota. "That is how it should be – not just for us in home care but for all public-sector workers."

But like most issues that unions pushed lawmakers to prioritize this year, funding for the PERB is caught in a standoff between the DFL-controlled House and the Republican Senate.

In their omnibus jobs bill, House DFLers signed off on the agency's funding request of roughly \$1 million over the next two years. But Republicans' version of the bill would defund the PERB and explicitly direct public-sector complaints back into district court until July 1, 2023.

Joining the press conference with union members, House Majority Leader Ryan Winkler slammed Republicans for "being held hostage to an ideological agenda that opposes organized labor."

Rep. Mohamud Noor, lead author of the House bill, said Republicans refuse to acknowledge the efficiencies the PERB offers both for public-sector workers and for the cities, counties, school districts and state agencies that employ them.

"This is truly a more innovative process," he said. Funding for the PERB had not been restored to the Senate jobs bill as this issue of The Advocate went to press.

Lawmakers needed to pass 14 budget bills into law by June 30 to avoid a state government shutdown.

– Michael Moore, Union Advocate editor

## At the Capitol



Members of Pipefitters Local 455, Laborers Local 563 and other Building Trades unions rally outside the Minnesota Senate chamber as lawmakers debate a proposal to require some refinery workers to complete an apprenticeship training program authorized by the state. After many Republicans initially supported the measure, the party's senate caucus pulled its backing in favor further studying the issue. "A proposal to settle for a study will tell us what we already know – that oil refineries are the highest hazard facilities in the state and need to be staffed with the mostly highly trained workforce possible," the Minnesota Building and Construction Trades Council responded.

Union Advocate photos

## Mixed results for union workers as Legislature sets budget

The Minnesota Legislature reconvened for a special session June 14 to determine how the state's \$52 billion biennial budget will be spent. Lawmakers faced a tight deadline of June 30 to finish their work without risking a state government shutdown.

Several agencies sent layoff notices to employees earlier in the month, leaving many workers feeling like "pawns in a political chess match," AFSCME Council 5 Executive Director Julie Bleyhl said. "Public service workers have carried us through the most difficult times in generations," Bleyhl said. "We need them on the job."

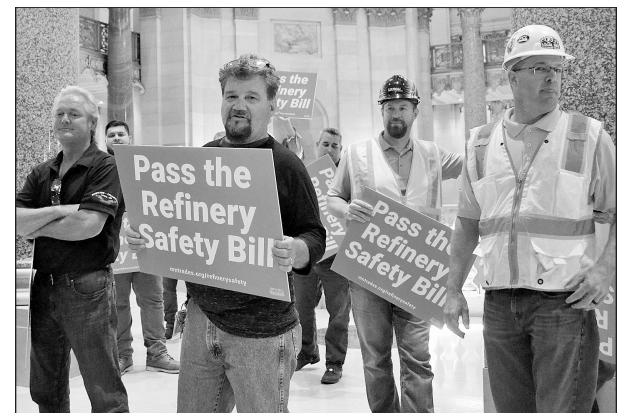
Most of the budget negotiations played out behind closed doors, leaving some advocates – union members included – feeling frustrated. "We continue to push hard on our priorities and push for more transparency in the process," Bethany Winkels, Minnesota AFL-CIO executive director, told the Minneapolis Labor Review.

While unions' top legislative priorities – like emergency leave for essential workers, new revenue for public schools and unemployment insurance for hourly school workers – succeeded in passing the DFL-controlled House, most failed to gain traction in the Republican Senate.

A refinery safety measure, supported by the state's Building Trades unions, appeared on track to pass in both chambers until Republican leaders abruptly pulled it from the jobs bill. Sen. Karla Bigham, whose district includes the Marathon refinery in St. Paul Park, where several out-of-state workers have replaced local tradespeople, offered a floor amendment to restore the language, but it failed on a party-line vote – despite winning support from several GOP senators a week earlier.

"This special session has shown us who stands with working people," St. Paul Regional Labor Federation President Kera Peterson said. "We're grateful for the work Sen. Bigham put into the refinery safety bill and hopeful that, in the long run, we will be successful."

But some victories appeared likely to emerge from the special session, including over \$7 billion in funding for



jobs-creating transportation projects, a tax credit to boost the state's film industry and conformity with federal tax rules exempting the first \$10,200 of workers' unemployment compensation during the pandemic.

Lawmakers also reached agreement on the largest increase to the state's per-pupil school funding formula in 15 years. Denise Specht, president of Education Minnesota, said the proposed budget invests enough in public schools to roll back a recent rounds of layoffs, while also making important investments in diversifying the state's teaching corps.

"With this agreement, there's no reason for class sizes to grow this fall because administrators laid off educators," Specht said. "It's time to stop the pink slips and bring back the educators who have already been let go."

But, she added, the budget – bolstered by federal relief funds – doesn't solve the long-term funding issues that prompted layoffs in the first place.

"It's not sustainable," Specht said. "But it is the best we can do until certain legislators stop prioritizing the wants of richest Minnesotans and largest corporations over the needs of working families and their children."

– Michael Moore, Union Advocate editor



# Essential workers tell lawmakers: Minnesotans support emergency leave

By Michael Moore  
Union Advocate editor

Thousands of essential workers in Minnesota have lost hours or exhausted their paid time off after being exposed to the coronavirus over the past 15 months, but a measure that would make them whole fell victim to partisan politics.

That surely disappointed more than 5,000 nurses, janitors, educators, child care workers and other Minnesotans who signed onto a petition in support of the Essential Workers Emergency Leave Act.

Union members delivered the petitions to Gov. Tim Walz and legislative leaders June 17, after holding a press conference on the Capitol steps.

"We deserve more than nice words, pats on the back and hearty handshakes," said Bill Schwandt, a paraprofessional in the Bloomington schools and member of Education Minnesota. "We deserve to be remembered, respected and, yes, compensated for the work that we did."

A week after receiving the petition from frontline workers, state lawmakers announced an agreement to spend \$250 million to compensate essential workers for stepping up and keeping the state running during the pandemic.

While an important step, essential workers said, the deal likely snuffed out hope for emergency leave. The bill's House author, Rep. Cedrick Frazier, chastised GOP leaders for refusing to take it up in the Senate, where powerful hospital



Bill Schwandt, an paraprofessional educator in the Bloomington schools, speaks at a press conference in support of emergency paid leave for essential workers.

Union Advocate photo

and businesses lobbyists were given "veto power" Frazier said.

Lawmakers had returned to the Capitol to negotiate the particulars of a \$52 billion, two-year budget by the end of the month. The budget, as several workers pointed out at the press conference, taps into federal relief funds that should prioritize support for essential workers, according to guidance from the Department of Treasury.

Emergency leave for time lost would help workers like Eva Lopez, a local janitor, regain their footing. Lopez is vice president of Service Employees (SEIU) Local 26, which represents janitors and security guards in the Twin Cities, and she said over 1,000 members of her union have missed work to quarantine or wait for test results.

"Most don't make enough to have big savings accounts, and we can never work

from home," Lopez said via a translator. "This year has been so hard."

Minnesota Nurses Association President Mary Turner, an intensive care nurse at North Memorial hospital in Robbinsdale, said members of her union have "dipped into their savings, their retirement, their 401(k)" plans to pay their bills while riding out quarantine.

The financial strain many health care workers are facing, Turner added, has only added to the stress of providing care through a crisis that has resulted in over 7,500 deaths statewide. "We aren't asking for a handout," Turner said. "What we are asking for is justice."

Turner and Troy Bowman, a Minneapolis custodian who had to quarantine twice in the last year, delivered copies of the petition to Walz, who has pledged support for the measure, and Sen. Erin Murphy (DFL-St. Paul), a lead author of the bill.

The DFL-controlled House included funding for emergency leave in its jobs bill last month, but Republicans in control of the Senate did not. Murphy, a registered nurse, promised to bring the petition to Senate Majority Leader Paul Gazelka's attention, and thanked essential workers for their service to Minnesota during the pandemic.

"You went to work, you took care of us, you kept us alive, you kept us healthy and you kept our economy going," she said.

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 **Building Trades  
Credit Union**

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## Labor News in Review

## SCHOOL STAFF VOTE 'UNION YES'

Employees of two Twin Cities charter schools, Great River School in St. Paul and Hiawatha Academies in Minneapolis, voted to unionize last month in elections overseen by the National Labor Relations Board. Both unions will become chapters of Education Minnesota, the statewide union of educators, which supported workers' organizing efforts.

Now, the new unions will create and adopt governing documents and start negotiating first contracts with their schools, a process that may take several months.

Staff at Great River voted June 4 to form their union, which will bring together 106 teachers and most non-management employees at the K-12 school. Union supporters said they looked forward to having a stronger voice in decisions that affect their working conditions – and students' learning conditions.

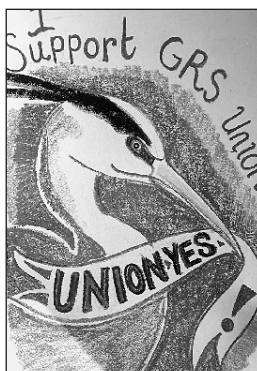
"We are proud and excited after months of organizing that our staff voted in overwhelming support to unionize," said Abby Mesnik, an adolescent math guide at Great River. "We look forward to working in partnership with Education Minnesota and Great River School to create positive change in education."

Hiawatha educators voted by mail, with the count taking place June 10. Their union brings together 205 educators and non-management employees.

"We are so proud of the work that got us this far and look forward to the next stage of the process: negotiating for a contract," said Tory Waggoner, an early college seminar teacher at Hiawatha Collegiate High School. "We will continue to center the needs of workers, students and families as we negotiate for a fair contract in the pursuit of creating sustainable working and learning conditions."

Education Minnesota now represents workers at five charter schools. Denise Specht, the statewide union's president, said school employees "are stronger and more likely to be heard when we stand together."

"All educators deserve a voice to advocate for their students' learning conditions and their own working conditions," Specht added. "When school staff have a say in how their schools are run, school climates improve and students are happier and more successful."



## STATE CONTRACT TALKS HEAT UP

A potential state government shutdown hasn't been the only concern on the minds of state employees lately, as they are also in contract negotiations with the state's Office of Management and Budget.

The talks, which cover about 18,000 members of Council 5 of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), began in April and have since entered the mediation process. The union plans a "push week" beginning July 19 to see negotiations across the finish line.

Members of the Minnesota Association of Professional Employees (MAPE) also are in negotiations with the state.

AFSCME members have given a theme to their campaign: "Respect Our Contract." Council 5 Executive Director Julie Bleyhl said the focus is on protecting seniority rights, due process and other long-standing contract language, while also delivering fair wage increases and keeping quality, affordable health insurance.

Bleyhl said union members on the negotiations team "will never back down from delivering a fair contract that treats state executive branch employees with respect and dignity, protects their health care and invests in their lives and workplaces."

Now more than ever, state employees deserve to be rewarded for their service to the public, she added.

"Public employees have shown up to work every single day throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and often in dangerous workplaces even before the pandemic, with chronic understaffing, underfunding and unsafe working conditions," Bleyhl said. "During the COVID-19 pandemic, state employees and public employees often risked exposure to the virus and also became infected as a result of their dedication to delivering results for Minnesotans."

## METRO TRANSIT CONTRACT HELD UP

Aug. 1, 2021, will mark one year since members of Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1005 have been working under the terms of an expired contract with Metro Transit.

"We're trying to get back to the table right now," Local 1005 President Ryan Timlin reported June 11, but no new negotiation dates had been set as of that date.

ATU Local 1005 members voted overwhelmingly May 17 to reject Metro Transit's "best and final offer."

Metro Transit has received about \$700 million in federal help to cope with the impacts of COVID-19 and its disruptions, Timlin noted.

As "essential workers," ATU Local 1005's 2,300 members at Metro Transit kept working through the COVID-19 pandemic and "it wreaked havoc on the membership," Timlin said. He reported that 353 Local 1005 members at Metro Transit came down with COVID. "It wiped-out a couple of departments."

Some members were hospitalized, but thankfully, Timlin reported, no Local 1005 members have died from COVID. "Nationally, we've had 153 [ATU] members who passed away from [COVID]," he noted.

Even though no Local 1005 members have died, Timlin cautioned, "they still don't know all the long-term effects" for the 353 members who did contract COVID-19.

Timlin said Metro Transit is providing COVID testing at the workplace but has not been providing paid time off work for Local 1005 members to get their COVID vaccines.

– Minneapolis Labor Review

## GUEST WORKERS EXPLOITED

A Minnesota company must pay \$157,000 in back pay and damages to 72 employees after an investigation by the U.S. Department of Labor found Lake Elmo-based Valdes Lawn Care and Snow Removal violated the temporary foreign workers' rights.

The company will also pay over \$127,000 in civil penalties and be barred from eligibility to participate in the H-2B visa program for three years.

The program allows employers to hire temporary foreign workers when U.S. workers are not available, but the Labor department's investigation found Valdes violated several provisions ensuring fair treatment of H-2B visa holders.

Valdes profited off of rent charged to workers, failed to reimburse workers for travel expenses, assigned workers responsibilities outside the scope of their terms of employment and did not provide workers with the minimum number of hours required by the program.

Additionally, the company violated minimum wage and overtime laws, according to the Department of Labor, and failed to keep adequate records.

"Employers who exploit temporary workers hurt both foreign and U.S. workers," said Kristin Tout, the Wage and Hour Division's assistant district director in Minneapolis. "The Wage and Hour Division is committed to ensuring that all workers receive their hard earned wages, and that employers using the H-2B visa program abide by all program requirements. Our enforcement protects workers and levels the playing field for employers who play by the rules."

## Labor Bowl is back after hiatus, raising funds for nonprofit Labor Studies &amp; Resource Center

After last year's hiatus due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the St. Paul Labor Studies and Resource Center (LSRC) and the St. Paul Regional Labor Federation are partnering on the 10th Annual Labor Bowl.

The team-bowling event raises funds for the nonprofit LSRC, which assists and advocates for union members and their families in the east metro.

Bowling will take place Aug. 16 at Sun Ray Lanes, with shift times at 2, 4 and 6 p.m.

All are welcome, and each bowler is asked to raise a minimum of \$100 in

pledges for the LSRC. (A team of four bowlers would raise \$400, and a team of five would raise \$500.)

Find registration information at [stpaulunions.org](http://stpaulunions.org), or call 651-222-3787 to schedule a time to bowl.

The LSRC, through its AFL-CIO Community Services work, connects union members and their families to several community resources and assistance programs. The LSRC also partners with labor organizations to provide important services such as strike and lay-off preparation training, community outreach and coalition building.

## Happy Independence Day

The members of  
Machinists Local Lodge  
459 extend our best  
wishes to all union  
members for a safe and  
happy July 4th holiday!







Members of the Minnesota Nurses Association and SEIU Healthcare Minnesota hold informational picketing outside Children's Hospital in downtown St. Paul. Union Advocate photo

## Nurses fear Children's restructuring leaves some without care

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

"We have been asking for months and months for them to consider what was going to happen when we got to this point, and they have failed to make decisive, timely decisions as to how to accommodate when the patients came back," Pederson said.

"We felt we needed to bring our nurses out to the street to show them that we feel the urgency inside the hospital, facing the families and patients that we don't have rooms for, don't have resources for. Hopefully, they will listen."

Unveiled before the coronavirus outbreak in the U.S., Children's restructuring plan would shift most critical-care services to Minneapolis and downsize the St. Paul hospital, leaving it to handle more outpatient care.

During the pandemic, Children's moved to speed up the process. The result has been bad for patients and staff alike, and nurses at both facilities are taking notice.

"Children's is taking away services from the sickest kids served in the St. Paul hospital while placing more of a burden on the already strapped resources of the

Minneapolis campus," Children's Minneapolis nurse Tricia Ryshkus said. "And now what's happening is kids are waiting for care, and it's increasing health inequities for all of these kids."

On the picket line in St. Paul, nurses hung 40 sets of hospital scrubs on a makeshift clothesline, representing nurses the hospital has reassigned or lost since the restructuring began. They also strung photos of 26 vacant hospital beds to represent the hospital's lost capacity for serving the community.

Nurses also called out Children's for being slow to respond to a rise in adolescent patients seeking critical mental-health services.

Nurses at both hospitals have been let go during the restructuring, according to MNA, which says the situation has left both hospital campuses critically short-staffed and without enough beds to admit patients.

"It's a huge concern for a community that relies on us, knowing we don't have the beds or the staff resources to take care of them and provide the high level of care that Children's has always been known for and that we are very proud to provide," Pederson said. "It's a failure to plan, and it's a choice."

## Students' labor history work honored at Minnesota History Day

Middle school and high school students participating in the 2021 Minnesota History Day competition won cash prizes for projects that examined labor history.

The Minneapolis Labor Review, Saint Paul Union Advocate and University of Minnesota Labor Education Service teamed-up to sponsor eight cash prizes of \$100.

Each year, the National History Day competition selects a theme and students choose to research a topic and present their findings via an exhibit, documentary film, live performance, website or research paper.

Junior Division winners included:

- Individual Exhibit, "The Triangle Shirtwaist Fire: Transforming Labor Laws," by Gwen Glasrud, Central Middle School, Eden Prairie.

- Individual Documentary, "38 Questions: How One Survey Ignited A Voice, Sparked A Movement, and Changed Our World," by Cecelia Erickson, Central

Middle School, Eden Prairie.

- Individual Website, "The Story of The Newsboys of New York City and Their Historic Two Week Strike," by Max Ulven, Capitol Hill Magnet School, St. Paul.

- Research Paper, "1946 St. Paul Teachers' Strike: How Teachers Communicated the Need for Better Schools," by Mara Booth, Byron Middle School.

Senior Division winners included:

- Group Exhibit, "Working Rosies," by Haley Shegstad and Nova Brown, North Lakes Academy, Forest Lake.

- Individual Documentary, "Riveting History," by Libby Bures, Roosevelt High School, Minneapolis.

- Individual Performance: "The Lavender Scare - Redbait & Switch," by Frances Ronning, DeLaSalle High.

- Group Website, "Newsboys' Strike: Actions Speak Louder Than Words," by Akshay Nambudiripad, Kalid Ali, Mani Chadaga, and Simon Mulrooney, St. Paul Central.

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# Outnumbered on the job site, tradeswomen find camaraderie, support via new 'Lean In Circles'

By Michael Moore

Union Advocate editor

Building Trades unions in the U.S. and Canada have launched a peer mentorship and training program to help tradeswomen thrive in an industry historically dominated by men.

Lean In Circles for Union Tradeswomen, a partnership between unions and LeanIn.Org, brings tradeswomen together in small groups – virtual gatherings during the pandemic – to connect, share advice and learn new skills.

Lakeville resident Jean-Marie Baudhuin, a member of Twin Cities-based Laborers Local 563, serves as co-chair of a circle that brings together 13 “fabulous” tradeswomen from several states. She said she looks forward to the meeting each month.

“We’re open, confidential and respectful of each other,” Baudhuin said. “We can share things that have happened to us on the job site. We bounce off each other different things that are going on and how we can support each other.”

“I think that’s extremely beneficial for women.”

Jobs in the unionized construction trades guarantee fair pay and are in high demand. They offer an earn-as-you-learn training model and family-supporting benefits.

Still, less than 4% of construction workers are women.

In recent years, Building Trades unions have expanded efforts to recruit women into their apprenticeship training programs – and to support women throughout their construction careers. The idea for a nationwide mentorship and peer-support program grew out of feedback from participants at the union-sponsored Tradeswomen Build Nations Conference in Minneapolis two years ago.

Today, some 700 tradeswomen participate in 76 Lean In Circles across the U.S. and Canada, and organizers are hoping more women will join as awareness spreads. Tradeswomen can find circles that work for them at [leanin.org/tradeswomen](http://leanin.org/tradeswomen).

“Increasing opportunities for women in our unions is incredibly important, and we want to provide them

## Get Involved!

Find your place in a Lean In Circle for Union Tradeswomen at [leanin.org/tradeswomen](http://leanin.org/tradeswomen).

with all the tools needed to be successful,” Brent Booker, secretary-treasurer of North America’s Building Trades Unions, said. “This includes being an ally and supporting women at all levels of the construction industry.”

Peer-support “circles” connect thousands of women across the world who work in a wide range of industries, according to LeanIn.Org, a nonprofit backed by Facebook executive Sheryl Sandberg, author of a 2013 book with the same name. The model offers women a space to share career-related challenges, give and get advice, and find support.

“Unions are all about collective voice, and this innovative program offers the perfect opportunity to enhance that solidarity,” AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Liz Shuler said. “Connecting with other women in similar situations and sharing strategies through networks is invaluable.”

Baudhuin describes her circle as both supportive and informative.

Each monthly meeting covers a specific topic. Sometimes, the conversation focuses on practical matters, like where to find work clothes and boots that fit women comfortably.

Other times, the conversation is more reflective, with tradeswomen discussing challenges they face working in a male-dominated industry and how gender bias can play out on a job site. Participants share practical advice for coping, responding and advocating for themselves.

“Often you’re the only woman on a crew,” Baudhuin said. “And the experience really depends on that crew, whether they’ve worked with women before, whether they know you belong or whether they look at you like you’re taking some guy’s job.”

“All of us, without exclusion, have had incidents where we have been sexually harassed or dealt with



Jean-Marie Baudhuin is a member of Laborers Local 563 who participates in Lean In Circles for Tradeswomen. submitted photo

inappropriate behavior or just felt isolated because we are women.”

By providing greater opportunities to share advice and support, organizers hope more women who try out a career in the trades stick with it. LeanIn.Org reports that 90% of tradeswomen participating in a circle say they are building strong connections and bonds, while also gaining leadership, moderating and organizing skills.

Baudhuin counts herself among them.

“We’re all trying to prove ourselves, and sometimes we question ourselves and whether we belong,” she said. “In sharing, we realize this isn’t a personal thing, but a systemic thing that’s working itself out over time.”

## Registration open for Roofers’ Twin Cities Sporting Clays Shoot

Registration is open for the Union Sportsmen’s Alliance’s 11th Annual Roofers Twin Cities Sporting Clays Shoot. The event will be Saturday, Sept. 11, at Wild Marsh Sporting Clays, 13481 Co.

Rd. 3 in Clear Lake Township.

Proceeds will support the conservation programs of the Union Sportsmen’s Alliance, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit.

Shooters receive lunch and

drinks, 12- or 20-gauge shotgun shells and clay targets. The event also will feature awards, door prizes, and premium drawings. Individual registration is available for \$175 per adult shooter or

\$125 per age 17 and younger.

Sponsor registrations also are available and include team registrations.

Register online at [union-sportsmen.org/shoots21](http://union-sportsmen.org/shoots21).



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## Fowler, Dicklich give Building Trades new leadership team

LIUNA Local 563 Business Manager Joe Fowler has succeeded Harry Melander as president of the Minnesota Building and Construction Trades Council.

The council's executive board met May 24 and accepted Melander's retirement, effective June 4. At the same meeting, board members voted unanimously to elect Fowler as their next president.

In a statement, Fowler said he was "honored and incredibly humbled" to be elected to the post.

"I'm looking forward to supporting the good work that the trade unions do, advocating for both the necessary investments into Minnesota's infrastructure as well as investments into the working-class citizens of the state who help to keep the economy moving," Fowler said.

Fowler, a second-generation member of Local 563, began union construction work in 1999 and became a business agent for the local in 2013. He has served as Local 563's business man-



Joe Fowler



Tom Dicklich

ager since 2017.

Fowler said he looks forward to expanding on the work of Building Trades affiliates to grow employment opportunities for the state's 70,000 union tradespeople, with a focus on jobs that "support a middle class living, provide quality family healthcare and include pensions that allow union members to retire with dignity, and protect the health and safety of construction workers throughout all of Minnesota."

### New executive director

The Building Trades Council also

welcomed a new executive director. Tom Dicklich, former Hibbing city administrator, began work in the position June 1.

Dicklich replaces Jessica Looman, who left in January to accept a position with the Biden administration.

Dicklich previously served as legislative director for the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development and, prior to that, in the office of the majority leader in the Minnesota House of Representatives.

"The State Building Trades is an important voice for more than 70,000 skilled union construction professionals in Minnesota," Dicklich said. "I look forward to furthering the Council's mission to grow construction union membership in the state by working closely with our affiliates and members."

The Minnesota State Building and Construction Trades Council represents skilled union construction professionals working in 15 trades.

## Melander retires after 12 years at helm of Minnesota Building Trades Council

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

was an immigrant from Sweden while his mother was an immigrant from Ireland. Now, he said, "there are new immigrants here and they're going to support the labor community."

A native of St. Paul, Melander joined what was then Carpenters Local 87 in 1973, following his father and grandfather into the local.

Over the years, he rose in union leadership, becoming Local 87 president, president of the Minnesota Statewide Council of Carpenters and executive secretary of the Saint Paul Building and Construction Trades Council, to name just a few highlights.

"Harry has dedicated his career to the labor movement and to the union construction professionals of Minnesota," said Craig Olson, secretary-treasurer of the Minnesota Building Trades. "His passion has been growing the union construction workforce, supporting diversity and inclusion in our industry, and tirelessly advocating for affordable housing and increased private and public investment in construction and infrastructure."

"You can't do these jobs without a lot of help," Melander said. "I've had a lot of help from a lot of good people."

"I've had great mentors," Melander said. He named Dick Anfang, his predecessor as president of the State Building Trades, as well as former Minnesota AFL-CIO presidents Dave Roe, Danny Gustafson and Ray Waldron.

"The AFL-CIO is much different than when I first attended a convention back in 1976," Melander said. "I think the labor movement is in a unique position now."

Commenting on politics, Melander said: "We have a two-party form of government... The polarization in both parties is not good. The Building Trades always say, it doesn't make any difference your affiliation, if you support us, we'll support you."

He added, "the DFL today is much different than when Hubert Humphrey and Dave Roe were guiding the ship," but he also lamented the changes in the Republican Party.

Melander has served on the board of a number of organizations in the community - Minnesota Housing Partnership, Twin Cities Housing Development Corporation and the Minneapolis Federal Reserve Bank, to name a few - and said he will continue his community involvement.

Looking to retirement, Melander listed home projects ahead. "My passion is being a carpenter," he said.

## For Highland hoops coach, career pathways in trades are a slam dunk

Highland Park boys basketball coach and self-proclaimed "basketball junkie" Jesse McCann has been a student of the game since his early elementary years. He has enjoyed the game as a fan, player and coach.

"What I admire in a basketball player isn't just natural athletic ability," McCann said. "That's a plus, of course, but I look for players who have great command of the game, court awareness, show dedication to the team and remain motivated to practice skills until they become second nature."

McCann applies these same principles off the court, as career path coordinator at St. Paul's Highland Park Senior High, where he connects students with career exploration experiences and helps them plan out how to attain those careers.

"The best part of my job is connecting students with work-based learning opportunities, where they can acquire job skills and explore their interests," McCann said. "When students engage in work-based learning and explore real jobs in the workforce, you can see their perspectives and interests change. They become confident in their own skills and empowered to make goals to achieve their career ambitions."

### Real conversations

"College is a serious commitment and investment," McCann said. "I challenge students to have real conversations about their futures. If you do not have a clear path on what career college will help you achieve, or you go because your friends are, statistics show there's a good chance you won't end up finishing. And that debt is not just wiped away."

St. Paul Public Schools Career Pathways highlight high wage and in-demand careers in several fields. There

is also a push to encourage students to consider careers in the construction trades.

"The focus has become more around career planning and less about admission into a college," McCann said of his work. "This does not mean college won't be a part of their plan; for many, college will play a part of their journey. However, it is more about backward planning to know what type of college or post-secondary training your career calls for."

"It can be tough to have these real conversations. We dig in and it can be uncomfortable, but my hope is for all my students to go into careers that make them happy and speak to their talents and interests."

### Summer internship opportunities

One career field to which McCann is seeking to draw more attention is Minnesota's construction trades. He collaborates with his friend and trades navigator Sam Ebute to encourage students to apply for the Minnesota Trades Academy (MTA). "Sam attracts many student interns with his sense of calm and encouraging demeanor," McCann said.

The Minnesota Trades Academy is one of the programs offered through Construction Career Pathways, a statewide nonprofit supported by trade unions, construction companies, a growing list of Minnesota school districts and the state, with the mission of introducing Minnesota's young people to skilled careers in the construction industry.

The MTA serves students, ages 16 to 20, who primarily live in the metro area. Students work 20 to 30 hours per week and are paid as they work on real-life projects.

McCann said the program gives his

### Explore careers in the construction industry

- Learn more about the Minnesota Trades Academy and other pathways into the trades at [ConstructionCareers.org](https://ConstructionCareers.org)

students the resources and the networking opportunities to build their professional brand and engage in serious conversations about their futures.

"Being a part of the union construction trades is not just about swinging a hammer," McCann said. "The trades are not given the attention they deserve within our educational system."

"There are so many layers to the careers within the construction industry. Many careers include viable, high-paying jobs for people who have the knack to work with their hands, enjoy being outside or just like to create."

McCann has many sophomores and juniors interested in the MTA program and plans to work with local educators and trades professionals to provide construction experiences earlier in students' education, so by the time students are seniors they have the information they need to consider a full-time apprenticeship with the trades.

"The Minnesota Trades Academy program changes kids' lives," McCann said. "I will continue to be a referral source for MTA. Students participate in leadership activities, build their resumes, get interviewing skills and receive real training from union construction training centers and tours of worksites, from house building to oil refineries."

- Reprinted with permission from



# Picketing at St. Paul Park refinery enters sixth month, as Teamsters keep pressure on Speedway

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

"We're trying to save Minnesota jobs and keep the community safe."

"They want us to do multiple jobs," Local 120 member Don Lande added. "I already do three jobs, and they want us to do more. That is way too much. You're just way too overloaded to do all that stuff and do it safely."

Scott Kroona, a business agent with the union, said in a statement that the vote shows refinery workers remain united in "putting their livelihoods on the line to protect the community they love."

"As we've said from the beginning of the work stoppage, our top priority is ensuring that the St. Paul Park refinery operates safely, given the dangerous and volatile chemicals at the facility and the intensive training needed for workers to do their jobs," Kroona said.

"We are willing to be flexible and creative at the bargaining table to reach an agreement that will maintain high safety standards at the plant," he added. "If Marathon Petroleum truly cares about safe operations, it's time to reach an agreement that gets the skilled members of Teamsters Local 120 back to work."

Meanwhile, support for striking Teamsters continued to pour in from fellow union members and lawmakers — not just in Minnesota, but across the country.

In late May, Teamsters in Ohio joined a local congressman in hosting a rally near Marathon's corporate headquarters in Findlay. They demanded the company stop prioritizing profits over safety at the St. Paul Park refinery.

"When we heard about the safety concerns in Minnesota, we knew it was on us to support our Teamsters brothers and sisters' efforts," said Patrick Darrow, president of Ohio-based Teamsters Joint Council 41. "We'll continue to fight alongside the Teamsters from St. Paul Park until their message is heard loud and clear by the arrogant executives at Marathon."

U.S. Rep. Tim Ryan, a Democrat who represents the state's 13th Congressional District, called on Marathon to "stop gambling with people's safety, and to cut their workers in on the deal."

A delegation of St. Paul Park workers



Members of Teamsters Local 120 on strike at Marathon walk a morning picket line, clogging truck traffic outside the St. Paul Park refinery. The work stoppage at the facility began Jan. 21.

Union Advocate photo

traveled to Ohio in advance of the rally. They hung posters around Findlay calling Marathon Executive Vice President Ray Brooks the "Most Dangerous Man in Minnesota." Local 120 President Tom Erickson said Brooks is among the executives primarily responsible for seeking to revoke critical safety measures and prolonging the labor dispute.

"Marathon Petroleum has outraged the people of Minnesota with their neglect of serious safety concerns raised by our members in St. Paul Park, which forced us to make the trek to Ohio," Erickson said.

Closer to home, U.S. Rep. Betty McCollum, whose district includes the refinery, accused Marathon of union busting in a scathing letter to plant manager Amy Macak June 3.

McCollum pointed to an explosion at the Husky Refinery in Duluth in 2018, as well as the findings of a recent report doc-

umenting "troubling incidents and practices" at the St. Paul Park refinery since Marathon took over.

"Please work in good faith with the union to reach a contract that is fair and maintains the safety of workers and this community," McCollum wrote. "The lives of thousands of Minnesotans are at risk without a 100% commitment to worker and community safety, public health and environmental protection."

Local 120 members continue to raise awareness of their strike at area Speedway gas stations, which receive fuel from the St. Paul Park facility. Every day, union members like Edstrom and Lande fan out across the Twin Cities with banners and fliers to educate the public about Marathon's failure to bargain a good contract with their union.

"I'm sure the community knows they've got a [hydrofluoric acid alkylation] unit in there, just like Husky up in

## How to support striking refinery workers

- Send a message to Marathon executives, and find graphics to share on social media, online at [areyouintheburnzone.com](http://areyouintheburnzone.com).
- The St. Paul Regional Labor Federation can direct supporters to ongoing solidarity actions at local Speedway stations. Call 651-222-3787 for details.

Superior," Edstrom said at a recent banner event. "We're a pretty specialized workforce. We're trained to know how to deal with all the chemicals. It's a dangerous place to work, and that's why you've got to have skilled laborers in there."

"We just want Marathon to do the right thing, but they don't want to bargain."

## SPRLF mourns Niemela

The St. Paul Regional Labor Federation mourns the loss of Linda Niemela, who worked over 25 years as office manager of the RLF and its predecessor, the St. Paul Trades & Labor Assembly. Niemela, a former member of OPEIU Local 12, died in May at the age of 68.

"Linda was a familiar, friendly face to all who visited the Labor Center, and her work was essential to the strength and success of our federation," RLF President Kera Peterson said. "She was our colleague, our union sister and our friend. Our thoughts are with Linda's family and loved ones."

Niemela, of White Bear Lake, is survived by her children Jeffrey and Jennifer. A memorial service was held June 10.



## 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

July 22, 4:30 p.m.

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

### Dakota County Assembly

July 8, 7 p.m.

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

### Ramsey County Assembly

July 27, 6 p.m.

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

### Washington County Assembly

July 28, 6 p.m.

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



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





# Minutes of the Saint Paul Regional Labor Federation

**MAY 12, 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, Beissel, Edwards, Engeldorf, Faber, Gibbons, Guertin, Luneburg, Madden, Markham-Kocurek, McNamara, Michelson, Peterson, Schmidt, Slattey, St. Aoro, Tastad-Damer, Vandassor and Varco. Excused were Gorman and Sansom. Absent were Hoppe, Jones, Ryan, and Terry.

## **MOMENT OF SILENCE**

President Peterson called for a moment of silence for Union Sister Linda Niemela.

## **CREDENTIALS**

Credentials were received from AFSCME Local 2508 and Minnesota Nurses Association. President Peterson administered the Oath of Obligation to those new delegates and alternates present online.

## **COMMITTEE ON POLITICAL EDUCATION (COPE) MINUTES MAY 12, 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 Beedle, Beissel, Edwards, Engeldorf, Faber, Gibbons, Guertin, Hoerth, Krey, Luneburg, Madden, Markham-Kocurek, McNamara, Michelson, Peterson, Schmidt, Slattey, St. Aoro, Tastad-Damer, Vandassor and Varco. Excused were DeRoy, Gorman, Naseth, Sansom and Wise. Absent were Hoppe, Jones, Lohmann, Mayer, Ryan, and Terry.

President Peterson reported on the PRO Act, the plan to complete the MN AFL-CIO postcards to go to senators and Minnesota Nurses Association pushing for paid pandemic leave of absence for health care workers. Please support by calling your legislators and senators.

Peterson also reported on the legislative campaign to extend unemployment insurance to hourly school employees, a rally and petition for funding our future, lobbying to secure funding for the union contracts covering state workers, and the charter amendment to allow enforcements of violations to city ordinances.

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

## **EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES MAY 12, 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 appointment of Tom Edwards, APWU, to the RLF Executive Board as Trustee.

– USDA Farmers to Families Food box program has been very successful across Minnesota, Wisconsin, North Dakota and South Dakota, with assistance provided to events in Arizona and Washington. Two and a half million pounds of food has been distributed, and Peterson thanked the board for encouraging and supporting this program.

## *Union members giving back through RLF's local labor assemblies*



In May, the Chisago County Labor Assembly held a fundraising drive to purchase school supplies for students in the Chisago Lakes school district. The effort raised \$2,660, which organizers used to buy markers, glue sticks, crayons and construction paper. Members of Chisago Lakes Education Minnesota delivered the supplies to Taylors Falls Elementary School last month, and an additional donation will be made before school resumes in the fall. Pictured delivering supplies at Taylors Falls Elementary School are, L to R, (front) Becky Anderson, Emily Anderson, Becca Johnson, Leah Sunquist, (back) Trevor Bernsdorf, Mary Grote, Colleen Nocerini, Chelsea Becker, Sheila Wiehl, Laura Greene, Sheryl Spray, Carrie Brandt, Cheryl Moberg and Jeff Lindeman.

submitted photo

– The RLF continues to work towards meeting our objectives and goals set.

• **ORGANIZING UPDATES/CAMPAIGNS:** AFSCME, Building Trades, Minnesota Nurses Association, NALC, SAG-AFTRA, SEIU Healthcare Minnesota, SEIU Local 26, Teamsters Local 120 and UFCW Local 1189 gave updates on their organizing activities.

• **M/S/C TO APPROVE THE APPOINTMENT OF TOM EDWARDS, APWU, TO THE ST. PAUL REGIONAL LABOR FEDERATION EXECUTIVE BOARD AS TRUSTEE.**

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

## **REPORT OF THE TREASURER**

Secretary-Treasurer Engeldorf reported on the financial status of the Federation as of April 2021. The report was accepted as read.

## **PRESIDENTS REPORT**

President Peterson reviewed the goals and objectives of the St. Paul Regional Labor Federation, AFL-CIO, and the work that the RLF has been doing by supporting unions and the PRO Act.

## **STAFF/LABOR LIAISON REPORTS**

Erica Dalager Reed, AFL-CIO Community Services liaison, reported on the food distribution program and helping union members in a time of need.

## **REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES**

• Michael Madden reported on behalf of the Chisago County Labor Assembly. The assembly held a food distribution event on Saturday, April 24,

2021, in North Branch. Its 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. The assembly held its annual Worker's Memorial Service at Lebanon Hills Cemetery in Apple Valley on Saturday, April 28, 2021. Its next meeting will be the second Thursday of the month at 7:00 p.m. via Zoom. If you would like to participate, RSVP to Colleen Nocerini, political organizer.

• Brian Beedle reported on behalf of the Washington County Labor Assembly. The assembly is continuing to work to provide support to the community. Its next meeting will be the fourth Wednesday of the month at 6:00 p.m. via Zoom.

• Theresa St. Aoro reported on behalf of the Ramsey County Labor Assembly. The assembly is changing its meeting to the fourth Tuesday of the month at 6:00 p.m. to increase accessibility for members to attend.

## **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

SAG-AFTRA is working on setting up a Labor Breakfast between media and union leaders.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

Use of the Saint Paul Labor Center hall and the National Guard were discussed.

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

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



The Washington County Labor Assembly has taken up a new initiative to volunteer regularly at Christian Cupboard Emergency Food Shelf in Oakdale. The nonprofit needs help sorting produce and assembling food packages, tasks union volunteers (pictured L to R) Brian Beedle, Jerry Serfling, Karla Sand, Colleen Nocerini and Jasmine Kitto took up for the first time in May. The assembly welcomes support from additional union volunteers; its next scheduled volunteer shift will run from 2 to 4 p.m. July 9. To get involved, contact Jasmine Kitto, an organizer with the St. Paul Regional Labor Federation, at [jkitto@stpaulunions.org](mailto:jkitto@stpaulunions.org).



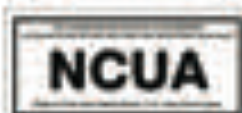
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