

The St. Paul Union Advocate

125th Year, No. 4, Issue 5450

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

September 2021

Do Something!

Visit the fair's Labor Pavilion

The Minnesota AFL-CIO Labor Pavilion will offer a daily lineup of family-friendly programming from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. all 12 days of the Minnesota State Fair, Aug. 26 to Labor Day, Sept. 6.

Stop by the pavilion, located at the corner of Dan Patch and Cooper near the Snelling Avenue entrance, and spend part of your fair visit learning about the unions of the Minnesota AFL-CIO.

Programming will include giveaways and demonstrations highlighting the wide range of jobs done by union members across the state.

There will also be opportunities to take action in support of union members and their campaigns. The Minnesota AFL-CIO promises free union bandanas to anyone who fills out a postcard to their elected officials.

For more information and the latest updates, visit mnaffcio.org.

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



Richard Trumka, former president of the nation's largest labor federation, the AFL-CIO, spoke to students at the University of Minnesota in November 2015. file photo

In Memoriam

Richard Trumka: Remembering a leader devoted to family, democracy

Editor's note: Richard Trumka died suddenly Aug. 5 at the age of 72. Trumka devoted his life to the labor movement, serving as president of the AFL-CIO, with 12.5 million union members nationwide, from 2009 until his death.

AFL-CIO staff published this remembrance in the days following Trumka's death.

Richard Louis Trumka dedicated his entire life to making sure every institution he touched – the United Mine Workers of

America (UMWA), the AFL-CIO, the U.S. government and the world community – served working people and the public interest, comforted the afflicted and afflicted the comfortable.

In that sense Trumka's legacy above all was his fight for democracy, from the UMWA of his youth to the AFL-CIO to the U.S. in 2020 to the world that he influenced through the global labor movement. Every day of his career, Trumka fought for the right of working people to be

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2021 Election

AFL-CIO backs Carter's re-election bid as labor sets sights on local elections

Mayor Melvin Carter and four candidates for school board in St. Paul secured the AFL-CIO endorsement last month, as area unions turned their attention to local elections on the horizon this fall.

Delegates to the St. Paul Regional Labor Federation, AFL-CIO, voted Aug. 11 to endorse Carter, the DFL incumbent seeking his second term as mayor.

Additionally, the federation endorsed James Farnsworth, Halla Henderson and Uriah Ward for full terms on the St. Paul Public Schools Board of Education, and Clayton Howatt in a special election to serve the remaining two years of a term vacated by Steve Marchese, who resigned from the board.

The endorsements are the first of several the St. Paul RLF is likely to make in local elections across the east-metro area this fall. The federation brings together over 100 local unions, representing nearly 60,000 union members who live and work in Chisago, Dakota, Ramsey and Washington counties.

"Our federation endorses candidates after a rigorous screening process that offers union members an opportunity to interact directly with local candidates," said Kera Peterson, president of the St. Paul RLF.

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Members of the Crow Wing County VFW install the colors at the start of the Minnesota State Building and Construction Trades Council's convention, held at Madden's Resort in the Brainerd area. Union Advocate photo

Leadership changes, but Trades' focus remains on building careers, communities

By Michael Moore
Union Advocate editor

A new president gavelled the 75th convention of the Minnesota State Building and Construction Trades Council to order at Madden's on Gull Lake July 22, as delegates unanimously affirmed their Executive Board in electing Laborers Local 563 Business Manager Joe Fowler to lead the statewide organization.

President Emeritus Harry Melander, who retired in June after 12 years leading the

council, administered the oath of office to Fowler and other executive officers as one of the convention's first orders of business.

"I will give it my all to advocate for the just cause of organized construction labor in the state of Minnesota," Fowler said, thanking delegates for their support.

While the leadership of the organization has changed – it's the first convention for newly hired Executive Director Tom Dicklich, too – the Building Trades Council's

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 16)

Well Said

"In the coming years, when we look back on these days, let us be able to say we rebuilt our country and our democracy. That we banded together to collectively bargain for working people today – and for generations to come. That we returned power to the hands of the workers. This is our time! This is our moment! We are North America's labor movement, and we will not be denied!"



– **Richard Trumka**, in his final speech, delivered to Latino unionists gathered at a convention in Las Vegas



Labor Voices: Kera Peterson

Trumka saw unions as a force for good beyond the workplace

Our nation suffered a great loss when Richard Trumka, president of the AFL-CIO for the last 12 years, died suddenly Aug. 5. President Trumka was a champion for working people everywhere, and an outspoken advocate at the highest levels of power for the values we share as union members. But for many of us who are active in the labor movement, including me, President Trumka was also a source of encouragement to continue working, organizing and fighting together to make our communities better, more just places for everyone.

It's vital work, as President Trumka well knew. Our nation is facing multiple crises at once: troubling racial and economic inequalities, a changing climate and home-grown threats to our democratic institutions. We will never meet these challenges – at least not in any meaningful or just way – without our labor movement leading the way. President Trumka believed our unions to be a force for good in the world, with the power and potential to do important things. And he laid out that belief in what, tragically, would be his final public remarks – two speeches delivered remotely three days before his death.

A union is the best tool working people have to make our workplaces fair, to hold our employers accountable and to demand our fair share of the wealth we produce. And what gives our unions strength? Solidarity. That's the message President Trumka, who worked in the coal mines of Pennsylvania, delivered to 1,100 union coal miners in Alabama, who have been on strike since April. "When you've been working alongside your fellow workers two miles underground, when you've been watching each other's backs and fighting for your rights on the job, you truly trust and understand each other in a very, very fundamental way," Trumka told the miners. The mine's hedge-fund investors, he added "have never led the lives that we have."

In the same way workers in Alabama are sticking together to fight for a fair contract, Americans must also come together to fight for democracy – on the job and in our government. For President Trumka, they were two sides of the same coin. "It's not a coincidence that the opponents of democracy are also anti-worker politicians," he told delegates to the Labor Council for Latin

"When working people speak with one, united voice – on the job and at the ballot box – we make our communities better."

– Kera Peterson



American Advancement's convention. "Democracy must exist at the ballot box, and also in the workplace." That means pushing back against Republican-led efforts to make it harder for people to vote. It also means passing the PRO Act, which would give workers more power to form unions and gain a seat at the table in decisions that affect their jobs.

When working people join together to speak with one, united voice – on the job and at the ballot box – we make our communities better. President Trumka not only understood this, but he shouted it from the hilltops every chance he got. It's why he was such a passionate supporter of local labor councils like the St. Paul Regional Labor Federation, where members of over 100 local unions come together to support each other and work together, in solidarity, to improve the lives of working people. We stand shoulder to shoulder on the picket line. We volunteer together. We speak up as one in support of our shared priorities, like public infrastructure, strong schools, good jobs and, yes, the PRO Act.

At the St. Paul Regional Labor Federation, we will always be grateful for the support President Trumka showed us during his tenure in office and his tireless advocacy on behalf of working people. We won't soon forget his words of encouragement and solidarity, either. Rest in power, Rich.

– Kera Peterson, a member of Machinists Local Lodge 459, serves as president of the St. Paul Regional Labor Federation. The federation brings together over 100 local unions, representing nearly 60,000 members who live and work in Chisago, Dakota, Ramsey and Washington counties. Learn more about the federation and how to get involved in its work online at www.stpaulunions.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

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Labor Events

Retiree Council plans hybrid convention

The Minnesota State Retiree Council, AFL-CIO, will hold its annual convention Sunday, Sept. 19, at Sheet Metal Workers Local 10's hall in Maplewood, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

The convention will be a hybrid affair, offering both in-person attendance and virtual attendance via Zoom. Delegates who are not fully vaccinated are asked to attend virtually.

Business likely to come before delegates to the convention, the council's 23rd, will include nomination and election of five executive officers, proposed by-law changes for selection of board members, awards and resolutions.

Organizers were working at press time to line up guest speakers, too.

Convention call packets were mailed to the council's affiliates and are available on the organization's website, mnretired.org.

Explore careers with Construct Tomorrow

Construct Tomorrow, a nonprofit dedicated to raising awareness about career opportunities in the construction trades, will host a two-day event at the Boy Scouts Basecamp in St. Paul, offering students hands-on opportunities to explore a range of construction crafts.

Students who attend a Construct Tomorrow event receive practical, one-on-one advice from experienced trades professionals and current apprentices – young men and women not much older than the students themselves – who are thriving in union apprenticeship programs.

For more information on the Construct Tomorrow event Sept. 28 and 29, or to get your union or high school involved, go to www.construct-tomorrow.org/trades-registration.

Late Labor Day picnic at the Freedom Library

The East Side Freedom Library invites working people of all backgrounds and occupations to a Labor Solidarity Picnic on Sunday, Sept. 12, from 4 to 7 p.m.

The independent, nonprofit library envisions the picnic as an opportunity to “connect in the present to celebrate the past and envision a brighter future.”

The ESFL is located at 1105 Greenbrier St. on St. Paul's East Side. Learn more about the library's programming and collections online at eastsidefreedomlibrary.org.



**East Side
Freedom
Library**



Alex Breiland (L) and Jessica Norem, members of the Minnesota Association of Professional Employees, joined their union's rally at the Capitol, held just hours before negotiators reached agreement on new contracts covering 33,000 state employees. Union Advocate photo

State contract agreements respect frontline workers' service, unions say

In the early-morning hours July 22, union bargaining teams reached tentative agreements on new, two-year contracts with the State of Minnesota covering about 33,000 workers statewide.

The contracts, if approved by union members and lawmakers, would provide 2.5% wage increases in each year, hold the line on health care costs, boost the employer's contribution to deferred compensation plans and add Juneteenth as a paid holiday, among other gains.

Member-negotiators from two unions – the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) and the Minnesota Association of Professional Employees (MAPE) – also fought off attempts by the state to strip workers of their seniority rights and make major changes to grievance, overtime and furlough procedures.

AFSCME Council 5 Executive Director Julie Bleyhl, whose union represents more than 18,000 state employees, said gains in the tentative agreement reflect the service and sacrifice of many AFSCME members over the last 18 months.

“Public service workers are the reason why our state continued to work even during the midst of a global pandemic that

has taken millions of lives and many within our own union family,” Bleyhl said.

MAPE members helped push the contract talks over the finish line with a rally on the Capitol grounds in St. Paul. It drew about 1,000 members and supporters July 21, just hours before negotiators reached the tentative agreement.

MAPE members from across the state spoke at the rally, highlighting the issues union members were making a priority in state contract talks – from telework to diversity, equity and inclusion.

“MAPE's professional members helped keep state government running and Minnesotans safe throughout the pandemic,” MAPE President Megan Dayton said. “We fought hard for a fair and reasonable contract for our members, and we know the wages and health care we bargain here set the tone for employers across Minnesota. Yes, it helps us, but it also sets the bar high and demands a fair shake for working-class people in our state.”

If union members ratify the contracts, a special legislative committee then has 30 days to vote on them. If lawmakers on the committee vote to approve the contracts or take no action, they go into effect on an interim basis, pending approval from the full Legislature in 2022.



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

Sept. 28, 6 p.m.

To register for the Zoom meeting, email cnocerini@stpaulunions.org

Dakota County Assembly

Sept. 9, 7 p.m.

To register for the Zoom meeting, email cnocerini@stpaulunions.org

Ramsey County Assembly

Sept. 28, 6 p.m.

To register for the Zoom meeting, email jkitto@stpaulunions.org

Washington County Assembly

Sept. 22, 6 p.m.

To register for the Zoom meeting, email jkitto@stpaulunions.org

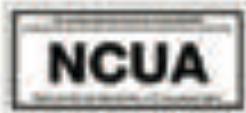


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Minnesota Nurses Association President Mary Turner, an ICU nurse, spoke at a March rally in support of compensation for frontline and essential workers.

\$250 million compensation fund must be 'just a start,' frontline workers say

Legislators on a select working group have been meeting since July to determine how a \$250 million fund, established with federal pandemic relief dollars, will be portioned out to compensate frontline workers for their sacrifices during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Every step of the way, lawmakers have heard directly from frontline workers themselves, thanks to the organizing efforts of a coalition of unions and other worker-led organizations advocating to ensure the process is speedy, fair and inclusive of worker voices.

The coalition brings together unions representing health care workers, educators and school employees, public servants, janitors, warehouse workers and others.

"The table is set; it's time to dig in," said Mary C. Turner, Minnesota Nurses Association president. "Lawmakers have been promising to care for essential, frontline workers. It's time to make sure these funds go to back pay and fulfill the needs of those workers who had to sacrifice pay and benefits during the pandemic."

One thread running through most of the hearings, which have focused on particular industries or sectors of the economy, is that \$250 million is not enough to compensate the state's massive frontline workforce in a meaningful way.

"Hopefully, the \$250 million is just a start," said Aaron Wolobah, a specialist in the Brooklyn Center Community Schools and member of Service Employees (SEIU) Local 284. Wolobah was among the school staff who provided "essential care" for children at public schools after the state shut down in March 2020.

"I watch story after story about first responders, cops, nurses and doctors doing their jobs during the pandemic, and they got all types of admiration from the community - rightly so," Wolobah said. "But they couldn't do their jobs without the support of someone caring for their kids."

Workers in a wide range of jobs have described burning through their paid time off after being exposed to the virus and forced to self-isolate, or after bringing the virus home. Angela Halseth, a member of the Minnesota Association of Professional Employees, described dealing with "outbreak after outbreak" at work in the state's correctional facilities.

"We did everything we could to stop the spread, but still we got sick, our families got sick and our clients got sick," Halseth said. "We are like hundreds of thousands of Minnesotans who endured over the last year while on the front lines."

"We are glad to see this taskforce get started, but it is just that - a start."

Happy Labor Day!

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Senator Matt Klein



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Educator unions back mask guidelines for schools, encourage vaccination agreements

Education Minnesota said last month it supports a safe and equitable return to in-person learning for the 2021-22 school year, which can best be accomplished by following the guidance of state and federal health officials for restricting the spread of the virus that causes COVID-19 in schools.

"Educators believe safe, equitable in-person instruction should be available to every Minnesota student this fall," said Denise Specht, president of Education Minnesota. "Right now, the best way we can see to achieve that goal, while keeping our schools and communities safe, is to consistently and rigorously follow the guidance from state health officials and the CDC."

The CDC recently reversed course and advocated restoring universal mask-wearing by students, teachers and staff in schools.

The presidents of the two big teachers unions, Becky Pringle of the three-million-member National Education Association and Randi Weingarten of the 1.6-million-member American Federation of Teachers, endorsed the mask mandate.

Specht acknowledged that many students and educators, especially those who have already been vaccinated, will be disappointed by the Minnesota Department of Health's recommendations. However, Specht noted that the department, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the American Academy of Pediatrics are unanimous in recommending that educators, staff and students wear masks at school, unless a medical or developmental condition prohibits their use.

"The delta variant has put our schools in a difficult spot," Specht said. "We must be honest about the situation and recognize the science is clear. The best way to keep our schools safe and open this year is to follow the strategies recommended by state and federal health officials, including masking, vaccinations, appropriate ventilation, social distancing and handwashing."

Although state and federal public

health experts can make recommendations, the ultimate authority about what policies will be adopted in Minnesota school districts resides with locally-elected school boards.

"The science is clear. The best way to keep our schools safe and open this year is to follow the strategies recommended by state and federal health officials, including masking (and) vaccinations."

– Denise Specht,
Education Minnesota

The St. Paul school board voted Aug. 17 to require face masks for all teachers, staff, students and visitors in all district buildings, regardless of vaccine status.

"We encourage school board members to consider their responsibility to the health and safety of their students, their educators and their communities," Specht said. "That not only includes adopting policies to slow the spread of the virus, but districts may also need to find new ways to encourage students, educators and staff to stay home if they are showing signs of infectious illness."

While Gov. Tim Walz has issued a vaccine requirement for state employees, he currently lacks the authority to impose a similar policy on employees of local school districts.

Unions have maintained vaccination policies should be crafted in partnership with employee groups. Education Minnesota distributed a sample model agreement to its local unions to facilitate quick negotiation and implementation of district-specific vaccine policies.

"Vaccination is the best tool we have for protecting our students, educators and the rest of our school communities," Specht said. "With very few exceptions, every educator who works directly with students this year should be vaccinated."



Sen. Jim Carlson, Rep. Sandra Masin & Rep. Liz Reyer:

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- Votes for policies to prevent violence in the workplace for health care and social services workers
- Understands education is the cornerstone of a strong workforce
- Believes government should work for us all

**Your union advocates
Sen. Jim Carlson, Rep. Sandra Masin,
& Rep. Liz Reyer**

Prepared and paid for by Friends for Jim Carlson, 1247 Carlson Lake Lane, Eagan, MN 55123, the Masin Campaign Committee, P.O. Box 21523, Eagan MN 55121, and the Liz Reyer Election Committee, 3485 Promenade Ave #208, Eagan, MN 55123.



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

Complaint alleges Home Depot illegally fired Minneapolis worker over Black Lives Matter emblem

Home Depot illegally discriminated against an employee at a Minneapolis store who raised issues of racial harassment with coworkers and managers and displayed a Black Lives Matter slogan on his apron, the National Labor Relations Board alleged in a complaint filed Aug. 12.

In a statement released to the press, Region 18 of the NLRB, the agency's Minneapolis-based office, said the employee's activity around racial issues, including his refusal to remove the slogan from his apron, ultimately led to his suspension and "constructive discharge," meaning the employee

resigned in response to an intolerable work environment created by the employer.

The Home Depot employee's attempts to discuss issues of racial harassment with co-workers, Region 18 Director Jennifer Hadsall said, are protected actions under the National Labor Relations Act.

"Issues of racial harassment directly impact the working conditions of employees," Hadsall said. "The NLRB protects employees' rights to raise these issues with the goal of improving their working conditions. It is this important right we seek to protect in this case."

The complaint also alleges that the Home Depot store unlawfully enforced its otherwise lawful dress code and apron policies, and threatened employees not to engage in activity regarding racial harassment.

Home Depot maintains similar policies at over 2,200 stores in the U.S., Mexico and Canada, and as a result, Region 18 is seeking to compel the chain to post notices inside all of its U.S. stores advising workers of their rights.

Should the Home Depot seek to reinstate the apron rule, the NLRB will argue that such reinstatement be accompanied by an assurance to employees

that the rule will not be applied to restrict their protected activity.

The NLRB is an independent federal agency that protects employees, employers and unions from unfair labor practices and protects the right of private sector employees to join together, with or without a union, to improve wages, benefits and working conditions.

The NLRB conducts hundreds of workplace elections and investigates thousands of unfair labor practice charges each year.

Learn more about your rights under the National Labor Relations Act online at nlrb.gov.



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MARVIN C. KOPPEN
Party Coordinator

Twin Cities window cleaners strike for wages, apprenticeship program

About 40 union members who clean the windows of high-rise buildings in the Twin Cities called an open-ended strike Aug. 16, citing unfair labor practices, low wages and safety concerns.

The strike continued as this edition of The Union Advocate went to press, with workers picketing outside skyscrapers in Minneapolis and St. Paul, and staging daily rallies with supporters.

Striking members of Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 26 said the work stoppage would continue until they get a contract that recognizes the sacrifices they made as essential workers during the pandemic – and one that keeps them safe.

“We deserve more, and we will strike until we can sit at the table with the bosses and bargain in good faith,” said Eric Crone, a window cleaner and union steward.

Crone works for Columbia Building Services, one of two contractors dragging their feet in contract negotiations with Local 26. The other is Final Touch Commercial Cleaning.

A third contractor involved in negotiations, Apex North, has agreed to workers’ proposals in principle, and its employees did not go on strike.

Those proposals include higher wages and new safety protections, including a state-recognized, fully funded apprenticeship program, similar to those sponsored by construction trades and their employers. An apprenticeship program would establish much-needed safety standards in the industry, workers said.

“If you ask someone on the street how much someone who is up on the buildings gets paid or what level of training they think we get, they always guess higher than what we currently get,” Crone said. “It feels like



Members of SEIU Local 26 on strike from their jobs as window cleaners for two Twin Cities contractors hold a rally at the Minnesota Capitol, raising awareness of their push for a registered apprenticeship program to raise safety standards in the industry. Workers marched to the Capitol steps from their picket line at the Wells Fargo tower in downtown St. Paul.

Union Advocate photos

we've been disrespected.”

The window cleaners’ original contract expired in 2020, but they agreed to postpone negotiations and

continue working under the agreement after the pandemic hit last year. But Final Touch and Columbia refused even to set bargaining dates until after the extension expired in August, the union alleged.

Meanwhile, the pandemic added new risks for many window cleaners. In addition to hanging off the side of skyscrapers, many were also asked to sterilize contaminated areas after COVID cases were reported in office towers, often with little training or additional equipment for their added duties.

“Over half of our group, including me, caught COVID,” said Josh Haynes, who works for Final Touch. “Our job may seem different from other ‘essential’ workers, but our job is still essential, and we are demanding to be treated that way.”

Added Crone: “We worked through the pandemic and made the companies their money while they got to work from home. We’re done with delays. We’re ready and we won’t back down.”



State Rep. Kaela Berg, a DFLer from Burnsville, thanks striking workers for taking a stand for safety in the window cleaning industry during a rally at the Capitol. Berg is a member of the Association of Flight Attendants-CWA union.

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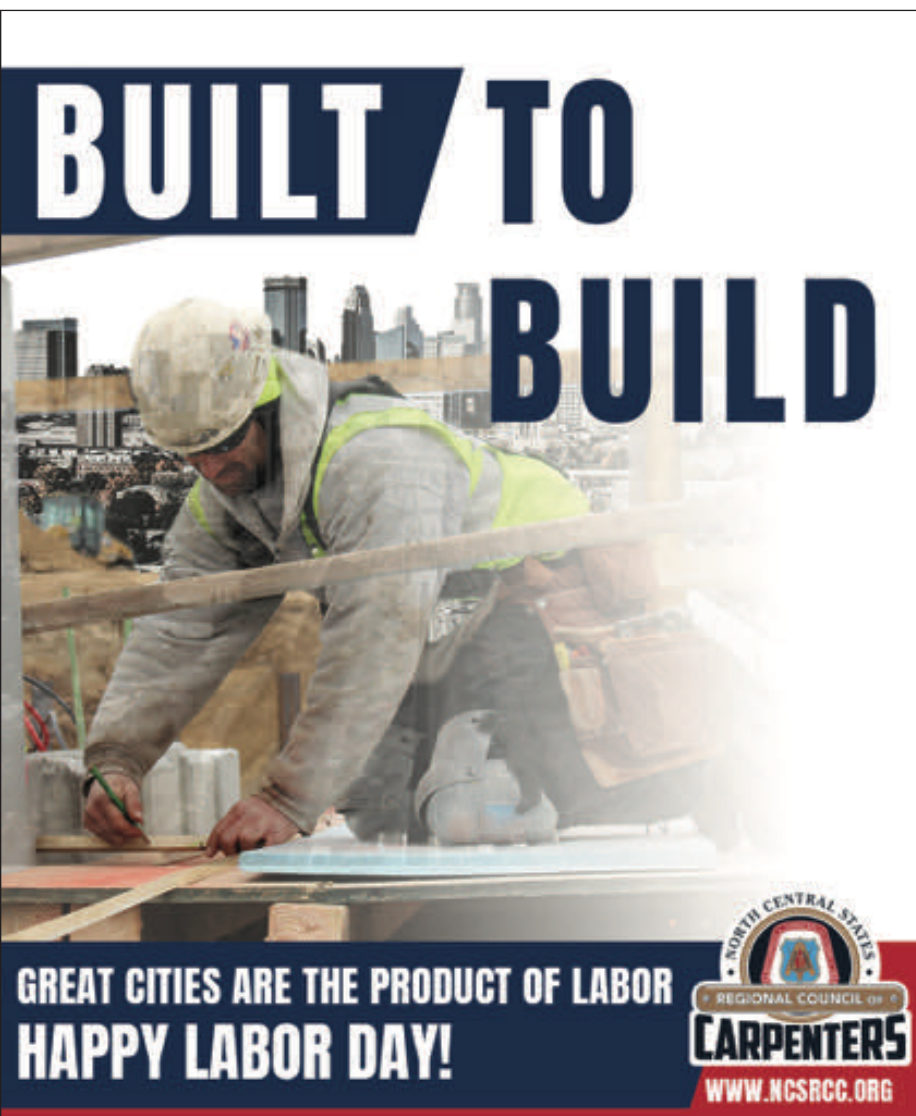
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Wishing everyone a happy and safe Labor Day!

Betty
Betty McCollum
Member of Congress

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Unions cheer federal infrastructure bill, but expect more heavy lifting to come

By Mark Gruenberg
PAI Union News Service

With broad Senate approval last month of a \$1 trillion bill to reconstruct or replace the nation's crumbling infrastructure came a caution flag: There's a lot of heavy lifting still to come on the two big spending bills going through Congress.

That's because the Senate's infrastructure bill must still clear the Democratic-run House, where Speaker Nancy Pelosi has pledged not to bring it to the floor until senators approve an accompanying \$3.5 trillion "reconciliation" budget bill. That measure would include many labor priorities left out of the "hard" infrastructure bill, like investments in green jobs and support for home- and community-based care.

Despite the uncertain road ahead, construction union leaders hailed the Senate's infrastructure vote. If signed into law, the measure would create tens of thousands of unionized, well-paying jobs on projects across the U.S.

Laborers President Terry O'Sullivan called the measure "one of the most significant and largest investments ever in America's infrastructure."

"For far too long we have starved our country of the infrastructure investment the American people want, need and deserve," he added. "We must seize this opportunity. It is time to get the job done so Laborers members, who are ready, willing, and able, can get to work now building America and securing our future."

Bricklayers President Tim Driscoll agreed, but pressed lawmakers to pass the \$3.5 trillion reconciliation bill, too.

His union "has long supported comprehensive investment in our nation's infrastructure, broadly defined," Driscoll said. The "hard" infrastructure bill "represents a good start, (but) we must continue to work to make sure that other vital infrastructure needs are not neglected."

"Investment in our infrastructure, including schools, housing, hospitals, public safety and other government buildings, is critically important. We must do everything we can to make sure these priorities are addressed as Congress turns to the reconciliation process."

Lawmakers got an earful from constituents about the importance of infrastructure investments while on their August break, which gave workers and their allies an opportunity to bend lawmakers' ears and lobby for pro-people priorities.

"To build back better, we must be bold," said Liz Shuler, the AFL-CIO's acting president, adopting Democratic President Joe Biden's theme for pro-recovery measures. "That means unparalleled investment in America's working families. The \$3.5 trillion budget resolution is what we need to continue on the path toward making our country whole again."

"From investing in working families, education, paid leave, child care, clean energy jobs and game-changing infrastructure projects to the creation of a long overdue path to citizenship, expansion of health care access and labor law enforcement with real penalties, this budget resolution is a vital part of President Biden's Build Back Better agenda that has already been such a lifeline for our economy."

Both bills fit squarely into Biden's plans to lift the country and the economy out of the pandemic-caused ditch.



St. Paul Mayor Melvin Carter snapped a selfie with activists rallying outside City Hall for a \$15 minimum wage in October 2018. file photo

Labor backs Carter for re-election, four seeking seats on St. Paul school board

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

"We know candidates who earn the labor endorsement share our movement's commitment to family-sustaining wages, good benefits, strong worker protections and the freedom to bargain collectively."

Carter has drawn praise from local unions for his administration's work to expand the ways the city supports working families, including passage of the citywide \$15 minimum wage ordinance, a guaranteed income pilot program and a new college savings program for every child born in St. Paul.

"It means a lot to be supported by the St. Paul Regional Labor Federation and the AFL-CIO," Carter said. "Their advocacy ensures that working families are centered in every conversation we have about building a city and a future that works for all of us."

The labor-endorsed candidates for school board come from a wide range of backgrounds.

Farnsworth, a 2016 graduate of the St. Paul school district, works as executive director of the Highland Business



Association and represents the 4th Congressional District on the University of Minnesota Board of Regents.

Henderson is policy director of the Minnesota Alliance With Youth and formerly worked as a mental health advocate.

Ward is an educator and community organizer. He was among the leaders of a successful campaign by Augsburg University staff to organize a union with Office and Professional Employees (OPEIU) Local 12 recently.

Howatt graduated from Como Park Senior High in 1993, and he now serves as president of a parent-teacher organization in the district.

Find a full list of labor endorsements in the east metro at www.stpaulunions.org.

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Labor Day greetings to union families!

*A message from the
International Union of
Elevator Constructors
Local 9*

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**Happy Labor Day from
Machinists Local Lodge 459!**



We are proud to stand in solidarity with our union family today - and every day!
Have a safe and happy holiday weekend!

Targeted by Trump's NLRB appointee, Scabby the Rat set free

Scabby the Rat escaped a trap set by the Trump administration, and lives on to fight for workers another day.

The National Labor Relations Board voted 3-1 on July 22 that former NLRB General Counsel Peter Robb, a Trump appointee, wrongly tried to kill the giant, inflatable rodent, who frequently appears on picket lines and at union rallies as a symbol of corporate greed.

Robb's opinion came in a case where members of Operating Engineers Local 150 erected Scabby outside a trade show in Indiana alongside two banners, which notified the public the event had hired non-union laborers, or "scabs."

Robb found that Scabby amounted to "secondary picketing," a violation of labor law. Upon appeal, most NLRB appointees, including two Republicans, disagreed and tossed the complaint.

Local 150, which claims to have created and named the first Scabby decades ago, cheered the ruling.

"An attack on Scabby the Rat is an attack on workers' right to free speech, and we must all stand united against such attacks," said James Sweeney, Local 150's president and business manager.

Meanwhile, Robb has since been fired from his post with the NLRB – one of President Joe Biden's first acts after he took office in January.



Labor Bowl raises \$30,000 for Labor Studies nonprofit

Bowlers helped raise over \$30,000 for the nonprofit St. Paul Labor Studies and Resource Center last month at the 10th Annual Labor Bowl. Held at Sun Ray Lanes, the fundraiser supports the nonprofit arm of the St. Paul Regional Labor Federation. LSRC staff members, part of the AFL-CIO Community Services program, connect union members with emergency resources, and help local unions provide their members with strike and layoff preparation. Labor Bowl shift winners, pictured clockwise from top-left, are Suzanne Kocurek of AFSCME (155), Mark Nicol of the Machinists (215), Jim Hodenfield of IUPAT (259), Kim Schrupp of LIUNA (184), Barb Larson of the Carpenters (182) and Dave Hansen of the Elevator Constructors (226).

Union Advocate photos

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A message from the members of Local 1005



Happy Labor Day!

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Labor News in Review

NEW PROTECTIONS FOR PARENTS

Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz signed legislation into state law earlier this summer that will expand pregnancy accommodations in the workplace and strengthen protections for nursing and lactating mothers.

The new law expands provisions of the Women's Economic Security Act (WESA), which was passed in 2014 to strengthen workplace protections and flexibility for expectant and new parents, among other priorities. The changes will go into effect Jan. 1, 2022.

"I am proud of this legislation, which gets our state closer to our vision of making Minnesota the best place for each and every child to grow up," Walz said. "Support for working families will keep our economy strong and serve as an investment in our future."

The new law calls for nursing and lactating employees to receive paid break time to express milk at work. It also gives workers at firms with 15 or more employees the right to request and receive needed pregnancy accommodations, such as more frequent restroom, food and water breaks, and limits to heavy lifting. The changes will impact an estimated 27,000 workers statewide, state regulators said.

"This new law is a win-win for expectant and new parents, their children and Minnesota employers," Labor Commissioner Roslyn Robertson said. "More pregnant employees will be able to request and receive a needed accommodation, allowing them to work safely and continue to earn a paycheck to support their growing families."

Evidence shows parents who breastfeed have a reduced risk of several types of cancer, including breast and ovarian. They also have a reduced risk of type 2 diabetes and postpartum depression. Babies who are breastfed have a reduced risk of ear infections, diarrhea, sudden infant death, obesity, diabetes, asthma and leukemia.

METRO TRANSIT STRIKE AVERTED

Members of Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1005 voted Aug. 15-16 to approve a new, three-year agreement with Metro Transit. The vote was 71% in favor, 29% opposed, the union reported.

By a similar margin, ATU Local 1005 members had rejected an earlier offer from Metro Transit in voting May 17. The new agreement offers the same wage increases as the contract that was rejected in May - 2% in the first and second years, and 2.5% in the third - but also includes a one-time payment of \$1,000, Local 1005 President Ryan Timlin reported.

In addition, Timlin said, the contract includes stronger language to protect part-timers from going over their hours and more equity for part-timers in accruing sick time. The contract does not include hazard pay, which Local 1005 had sought for members who worked through the COVID-19 pandemic.

The new agreement comes more than one year after Local 1005's previous contract expired. In September 2020, ATU members voted by a 94% margin to reject Metro Transit's original contract offer and authorize a strike. The original offer was for a one-year agreement with no increase in wages.

"Members organizing and fighting back really helped get where we're at," Timlin said.

The 2% wage increase for the first year of the agreement will be retroactive, Timlin said, and will be paid in a lump sum, likely in October.

- Minneapolis Labor Review

HOME CARE EMPLOYER DODGED OT

A Minnesota district court judge last month approved a \$480,000 settlement between the U.S. Department of Labor and a Golden Valley home health provider charged with failing to pay workers overtime

when they worked more than 40 hours in a workweek.

Alliance HHC & Nursing Service LLC will resolve the complaint by paying \$241,582 in back wages and the same amount in liquidated damages to 82 home health care workers it employs.

An investigation by the Department of Labor's Wage and Hour Division found Alliance and its owner, Robin Nyangena, failed to pay workers overtime and, instead, continued to pay workers straight-time rates, regardless of the number of hours they worked each week.

The impacted workers provide skilled nursing, private duty, personal aide and therapy services. The Labor Department, in a press release, noted that home health workers are often women, immigrants and people of color, and the industry employs many of the nation's lowest-paid workers.

"The essential care that home healthcare workers provide helps their clients maintain their dignity and remain in their homes," said Kristin Tout, acting Wage and Hour Division district director in Minneapolis. "The Wage and Hour Division is committed to ensuring essential employees receive every dollar of their hard-earned wages and that employers abide by the federal wage laws."

Tout added: "Other employers should use the outcome of this investigation as an opportunity to review their own pay practices to ensure they comply with the law."

The division recently launched an initiative, "Essential Workers, Essential Protections," to ensure that workers know about the workplace laws that protect them - and how to contact the division to get the help they need.

Learn more about the initiative online at dol.gov/agencies/whd/pandemic.

*Wishing a happy and safe
Labor Day to all workers!*



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HAPPY LABOR DAY!**

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AFL-CIO's Trumka remembered for fierce dedication to family, democracy

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

everywhere it mattered. And the people he remembered were those who suffered in that cause – his friend the Colombian mine worker assassinated as he rode a bus to work, the miners he worked side by side with who gave life and breath to power our communities, the nurses, grocery workers, meatpackers, hotel workers, taxi drivers, steelworkers and autoworkers whose picket lines he joined and whose stories he heard through a lifetime of leading their fights.

But the fight he fought was about something more than the particular demands of any given organizing drive or bargaining session. It was always about democracy, about the only question that really mattered – who gets a say in what happens? It must be said that Trumka in 2020 was prepared to lead working people into battle to defend our democracy, and his leadership in 2020, together with the courage of union members, helped make sure that the votes were counted, the result was honored and democracy was saved.

And Trumka was devoted to dignity at work. He passionately cared about what happened to people when they clocked in, when they picked up the tools and put on a helmet. From his chairmanship of the mine safety committee in Nemacolin, Pa., to his fight for a COVID-19 workplace safety standard, his first question to anyone about any decision was always, “Will workers be safe?” His second question was, “Will workers be treated fairly and with dignity?” And his third question was, “Who will get the wealth workers create?” For Richard Trumka the labor movement was first, second and third about what happens to us when we go to work.

He saw the faces of the men who had worked by his side and had died in the mines until the end of his



Former AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka is pictured speaking at a press conference held in July at the organization's Washington, D.C., headquarters, where unions and lawmakers spoke in support of democratic reforms – in the workplace, in the U.S. Senate and in our nation's elections. submitted photo

life. And yet he asked union members to go to Puerto Rico in 2017 and risk their lives to help our brothers, sisters and friends who were abandoned by the federal government. And they went.

Trumka leaves a lifelong legacy of understanding

the labor movement as both a thing in itself – a place of solidarity – and as the most singular, powerful tool for economic justice. He believed the labor movement must be heard on the core direction of the economy.

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 15)



Happy Labor Day to all union members!

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from Local 563!**

LiUNA!

Feel the Power



**Construction and General
Laborers' Union
Local 563**

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 14)

As president of the Mine Workers, he helped found the Economic Policy Institute, and as president of the AFL-CIO, he was an insistent voice in the ears of presidents of both parties and Federal Reserve chairs of all stripes, demanding economic policy that benefited working people, with full employment, rising wages, economic security and, most of all, bargaining power.

One of his proudest moments was that he was the sole dissenter on then-President Bill Clinton's Social Security commission when it voted to consider partial privatization. Another was the passage of the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement—with labor rights enforcement language that he insisted on over then-President Donald Trump's initial opposition.

Trumka believed the labor movement had a responsibility to fight for all working people and to build an economically just society. He led one of the most substantial strikes in American history against the Pittston Coal Co. between 1989 and 1990. At stake was the health care of nearly 2,000 retirees, widows and miners with disabilities. It was a tactical masterpiece. In the course of the strike, Trumka went to jail. He saw judges in the pocket of the company try to take the UMWA's treasury. The men and women of the Mine Workers risked their lives in the plant occupation that won the strike, facing down armed company guards and state police. The guards and the police waved machine guns and screamed insults at the strikers, trying to provoke violence. Yet Richard Trumka's message at every moment was nonviolent civil disobedience.

During the heart of the strike, which lasted nearly a year, Trumka would lay in bed at night and close his eyes. He'd see the faces. The union members. The widows. The retirees. And the kids. They kept him going. On the darkest of days, they were his guiding light. "One day longer. One day stronger," he would say. Workers at Pittston achieved victory at a time when working people desperately needed a win, still reeling from then-President Ronald Reagan's decision to fire America's unionized air traffic controllers.

Trumka brought that vision to the world stage. In his youth he organized coal miners in Alabama to go on sympathy strike with South African miners protesting apartheid. More recently, he fought for imprisoned Uyghurs in China, for the right of working people in the United Kingdom to have a voice in trade negotiations, and for imprisoned trade unionists in Burma.

Trumka hated racism and sexism and other bigotry, something he referred to as the "isms." He was the son of immigrants and when someone attacked immigrants, he saw them attacking his mother, father and neighbors, and responded accordingly.

Trumka understood his mission was more than political, more than economic. That he was lifting up the moral value of solidarity that he learned from his parents, from his community, from his sisters and brothers in the Mine Workers and from his Catholic parish in Nemacolin.

Trumka was a man in full. His private life was as big as his public persona. His love for his family – his parents, his wife and son, his sister and brothers-in-law, grandkids, and the many people for whom he was a surrogate parent and brother – shined through him. He was a magnificent hunter, a man whose football career, ended by injury, was transformed into a lifelong love of the game and a devotion to teaching it to young people. Watching his son, Richard, play linebacker at Cornell University gave him special joy and, despite the schedule of a global labor leader, he never missed a game. He was never happier than when he was with his grandchildren, Trey, Taylor and Ki.

Trumka also had a devotion to craft – to how things are done and how things work. Trumka loved people, loved a fight, hated injustice and cruelty, and strived for self-knowledge. He was a student of history. And the history books will be sure to write about him. Trumka

never stopped marveling at how much fortune had smiled on him by giving him the chance to fight for working people with every breath he had, from the darkness of the coal mines to the shining lights of the White House.

What is Richard Trumka's legacy to the labor movement? The labor movement as a movement. An organizing movement. The labor movement as a force for racial and gender justice. The labor movement as a powerful voice in leading the direction of the American economy – the counterweight to Wall Street, big corporations and billionaires. The force for justice and a voice at work. The idea that the labor movement must be prepared to fight, to risk everything for working people. And above all, the embodiment of solidarity as a way of being – an antithesis to greed and selfishness. A path to hope and light and love.

He lived it every moment of his life, and workers around the world are better for it.

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Lawmakers from both parties pitch to delegates at MN Building Trades convention

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

work remains focused on fostering family-sustaining, high-quality job opportunities for tradespeople across the state.

In practice, Fowler said, that means recruiting new workers – particularly veterans and workers from underrepresented communities – into unions’ registered apprenticeship programs and keeping up with the industry’s demand for skilled labor. It means organizing to end mistreatment of workers on non-union construction sites, where wage theft, employee misclassification and labor trafficking are too common. And it means opposing right-to-work laws and attacks on prevailing wage at the Capitol.

By most of those measures, Minnesota’s Building Trades unions have fared better than their counterparts in other Midwest states. And unity, Fowler said, is the reason why.

“Sticking together and showing solidarity is what sets us apart from other organizations that would like to see us and organized labor as a whole fail, and that will never happen,” he said. “If we do not have solidarity, we do not have a strong Building Trades, and in Minnesota that is just not an option.”

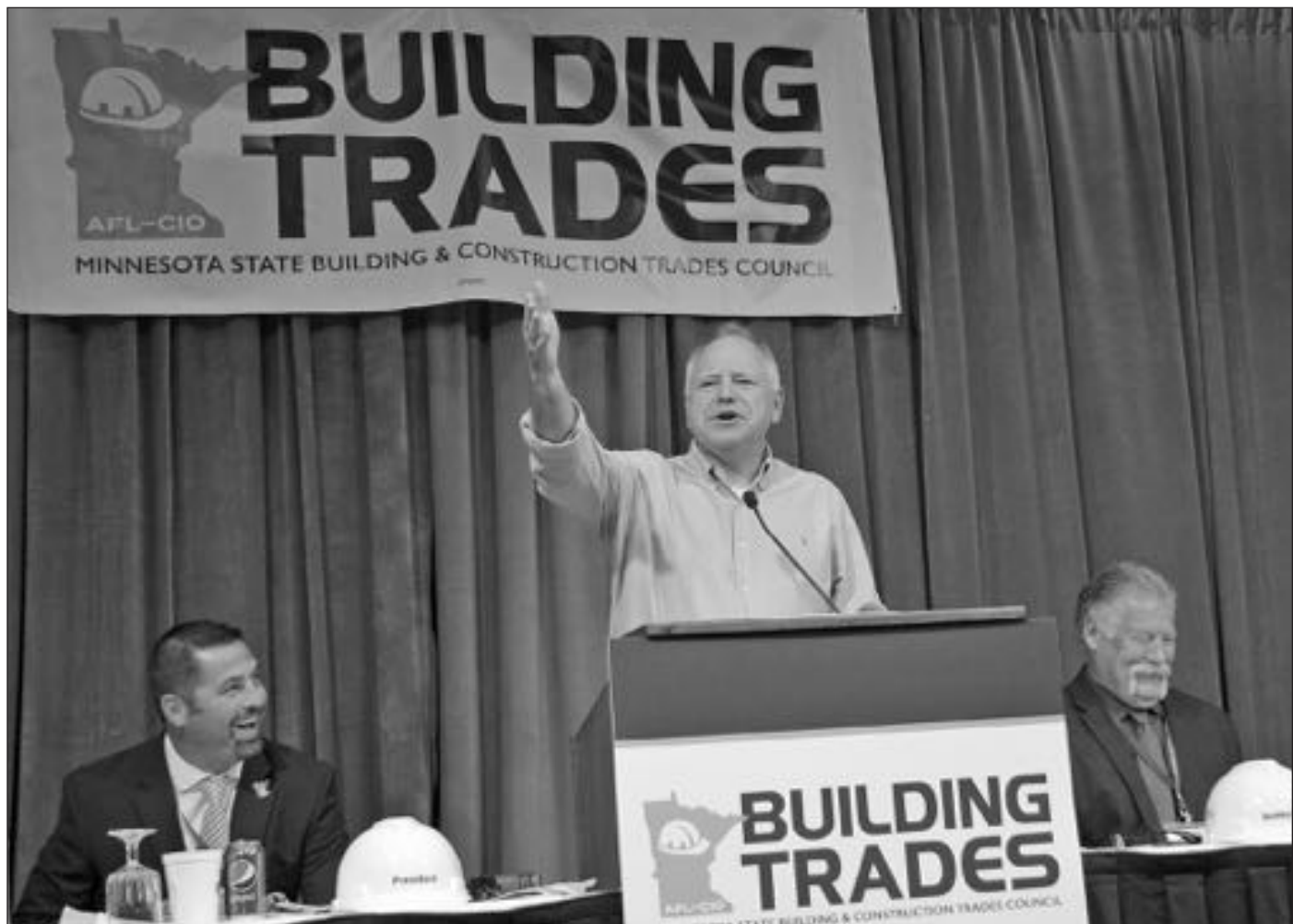
The Trades have worked in recent years to attract bipartisan support for their agenda at the State Capitol, and that support was on display in the lineup of guest speakers who took the podium in Brainerd. Mayors, state legislators, agency commissioners, members of Congress and Gov. Tim Walz all touted their work in support of union tradespeople.

Senate Majority Leader Paul Gazelka, a Republican whose district includes the Gull Lake area, told delegates his caucus, unlike Republicans in states like Wisconsin, won’t advance measures to undermine collective bargaining or attack prevailing wage.

“Times are changing,” Gazelka said. “We’re the ones that are fighting for the mining jobs, whether it’s copper-nickel or taconite mining. We’re the ones standing up for the pipelines.”

But Walz warned against politicians who frame a “false choice” when it comes to energy policy and mining. He said his administration is determined not to “cut corners,” but has moved projects like the Polymet mine through the permitting and review processes quickly. It is Senate Republicans’ move to force out his head of the state’s Pollution Control Agency, Walz said, that has slowed that process down.

“They’re playing games with your jobs,” Walz said. “They’re playing games with a process that now works. This isn’t about me picking winners or losers, it’s about following the science, following



Gov. Tim Walz greets delegates to the Minnesota Building and Construction Trades Council’s convention in Brainerd. Walz, one of several high-ranking elected officials – both DFLers and Republicans – who addressed the convention, is flanked by newly elected Council President Joe Fowler (L) and longtime Secretary-Treasurer Craig Olson.

Union Advocate photos

the law and following the process.

“We did all those things. And we’re a long ways down that process on the Polymet mine, but it’s pretty damn hard to go back to an agency when that commissioner is no longer there.”

DFL lawmakers also called out Republicans for bailing on the Building Trades-backed refinery safety measure during a special session in June.

The measure, which would have required skilled laborers at sensitive petroleum facilities to complete a registered apprenticeship program, gained steam after Marathon replaced local, union contractors at its St. Paul Park refinery with workers from out-of-state, non-union contractors. The bill passed the DFL-controlled House but was stripped from the Senate jobs bill after more than a dozen Republicans, who originally voted to advance the measure, withdrew their support.

Rep. Rob Ecklund, a DFLer from International Falls, said the vote revealed who is “standing with labor not just when it’s politically convenient, but all of the time.”

A diplomatic Fowler sought to cool the political rhetoric, insisting the council, under his leadership, “will always be non-partisan in the sense that we support those who support us and who understand labor is always on the side of the worker.”

There were some issues on which everyone in the room could agree, including a renewed state investment in Helmets to Hardhats, which has successfully introduced thousands of mili-



Harry Melander (L), who retired as president of the Minnesota Building Trades earlier this year, congratulates newly elected officers after administering the oath of office.

tary veterans to career opportunities in the union trades. Justin Ross, a former Marine who heads the statewide initiative, said in the last three years 840 Minnesota veterans have enrolled in unions’ apprenticeship programs after accessing the program.

“I know firsthand what it can be like returning from military service,” Ross said. “I spent over five years bouncing from job to job, trying college a couple times. It wasn’t until I found my way into an apprenticeship program with Sheet Metal Workers Local 10 that I really found a home.”

Another point of universal agreement:

appreciation for Melander’s leadership during the 12 years he served as president of the council. Walz presented the president emeritus with a plaque declaring it Harry Melander Day in Minnesota.

In characteristically brief remarks, Melander assured delegates their organization is in good hands, and left them with a few words of wisdom.

“Teach the trade; honor the craft,” he said. “Just remember that. Teach the trade to the young people, and honor the craft amongst ourselves. And thank you for the privilege of serving the last 12 years.”

IN SOLIDARITY THIS LABOR DAY!



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Minutes of the Saint Paul Regional Labor Federation

JULY 14, 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, Engeldorf, Gibbons, Guertin, Madden, Markham-Kocurek, McNamara, Michelson, Peterson, Ryan, Schmidt, Slattery, St. Aoro, Tastad-Damer, Vandassor and Varco. Excused were Edwards, Luneburg, Sansom and Terry. Absent were Gorman and Hoppe.

MOMENT OF SILENCE

President Peterson called for a moment of silence for ATU Local 1005 union brother Doni Jones.

CREDENTIALS

Credentials were received from ATU Local 1005 and Heat and Frost Insulators Local 34. President Peterson administered the Oath of Obligation to those new delegates and alternates present on-line.

MINUTES

M/S/C TO APPROVE MINUTES OF MAY 12, 2021, AS PUBLISHED IN THE UNION ADVOCATE NEWS-PAPER AFTER THE ACTING SECRETARY-TREASURER NOTES THERE ARE NO ADDITIONS OR CHANGES CALLED FOR.

COMMITTEE ON POLITICAL EDUCATION (COPE) MINUTES JULY 14, 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, Engeldorf, Gibbons, Guertin, Hoerth, Krey, Madden, Markham-Kocurek, Mayer, McNamara, Michelson, Peterson, Ryan, Schmidt, Slattery, St. Aoro, Tastad-Damer, Vandassor and Varco. Excused were Edwards, Luneburg, Sansom and Terry. Absent were DeRoy, Gorman, Hoppe, Lohmann, Naseth and Wise.

President Peterson reported on the following:

- MNA and SEIU successfully lobbying for inclusion of \$250 million in the new state budget for pandemic pay to essential workers, who often were mandated to quarantine during the pandemic.
 - Support for the Postal Act of 2021.
 - A July 27 candidate screening for St. Paul Mayor and St. Paul School Board via zoom.
 - The PRO Act Week of Action.
- There being no further business to come before this committee the meeting adjourned.

EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES JULY 14, 2021

The Executive Board met upon conclusion of COPE with those same members present who are duly elected to this board.

- President Peterson reported the following:
 - St. Paul Labor Studies and Resource Center's Tenth Annual Labor Bowl.
 - Beginning stages of planning the Holiday Party.
 - Union Family Night on Friday, July 30, from 6 to 8 p.m. at Mears

Acting up for good at Allianz Field



Volunteers stuffed 50,000 backpacks full of pencils, markers, notebooks, scissors and other school supplies at Allianz Field during Greater Twin Cities United Way's annual Action Day volunteer event Aug. 12. The backpacks were to be distributed to school-age children throughout the metro area last month, helping ensure students go back to school ready to learn. The St. Paul Regional Labor Federation's nonprofit, the St. Paul Labor Studies and Resource Center, recruited a team of volunteers for the event, held at the new, union-built soccer stadium in St. Paul's Midway neighborhood. Pictured top, L to R, are Mike Dreyer (retired United Food and Commercial Workers Local 1189), Cheryl Dreyer, St. Paul RLF President Kera Peterson (Machinists Local 459), James Westin (UFCW Local 1189), Lynne Larkin-Wright (retired AFSCME Council 5), Dave Wright, Bill Wessinger (retired Letter Carriers Branch 28) and AFL-CIO Community Services liaison Erica Dalager Reed (OPEIU Local 277).

Union Advocate photos

Park in St. Paul.

- Submitting our application to participate in the Minnesota State Fair Labor Day Parade.
- Nick Faber, SPFE Local 28, retired, and we have no current recommendation for replacement.
- Meeting with local leaders.
- ORGANIZING UPDATES/CAMPAIGNS: Minnesota Nurses Association, Teamsters Local 120, Twin Cities Musician's Local 30-73 and UFCW Local 1189 gave an update on their organizing activities.

• Requests:
- **M/S/C FOR THE RLF TO MAKE A \$500 DONATION TO GUIDE DOGS OF AMERICA CHARITY GOLF TOURNAMENT.**

- **M/S/C FOR THE RLF TO MAKE A \$500 DONATION TO IUPAT DC 82 PATCH DAY GOLF FUND-RAISER.**

- **M/S/C FOR THE RLF TO MAKE A \$350 CONTRIBUTION TO**

IUPAT DC 82 MINNESOTA SHOOT FOR THE CURE.

- **M/S/C FOR THE RLF TO MAKE A \$500 DONATION TO TEAMSTERS LOCAL 120 FOURTH ANNUAL HOME FOR OUR TROOPS GOLF TOURNAMENT.**

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

REPORT OF THE TREASURER

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

PRESIDENTS REPORT

President Peterson expressed appreciation as unions work to support contract campaigns. Please ask the Saint Paul Regional Labor Federation to assist, as necessary. The Saint Paul RLF can help communicate campaign information to union

network.

STAFF/LABOR LIAISON REPORTS

Erica Dalager Reed, AFL-CIO Community Services Liaison, updated the delegation on the following:

- Union Family Night, July 30 at Mears Park in Saint Paul from 6 to 8 p.m.
- Greater Twin Cities United Way Day of Action on Aug. 12, 2021, from 4 to 6 p.m.
- Request for one vehicle and one trailer, needed for our marching unit for the Labor Day Parade at the Minnesota State Fair.
- The PRO Act Day of Action on Thursday, July 22, 2021, at 60 Plato Boulevard East at 1 p.m. If unions need postcards to send thanking our senators for their support of the bill, please contact President Peterson or Colleen Nocerini, political organizer, and we will deliver them.

Endorsement notice

At its delegate meeting Sept. 8, the Saint Paul Regional Labor Federation, AFL-CIO, may consider recommendations from local labor assemblies to grant labor endorsement in upcoming local elections.

Delegates may consider endorsement of operating levy referendums on the ballot in Independent School District No. 834 (Stillwater Area Schools) and in ISD No. 623 (Roseville Area Schools).

The federation may also consider endorsement recommendations for municipal and school board candidates.

For more information on the Saint Paul RLF's endorsement process, call 651-222-3787.

REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES

- Michael Madden reported on behalf of the Chisago County Labor Assembly. Union members from LIUNA Local 563 and IAMAW Local Lodge 112 helped deliver \$800 of school supplies. Our next meeting will be the fourth Thursday of the month at 6 p.m. via Zoom.
- Connie Beissel reported on behalf of the Dakota County Labor Assembly. We did not have our July meeting. Our next meeting will be the second Thursday of the month at 7 p.m. via Zoom.
- Brian Beedle reported on behalf of the Washington County Labor Assembly. We are working with Community Thread to put together personal care packages to distribute to individuals and we are sponsoring two teams for the St. Paul Labor Studies and Resource Center's Labor Bowl. Our next meeting will be the fourth Wednesday of the month at 6 p.m. via Zoom.
- Theresa St. Aoro reported on behalf of the Ramsey County Labor Assembly. Our next meeting will be the fourth Tuesday of the month at 6 p.m. via Zoom. We will be screening for the Mayor of St. Paul and the St. Paul School board. Please contact Jasmine Kitto if you are interested in participating.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Union members would like to locate the plaque from 411 Main Street and place it in the current Labor Center.

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

Submitted by,
BERNADINE ENGELDORF
Secretary-Treasurer



Minutes of the Saint Paul Regional Labor Federation

AUGUST 11, 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, Madden, Markham-Kocurek, McNamara, Peterson, Schmidt, Slattery, St. Aoro, Tastad-Damer, and Varco. Excused were Guertin, Ryan and Sansom. Absent were Gibbons, Gorman, Hoppe, Luneburg, Michelson, Terry and Vandassor.

MOMENT OF SILENCE

President Peterson called for a moment of silence for brother and leader Richard Trumka.

CREDENTIALS

Credentials were received from AFSCME Local 34 and AFSCME Local 306. President Peterson administered the Oath of Obligation to those new delegates and alternates present on-line.

MINUTES

M/S/C TO APPROVE MINUTES OF MAY 28, AND JUNE 9, 2021, AS PUBLISHED IN THE UNION ADVOCATE NEWSPAPER AFTER THE ACTING SECRETARY-TREASURER NOTES THERE ARE NO ADDITIONS OR CHANGES CALLED FOR.

ST. PAUL LABOR STUDIES AND RESOURCE CENTER

Business to come before the LSRC board to be acted upon consisted of LSRC's 2020 Audit.

M/S/C TO APPROVE THE 2020 LSRC AUDIT.

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

COMMITTEE ON POLITICAL EDUCATION (COPE) MINUTES AUGUST 11, 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, Hoerth, Krey, Madden, Markham-Kocurek, Mayer, McNamara, Peterson, Schmidt, Slattery, St. Aoro, Tastad-Damer, and Varco. Excused were Guertin, Ryan and Sansom. Absent were DeRoy, Gibbons, Gorman, Hoppe, Lohmann, Luneburg, Michelson, Naseth, Terry, Vandassor and Wise.

Items to come before this committee included:

- The National AFL-CIO has approved the Saint Paul Regional Labor Federation's request to conduct the endorsement process remotely due to COVID restrictions.
- The Ramsey County Labor Assembly requested consideration of granting Labor Endorsement of:
 - Melvin Carter, Mayor of Saint Paul
 - James Farnsworth, Saint Paul School Board
 - Halla Henderson, Saint Paul School Board
 - Uriah Ward, Saint Paul School Board
 - Clayton Howatt, Saint Paul School Board Special Election
- President Peterson discussed potential screening for suburban

A party for the PRO Act



The St. Paul Regional Labor Federation and its nonprofit, the St. Paul Labor Studies and Resource Center, co-hosted a free concert in St. Paul's Mears Park July 30. It was an opportunity for the public to dance to the Cuban sounds of union musicians in Charanga Tropical – and learn more about labor's No. 1 priority in Congress right now, the PRO Act. The federation and Twin Cities Musicians Union - AFM Local 30-73 tapped into a grant from the Recording Industry's Music Performance Trust Fund to stage the concert. Federation staff and volunteers hosted a table at the event with informational materials about the PRO Act, which would restore the right of workers to freely and fairly form a union and bargain together for changes in the workplace.

photos by Logan Beere

AUGUST 11, 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 Peterson reported on the Saint Paul Regional Labor Federation's 2020 Audit, the AFL-CIO Solidarity Grant, Union Family Night, St. Paul Labor Studies and Resource Center's Tenth Annual Labor Bowl and to possibly cap the number of participants in our marching unit at the Minnesota State Fair.
- **M/S/C TO APPROVE THE SAINT PAUL REGIONAL LABOR FEDERATION'S 2020 AUDIT.**
 - The President and board are open to providing additional education to related staff person if they feel the need for additional training in book-keeping.

municipal candidates, school board candidates and school district operating levies.

- Peterson also reported on the number of events the RLF had to support the PRO Act over the last month, as this continues to be a national priority.

M/S/C TO RECOMMEND LABOR ENDORSEMENT TO MELVIN CARTER, MAYOR OF SAINT PAUL; JAMES FARNSWORTH, SAINT PAUL SCHOOL BOARD; HALLA HENDERSON, SAINT PAUL SCHOOL BOARD; URIAH WARD, SAINT PAUL SCHOOL BOARD; AND CLAYTON HOWATT, SAINT PAUL SCHOOL BOARD SPECIAL ELECTION.

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

EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES

REPORT OF THE TREASURER

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

PRESIDENTS REPORT

President Peterson spoke about the recent passing of President Trumka and Liz Schuler becoming interim president, Union Family Night at Mears Park on July 30, United Way Day of Action at Allianz Field and upcoming screening events.

STAFF/LABOR LIAISON REPORTS

- Michael Moore, Union Advocate editor, spoke of the upcoming Labor Day issue for the Advocate and that this is a great opportunity for unions to create solidarity. He also encouraged union members to like and share social media content and web sites. If your local union has a story to tell, please do not hesitate to contact him at 651-222-3787 ext. 112.
- If you are interested in marching in the federation's unit for the Labor Day Parade at the Minnesota State Fair, contact Erica Dalager Reed, AFL-CIO Community Services Liaison, at 651-222-3787 ext. 120.

REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES

- Michael Madden reported on behalf of the Chisago County Labor Assembly. We are doing union work where we live. Our next meeting will be the fourth Tuesday of the month at 6 p.m. via zoom.
- Connie Beissel reported on behalf of the Dakota County Labor Assembly. We did not have our July meeting. Our next meeting will be the second Thursday of the month at 7:00 p.m. via zoom.
- Brian Beedle reported on behalf of the Washington County Labor Assembly. We are sponsoring two teams for the St. Paul Labor Studies and Resource Center's Labor Bowl. Our 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. Our next meeting will be the fourth Tuesday of the month at 6:00 p.m. via zoom. We met and conducted screening for the Mayor of St. Paul and the St. Paul School board. Please contact Jasmine Kitto if you are interested in participating.

NEW BUSINESS

President Peterson called for a floor vote on the recommendations for granting labor endorsement in elections for St. Paul mayor and school board.

M/S/C TO GRANT LABOR ENDORSEMENT TO MELVIN CARTER, MAYOR OF SAINT PAUL; JAMES FARNSWORTH, SAINT PAUL SCHOOL BOARD; HALLA HENDERSON, SAINT PAUL SCHOOL BOARD; URIAH WARD, SAINT PAUL SCHOOL BOARD; AND CLAYTON HOWATT, SAINT PAUL SCHOOL BOARD SPECIAL ELECTION.

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

Submitted by,
BERNADINE ENGELDORF
Secretary-Treasurer

Exit Interview: Jennifer Christensen

'We really are dedicated, as a union, to everyone doing better'

Jennifer Christensen's career with the United Food and Commercial Workers started over 30 years ago as a part-time deli worker at Cub Foods, and it ended last month, when she retired as president of South St. Paul- and Duluth-based UFCW Local 1189.

She was the first woman to serve as president of the 10,000-member local, which represents workers in retail stores, nursing homes, hospitals, food processing plants, the state's medical cannabis industry and beyond.

But in this interview, which has been edited for length and clarity, Christensen said she preferred to focus not on "the girl thing" but on the work that has made Local 1189 a successful, fighting union with a bright future.

UA: What drove your interest in union leadership?

JC: When I went to work in the Cottage Grove deli part time, I set out in my mind to get the store director's job. Then I got a full-time promotion working seafood when the Apple Valley store opened, and SuperValu paid for me to finish my degree. And I had for some time been trying to be a union meatcutter – I wanted to be a carpenter when I was younger, and being a meatcutter was almost like being a carpenter, only you took things apart rather than putting them together – and I finally got a job as a meatcutter apprentice when they opened the Midway store...

But before I became a meatcutter, I was on the negotiating committee of a different local in 1995... After that experience, I decided right then and there that if I ever got a chance to run a local, I would never run it that way!

UA: Eventually you got your chance, getting elected secretary-treasurer in 2003 and president in 2016. Did you stay true to that approach?

JC: I strongly believe that workers will always make the right decision for themselves, their families and

even their employer – if they're given true and honest information. Workers are smart, and regardless of how long they've been there or what wage they make, you need to respect their intelligence. It's their workplace. It's their union. That's been the driving factor for me, taken from those experiences I had along the way.

UA: What have you learned about leadership?

JC: To purposefully take time to thank people and appreciate people and have conversations and build solidarity. Sometimes we keep calling on the same people, and we're wearing people out. We need to find the joy in solidarity. The struggle is long. Stop and have a drink of water. Have a beer. And then go on.

UA: Local 1189 represents such a diverse group. How would you characterize your local's identity?

JC: I find that the more we learn about each other and our neighbors, the stronger we are. Because we are a diverse local, we have in our culture that we support people in other industries. It's not all about us! We are really dedicated, as a union, to everyone doing better.

UA: How has Local 1189 navigated COVID?

JC: The vast majority of our members are essential. Our members had to face the pandemic every day, head on. And we're all fortunate that they are professionals and committed to what they do, so they did show up every day. They stayed. They worked. People adjusted their lives in order to rise to the challenge, even if it was scary. They're heroes.

It took and is taking a toll. But we as a union did not let them go through that alone. We continued to come to work. We worked to make sure that the union representatives of essential workers were also essential, so that we could stand beside them, getting information out to people, making ourselves available, pro-



Jennifer Christensen, president of UFCW Local 1189, spoke at a Capitol press conference in 2016. file photo

viding our members with masks or face shields...

UA: There was an outpouring of appreciation at the start of the pandemic for the essential work we too often take for granted. Do you think that will last?

JC: We all want to get back to normal, and some of normalcy is the ability to take things for granted like going to the grocery store and finding food and toilet paper. Our folks, we've always known what an integral part of the community they are. Everyone else found out, and I think from time to time we'll all kind of remember still.

UA: What are you going to miss in retirement? And what are you looking forward to?

JC: I'll miss being able to give people answers, giving people the right information. I will miss my staff and friends in the labor community. I'll miss seeing the accomplishments we make as unions and being part of it, watching people grow in their power.

I'm going to do some pottery. I don't know that I look forward to weeding my garden, but my garden might be looking forward to that.



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