

The St. Paul Union Advocate

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

March 2026

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COMING TOGETHER, PROTECTING EACH OTHER



Twin Cities restaurant and hotel workers bring their "86 ICE!" campaign to the offices of Hospitality Minnesota.

Union Advocate photo



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

Hospitality workers call on industry leaders to '86' immigration agents

By Michael Moore
Union Advocate editor

Workers in the Twin Cities' restaurant industry marked the start of Valentine's Day weekend with a march on the offices of Hospitality Minnesota, where they demanded the trade association sign onto a campaign to protect immigrant customers and staff.

Workers at the Feb. 13 rally in downtown Minneapolis said the violent surge of immigration enforcement across the state

over the last two months had sent many of their colleagues into hiding – or worse.

The "86 ICE!" campaign, a nod to industry slang for banning someone or something from an establishment, calls for employers and employees to work together on training, planning and surviving the crisis created by increased immigration enforcement.

Demands include refusing service to immigration agents, denying entry to agents unless they have a judicial warrant

and training all restaurant employees in how to protect the rights and safety of customers and fellow staff members.

Two local worker centers, CTUL and the Restaurant Opportunities Center of Minnesota, are behind the organizing effort, and several local restaurant owners already have signed on, including Miguel Hernandez, owner of Lito's Burritos in Richfield.

Signing onto the "86 ICE!" campaign,
(CONTINUED ON PAGE 9)

Despite tough climate for organizing, unions notched gains in 2025

By Michael Moore
Union Advocate editor

The number of American workers represented by unions grew to 16.5 million in 2025, its highest point in 16 years. Still, the gap between the share of workers who say they want a union and the share of workers with one remained stubbornly high.

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics released its annual

report on union members in the workforce last month. It showed modest growth for unions both nationwide and in Minnesota, where 15.8% of workers were represented by unions in 2025, an increase of 1%.

Nationally, the rate of union representation increased by one-tenth of a point, to 11.2%. The total number of workers represented by unions grew by 463,000.

Labor leaders said the data underscores how difficult it remains to organize unions under current labor law. They pointed to the tension between current union density and recent survey data showing near-record highs in unions' approval ratings.

AFL-CIO President Liz Shuler, the nation's highest-ranking union officer, said the increase in unionization last year reflects years of sustained effort

among workers to organize and win elections – a lengthy process that is met with hostility in most workplaces.

"Billionaire bosses and union-busting politicians have tried to throw the kitchen sink at working people and their unions – slashing our jobs and rigging the rules to scare us out of organizing – but they are failing," Shuler said in a response

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 9)

Go Figure

15.8% Share of Minnesota workers represented by unions in 2025, up 1% from 2024

11.2% Share of workers represented by unions nationwide

\$1,487 Median weekly earnings of union-represented workers in 2025

\$1,174 Median weekly earnings of workers without a union on the job

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics



Labor Voices: Stacy Bartlett

Educator reflects on ‘liberty and justice for all’

Every child living in the United States has a legal right to a free public K-12 education. That right is not conditional nor dependent on citizenship. It is settled law.

And yet I have watched my students’ shoulders bend under burdens far heavier than books. We now know that promises can be withdrawn, protections reversed, and laws rewritten.

For “E,” an immigrant student in my multilingual biology class, this is a lived experience.

Always stoic, deliberately reserved, and relentlessly hard-working, E rarely draws attention to himself. He and his family have been living here legally through a government-sponsored program. In December, after the Department of Homeland Security abruptly revoked their status, they were thrust into immigration proceedings. The courts have since paused enforcement while the decision is reviewed. They can stay, for now.

When nearly 3,000 Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers surged into Minnesota in December, a fog of uncertainty and fear settled over our schools. For educators who taught through the pandemic, the weight feels familiar.

Our friends are missing; some are gone forever. Some families here legally have self-deported. Others have moved all or part of their family to “safer” states. Students sheltering in place return to school just often enough to avoid generating a truancy report that would otherwise draw attention to their absence. Those who have come back are forever changed, the damage generational.

As educators, we have once again stepped into the gaps. On a moment’s notice, we have bought groceries, funded rents and utilities, organized pantry drives, delivered supplies, become notaries, built calling campaigns to legislators, trained as legal observers, switched to encrypted communication apps, and worn blue ribbons to signal we are safe adults. Whether we’re buying Kleenex for runny noses, calming fears, or donating our time and money, we do it because our students are “our kids,” and by extension, their families are our families. This isn’t political; it’s simply what we do.

Supporting our students so they are able to learn and attend school is also the law. In 1982, The Supreme Court affirmed in Plyler v. Doe that all students, regardless of citizenship, have the right to a public education. When ICE activity makes students too afraid to attend, however, that right exists only on paper, not in practice. Furthermore, it defies Plyler v. Doe when we educators observe that only certain bus routes

“Never in a million years did I think I would see passports tucked into students’ backpacks.”

– Stacy Bartlett



are followed, only certain neighborhoods are surveilled, and only certain students with certain levels of melanin and the ability to speak multiple languages are targeted.

That is why I am speaking out. Unlike the pandemic, which required all students to stay home, the students missing now are doing so to protect themselves and their families.

Never did I imagine that lockdown drills might serve to protect students from our own government. Never did I think I would mourn deported colleagues over paperwork errors. Never did I think I would see passports tucked into backpacks to substantiate school IDs. Never did I think I would have to comfort a sobbing student who felt the need to teach her five-year-old brother to play silent hide-and-seek should anyone come to the door.

Eventually, your brain stops filing these events under “impossible” and instead starts accepting them as “Tuesday.”

On Tuesdays, we stand for the Pledge of Allegiance. In 30 years of teaching, I have never seen a student stand with E’s dignity and resolve. He faces the flag with gratitude and the unwavering hope that words still matter. Watching him is both devastating and beautiful. Devastating because no child should have to earn their safety. Beautiful because E still believes in the ideal of the American dream.

One afternoon, long after the bell rang, E lingered by my desk. “Thank you for supporting me,” he said quietly, as if even that might be taken away.

The least I can do in return is neither radical nor political. It is promised. We must stand up for our students and insist that the words we ask them to recite carry meaning. For E, and for every child in our classrooms, there must be liberty and justice for all.

– Stacy Bartlett is an Education Minnesota member and a high school science teacher of 30 years.

Letters

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- Email them to: mmoore@stpaulunions.org

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Union members marched to “No Kings 2” last October. file photo

March with Labor at ‘No Kings 3’

What began in 2025 as a single day of defiance has become a sustained, national, peaceful resistance to the second Trump administration, spreading from small towns to city centers and across every community determined to defend democracy.

Organizers, including the Minnesota AFL-CIO, are planning the next “No Kings” day March 28, with a flagship rally at the Capitol in St. Paul beginning at 2 p.m.

Union members are encouraged to save the date – and watch for information about a potential labor-specific march to the Capitol rally. Find information at mnaflcio.org/events.

Nellie Stone Johnson fundraiser April 16

Entering its 39th year of supporting educational opportunities for minority union members and their families, the Nellie Stone Johnson Scholarship Dinner is scheduled April 16 at the DoubleTree by Hilton in Bloomington.

The event brings together higher education supporters, union activists, legislators and students to celebrate both the recipients of the scholarship and its namesake, a groundbreaking civil rights activist and labor leader.

Learn more about the event and the scholarship, and purchase tickets, at www.nelliestone.org.

Training for members running for office

Nobody knows labor issues better than union members. That’s why the Minnesota AFL-CIO, the state’s largest labor federation, sponsors a two-day training for prospective candidates and campaign workers.

Participants get a crash course in campaign planning, messaging, public speaking, volunteer recruitment, fundraising and more.

Sessions are led by campaign veterans and union members who have won election to public office.

The 2026 candidate training is scheduled May 2-3. Find application information at mnaflcio.org/runforoffice.



Members of three letter carrier unions based in the Twin Cities area join a day of action to kick off their union’s nationwide contract campaign, rallying outside the post office on South 1st Street in Minneapolis. Union Advocate photos

Carriers rally as contract talks begin: ‘We are worth more’

By Michael Moore
Union Advocate editor

Letter carriers are back at the bargaining table with the U.S. Postal Service, less than a year after settling a three-year contract that will expire in May.

Negotiations covering over 200,000 city carriers nationwide began Feb. 23, and members of the National Association of Letter Carriers launched their contract campaign a day earlier with events in 39 states, including a rally in Minneapolis.

Higher wages, sustainable workloads and a commitment to career-track jobs are among the union’s top demands.

Carriers have grown frustrated in recent years with “sub-standard” contracts, Hopkins-based NALC Branch 2942 President Tom Nickerson said during the action outside the post office at 100 South 1st Street in Minneapolis.

“We are worth more than the Postal Service is giving us,” he said. “We are going to do what needs to be done to get a fair contract... Now is the time to fight.”

The tactics NALC can bring to that fight, however, are more limited than most other unions, as USPS workers and other federal employees are prohibited by law from striking.

During the last round of talks, NALC members voted overwhelmingly to reject a tentative agreement that their representatives settled with USPS after nearly two years at the table. The sides agreed to enter binding arbitration over a final contract, which took effect in March 2025, about 700 days after their previous agreement expired.

The contract delivered wage increases of less than 1.5% annually, and it did not address mounting objections among carriers about mandatory overtime, overreliance on low-paid “carrier assistants” and the slow progression of their 13-step wage scale.

Those concerns were top of mind for carriers at the Minneapolis rally. Branch 9 President Joe Rian said post offices in his Minneapolis-based local’s jurisdiction have stopped hiring carrier assistants because so many of them quit soon after being hired. Billed by USPS as a part-time job, the CCA positions – about 27,000 nationwide – come with lower pay and fewer benefits, schedules that change week to week and the same mandatory overtime requirement as their career-track peers.



Overtime has ballooned in recent years as USPS looks to cut routes. Nickerson said the Hopkins office axed nine routes, eliminating 360 carrier hours from the weekly schedule.

“This work did not just go away,” he said. “This work was spread throughout the office, leaving the remaining routes overburdened and requiring 10 or more hours per day to complete... It is not a sustainable plan.”

Some Branch 9 carriers, Rian added, are delivering mail as late as 8 p.m. “They’ve made the routes so long that some aren’t being delivered all the way,” he added. “Their computer says it’s an 8-hour route, and we’re having a hard time convincing the post office that their numbers are junk. But the numbers don’t deliver the mail; the people deliver the mail.”

Carriers also said they hope bargaining results in action on increasing safety concerns, including physical threats, assaults and heavier workloads. Some postal facilities, too, have become unsafe after falling into disrepair, Branch 28 member Perry Schmidt said. Earlier this month, a postal clerk fell in the parking lot of the St. Paul post office where Schmidt works, suffering injuries to her nose, eye socket and shoulder blade.

“We got her on an ambulance,” Schmidt said. “The boss didn’t even come out, but the first thing he asked inside? ‘Was she on the clock?’ The way they treat people is just a shame.”

Son of detained Guild member attends State of the Union as Omar's guest

The Trump administration's chaotic, violent surge of immigration-enforcement activity in Minnesota this winter has upended thousands of lives, Gerardo Orozco Guzman's among them.

But Guzman, 27, had a rare opportunity to bear witness to that devastation when President Trump delivered his State of the Union address Feb. 24. He was one of four guests - all impacted by Operation Metro Surge - invited to attend the speech with Rep. Ilhan Omar.

Guzman's father, Eustaquio Orozco Verduco, was abducted on his way to work Jan. 9, and he remained in federal detention at press time. Verduco is an organizer with the worker center CTUL, Centro de Trabajadores Unidos en la Lucha, and a member of the Minnesota Newspaper and Communications Guild.

For Guzman, attending the State of the Union was an opportunity to bring "light and awareness" to what's happening both to his family and to his community.

"It is extremely unfair that my dad was

taken by the government," he said. "It's unfair that our family is having to go through this. It's unfair that my Minnesota community is having to go through this still."

Guzman's father, known to friends and family as "Paco," has made a career of helping vulnerable workers fight back against abuses in the construction industry.

CTUL provides assistance to workers who experience wage theft, misclassification and labor trafficking, and the worker center has a track record of recovering unpaid wages and helping deliver cases to authorities for investigation.

Guzman has built a career as an advocate, too. A legal assistant and mediator for the Minnesota Attorney General's office, he was named an "Unsung Legal Hero" by Minnesota Lawyer magazine last year.

Guzman, his mother, his sister and his extended family have been scrambling to pursue every legal option possible to get Paco home since his arrest. Lawyers

immediately filed a habeas corpus petition for his release, but it was denied by a judge.

After spending weeks in the notoriously dangerous Camp East Montana detention facility, Paco was transferred to a facility in New Mexico, a move that came with greater access to phone calls and legal advocates, Guzman said.

But the family's concern grows with each day Paco is detained.

"He calls to check in on us and tell us he's OK, but with every call he does sound more dejected," Guzman said. "He recognized, I think, that people who he's met in detention have been there way longer - eight or nine months, if not longer. As time goes on the tone of his voice is not the same, and noticing that change, it's heart-breaking to say the least."

Guzman said the family has settled on a multi-pronged legal approach to get Paco home, but costs are adding up. The family launched an online fundraiser at bit.ly/FreePacoFund, and 6,000 people



Eustaquio Orozco Verduco with his godsons. submitted photo

have signed onto a petition for Paco's release at bit.ly/BringPacoHome.

"You want to have faith in the laws and procedures, and at first my dad was hopeful that he would be released, as he should have been," Guzman said. "We've gotten so much support from more people than I know, but if we can get a little more support, get the right kind of support..."

"I'll talk to anyone and everyone. I just want my dad back with us."

For St. Paul city workers, bargaining shifted into high gear after Her took office

By Michael Moore

Union Advocate editor

Clerical and technical workers at the City of St. Paul ratified new three-year contracts last month after just three bargaining sessions, locking in wage increases that will ensure most union members earn \$20 per hour by 2028.

Negotiations between the city and two AFSCME locals, which bargain in tandem on behalf of a combined 1,000

workers, progressed much faster than they did three years ago, when dragged on for six months, sparked informational picketing and required 60 hours with a state mediator.

Two key factors, union leaders said, contributed to the quicker resolution. Workers were fired up from the start to support their bargaining team, and St. Paul voters elected a new mayor, Koahly Her, who sought to get her relationship

with city workers off on the right foot.

"Some things we can give the city credit for, and some things we can credit ourselves with doing well," AFSCME Local 1842 President Isaac Mielke said.

In the end, the new contracts will deliver a \$1 across-the-board wage increase April 1 and increases of 3% and 3.5% on Jan. 1 of the next two years. Workers also gained a floating holiday, bereavement leave and a deferred-compensation match.

What's more, those gains came with no concessions, Local 2508 Treasurer Chelsea Beary said.

"What did we give up? Nothing," she said. "We took back some of our initial proposals, but the city didn't add anything. There weren't any real carveouts or concessions, and we're really proud of that."

The relationship between AFSCME - the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees - and city leadership has warmed significantly since last fall, when administrators surprised city workers and their unions with a list of proposed changes to its civil-service rules that they planned to implement by year's end.

The proposal, which administrators told union leaders they had been working on for about three years, sparked outrage - and action - among AFSCME members, who had already been organizing in opposition to then-Mayor Melvin Carter's proposed staffing cuts at rec centers and a library.

Locals 1842 and 2508 began gathering support from city unions for a letter to council members opposing the civil-service changes, which would have doubled the probationary period, shortened the timeline for unions to file grievances and lifted guidelines for management in responding to worker complaints,

among other changes.

"I think every city local was extremely concerned, and we all hit the ground running, talking to city council members to say this is not how you make these changes," said Beary, an executive assistant in the Parks Department. "This is something we're going to negotiate."

Meanwhile, about 50 AFSCME members showed up to the city's Truth in Taxation hearing Nov. 25 to oppose the staffing cuts.

"We wanted to do something proactive for these negotiations," Mielke, a library associate, said. "It turned out, we got a lot of support from community members at that hearing, even people there to talk about other issues. And we won that budget fight."

Unions won the fight over civil-service rules, too, and they took that momentum into contract talks with the city.

Labor Relations representatives were dismissive, Mielke and Beary said, of AFSCME's proposals in two bargaining sessions before Carter left office, but that changed in their first - and only - session after Her's inauguration in January.

"There was an immediate kind of visual change because the city literally brought us donuts," Beary said. "We met for nine hours, but it became clear as the day went on that the city (representatives) were there to wrap this up."

After union members voted to ratify the contracts, several members of the bargaining unit who were not signed up as AFSCME members showed their enthusiasm by joining the union, Mielke said.

"Right after we reached the tentative agreement, [Parks and Recreation] had their staff day, and we signed up 11 new members that day alone," he said. "It's really exciting."

Register your team now!

15th ANNUAL LABOR BOWL



Our annual fundraiser benefits the Labor Studies and Resource Center, a nonprofit that assists and advocates for union members in the East Metro.

Bowlers are asked to raise \$100 in pledges.

(Teams of four bowlers = \$400, teams of five = \$500.)

All donations are tax-deductible.

Thursday, May 7 | Sun Ray Lanes

To register as a team or individual, call 651-222-3787.

www.stpaulunions.org

Educators push statewide insurance pool as health care costs erode wage gains

Minnesota educators struggling with soaring health insurance premiums will advocate at the Capitol this year for legislation that would create a single, statewide insurance pool for all public school employees.

Rep. Liz Reyer (D-Eagan) is sponsoring a bill, House File 2904, that would establish the Educator Group Insurance Program, or EGIP. Educators say the large, statewide insurance pool is needed to control cost increases that have become unsustainable for school employees and their families.

“Every year, school employees across Minnesota are forced to choose between wages and health insurance at the bargaining table because there isn’t enough money for both,” Education Minnesota President Monica Byron said. “This bill changes that.”

“By pooling every school employee in the state, we give educators the collective power they need to push back against an industry that has been dictating terms to small districts for far too long. The Legislature has the tools to fix this. We’re asking them to use them.”

Reyer’s bill would create an insurance pool for all of Minnesota’s public schools and their employees, including teachers, paraprofessionals, custodians and other school employees.

The EGIP pool would be overseen by

Minnesota Management and Budget and modeled after the existing state employees’ group insurance program, known as SEGIP. The creation of the EGIP pool would create increased stability and predictability by spreading risk over a larger group.

A “hold harmless” provision would fund the difference between current district premium costs and costs under the new program.

Aaron Wilke, a middle school social studies teacher and union leader at Kasson-Mantorville who has spent a decade on his district’s health insurance selection committee, said premium increases have made contract negotiations nearly impossible.

“Over the last six years, Kasson-Mantorville educators have seen an 11.1% average annual premium increase ... and we are better off than many districts,” Wilke told a House committee.

Wilke said some of his colleagues have been forced to go without coverage.

“The cost of a current family health insurance premium at Kasson-Mantorville is around \$36,000 a year, depending on the selected plan. Assuming a 10% annual premium increase, a decade from now, the premium for the same plan will cost about \$93,000 a year. Who is going to pay for that?”



Maria Lê Selmer, president of Education Minnesota-Roseville Local 7228, leads a rally Feb. 24 outside the building where school board members would meet later that night. The union of 600 educators finally settled a tentative agreement with the district the following day, after 10 bargaining sessions and 60-plus hours at the table. Compensation was the biggest sticking point, lead negotiator Gregg Martinson said. “Insurance rates have gone up so much that we’ve seen many of our paychecks decrease as a result.” Speaking at the rally, Education Minnesota President Monica Byron said 90 locals remained in bargaining with their districts. Union Advocate photo

In the summer of 2025, Education Minnesota polled its 84,000 members and found that health insurance costs were their top concern. Nine in 10 said every educator should have affordable, high-quality health insurance, but half said their coverage was not affordable, and 49% said they had put off medical care because it

was too expensive. Health insurance has strained contract negotiations statewide. Earlier this year, more than 3,200 teachers in Anoka-Hennepin, the state’s largest school district, were on the verge of a strike over insurance costs after their district was hit with a 22% premium increase.

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A DAY OUT FOR DEMOCRACY

Hundreds of Minnesotans spent their Presidents' Day afternoon marching together in south Minneapolis, mourning the deaths of Renee Good and union member Alex Pretti and pledging to remain vigilant – and continue demanding accountability – as the Department of Homeland Security began scaling back its surge of immigration agents to the state. Organized by the Minnesota AFL-CIO in partnership with faith, community and small-business groups, the 'Day Out for Democracy' march began with a rally in Stewart Park and ended at the memorial for Pretti, a VA Hospital nurse and member of the American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE) who was killed by Customs and Border Protection agents on Nicollet Avenue. Demonstrators amplified several demands, including the immediate removal of Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers from the state, justice for all victims of ICE violence and a halt to ICE funding. They called for meaningful immigration reform, and they demanded federal investments to help Minnesota recover from the damage Operation Metro Surge did to the state's economy, particularly to small businesses and working families.

Union Advocate photos



Report: Minnesotans lost over \$100 million in wages during Operation Metro Surge

Researchers at North Star Policy Action and the W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research released a report last month that estimates Operation Metro Surge cost Twin Cities workers an estimated \$106 million in wages.

The report digs into economic data from Jan. 3 to Feb. 17, when researchers found the number of employees working in the metro area declined by an estimated 2.8%, the total number of hours worked dropped by 1.9% and the number of business locations operating fell by 1.7%.

The report finds that these declines conservatively translated into more than

\$100 million in lost wages for Minnesota workers during that short period alone.

Dr. Aaron Rosenthal, research director at North Star Policy Action, a labor-backed think tank, likened economic impact of the immigration surge – which spread fear and chaos throughout communities – to the COVID-19 pandemic. Fewer people went to work because it wasn't safe, and that created a "ripple effect across the entire economy."

"The difference is that we can't expect the federal government to step in and help businesses recover, because federal action is what caused this disruption," Rosenthal added. "That means

recovery will depend on leadership here at home from state policymakers and community leaders. This analysis makes clear the scale of support Minnesota's working people need right now."

The analysis examined daily labor market data to capture changes as they happened, offering a fine-grained view of how harms unfolded day by day. The data is particularly well-suited to understanding impacts on small businesses, where disruptions were likely most severe.

"Because workers are staying away from their jobs out of fear, this disruption is harder to measure through tradi-

tional indicators like unemployment," said Dr. Aaron Sojourner, Senior Economist and Deputy Director of Research at the W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research. "But when you look at hours worked and businesses operating, the economic impact becomes clear. We're seeing fewer people clocking in and fewer dollars flowing into Minnesota households."

The report utilized conservative assumptions and the total wages lost are likely larger than the \$106 million estimate.

The full report is available at: northstarpolicy.org/labor-outcomes.

At the Capitol

Walz proposes \$907 million infrastructure jobs bill, but some lawmakers thinking bigger

Before Minnesota legislators returned to the Capitol last month for the 2026 session, Gov. Tim Walz announced his proposal for infrastructure spending, a top priority for state lawmakers during even-numbered years.

Walz proposed a \$907 million package of investments in public safety, clean water, transportation and housing infrastructure that drew praise from Building Trades unions.

Dan McConnell, president of the Minnesota Building and Construction Trades Council, called the proposal a “smart, balanced investment in Minnesota’s future ... that addresses real needs while creating thousands of good, family-sustaining construction jobs across the state.”

But some labor-endorsed lawmakers are calling on the governor to think bigger.

Sen. Sandy Pappas (D-St. Paul), chair of the Capital Investment Committee, said in a statement that the governor’s

“To put it in perspective, the 2005 bonding bill was \$945 million – \$1.6 billion in today’s dollars. The governor’s 2026 proposal fails to even meet the standards of 21 years ago.”

– Sen. Sandy Pappas

proposal would “barely put a dent in the growing backlog of projects statewide.”

Pappas said the state received \$6.5 billion in capital-improvement requests last summer from state agencies, local governments and public colleges and universities.

Unanswered requests have piled up in recent years as lawmakers have struggled to reach bipartisan agreement on infrastructure packages, also known as “bonding bills” because the state

finances the investments by issuing bonds.

Bonding bills require support from a three-fifths majority of both the House and Senate to pass, and members of the minority party look to use those votes as leverage on other issues before the Legislature.

Minnesota communities and the state’s construction industry rely on sustained and predictable state infrastructure investments, Joel Smith, president of LIUNA Minnesota and North Dakota, said.

The Laborers union encouraged lawmakers to pass a \$1 billion infrastructure jobs bill, about \$90 million higher than Walz’s target – and to invest in removing lead pipes from the state’s clean-water infrastructure.

“Minnesota has 100,000 lead water service lines that need to be replaced,” Smith said. “We call on the Legislature to invest \$250 million to maintain the progress we are making to remove dangerous lead pipes in communities throughout the state.”

Pappas, meanwhile, said Minnesota has a history of maintaining and investing in infrastructure needs responsibly, not kicking the can down the road. But



being responsible also means keeping pace with inflation.

“To put it in perspective, the 2005 bonding bill was \$945 million – \$1.6 billion in today’s dollars,” Pappas said. “The governor’s 2026 proposal fails to even meet the standards of 21 years ago.”

Minnesota has maintained one of the strongest credit positions in the country.

“Minnesota’s ‘AAA’ bond rating demonstrates our stability and fiscal responsibility, and robust bonding bills are part of that equation,” Pappas added. “I look forward to discussions with my colleagues in the 2026 session, and I’m hopeful the governor and the House will agree to a larger bill that can better address the dire infrastructure needs throughout our state.”

– Michael Moore, UA editor

Minnesota’s ban on captive audience meetings survives legal challenge

By Max Nesterak
minnesotareformer.com

Minnesota’s ban on anti-union “captive audience meetings” survived a legal challenge and remains in effect after the U.S. Supreme Court declined to take up an appeal from two non-union contractor associations and a Minnesota electrician.

The law, which passed as part of a sweeping pro-labor agenda in 2023, bans employers from making workers attend anti-union presentations or other meetings promoting their political or religious views. The ban was long sought by union leaders, who argue that the meetings gave employers an unfair advantage in organizing campaigns.

Minnesota Attorney General Keith Ellison, who defended the law in court, called the news a victory for workers.

“This is a great day for workers across our state,” Ellison said in a statement. “Every worker deserves the freedom to make their own decisions about politics and religion without fear of losing their job.”

Laketown Electric Corporation and two non-union contractor associations – the Minnesota chapter of Associated Builders and Contractors and the National Federation of Independent Business – challenged the ban, arguing in a 2024 lawsuit filed in federal court that it violates employers’ First Amendment right to free speech and contradicted the National Labor Relations Act.



Keith Ellison

The state hadn’t tried to enforce the ban, but the contractors argued the law created a “chilling effect” that prevented them from exercising their constitu-

tional rights.

In the lawsuit, Laketown Electric said it was one of the fastest growing companies in Minnesota, and “is frequently targeted by union organizing efforts, creating the need to communicate lawfully with its employees on this important topic.”

Ellison argued the contractor and business groups lacked standing to sue.

The courts agreed.

The law largely leaves enforcement to employees, who have the power to sue their bosses if they are forced to attend captive audience meetings. Ellison and state Department of Labor and Industry Commissioner Nicole Blissenbach, both named as defendants in the suit, said they never threatened to enforce the ban and had no “present intention” to.

In a 2-1 ruling, the 8th Circuit Court of Appeals dismissed the case in September, ruling that Ellison, Blissenbach and Gov. Tim Walz were not sufficiently connected to enforcement action to bring a lawsuit.



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UBTMN.COM

Workers call on Fairview, other health systems to adopt best practices for protecting patients from ICE

By Michael Moore

Union Advocate editor

Health care facilities have not been spared the aggressive tactics deployed by federal agents during the recent surge of immigration enforcement in Minnesota. Now, local unions, immigrant-rights groups and lawmakers are demanding health systems adopt new “best practices” to keep patients and workers safe and uphold their rights.

Union nurses, doctors and support staff called a press conference Feb. 20 outside the U of M Medical Center after delivering a list of demands to Fairview, citing unanswered questions and persistent concerns about how the system is navigating the immigration chaos.

Kirby Crow, a Fairview Riverside worker and member of SEIU Healthcare Minnesota and Iowa, cataloged a list of incidents workers have witnessed at Fairview facilities, from agents covering up security cameras to verbally and physically intimidating health care workers – even following some to their homes.

“Despite a need for new, improved procedures, Fairview hasn’t offered workers any updated policies in the last few weeks,” Crow said. “So us workers stepped up.”

Workers’ top concern, speakers at the event said, is that community members are foregoing health care to avoid encounters with federal agents.

Soon after Operation Metro Surge began in December, workers across the health care industry began sounding the alarm that immigrant patients were avoiding hospitals and clinics, deferring needed care and going without their medications.

“Our No. 1 priority will always be and has always been the safety and well being of our patients,” Dr. Kaitlin McLean, a member of Council of Interns and Residents (CIR-SEIU), said. “It is the hospitals’ job to allow us to do that safely. We need to know that the hospital has our back while we do that important work.”

A coalition of union doctors, nurses and health care workers at Fairview, working with the immigrant-rights group UNIDOS MN, drafted best practices that, they say, would offer assurances to patients fearful of seeking care.



Dr. Kaitlin McLean offers a message to community members who have been avoiding health care facilities: “We want you to get the care you need. We are here asking the hospital to support us in caring for you.” Union Advocate photos

Demands include alerting the public when immigration agents approach a Fairview facility. Workers also want Fairview to provide them with education about patients’ rights under civil detention, and clear protocols to follow when immigration agents arrive at their facilities. That includes requiring agents to sign in, remove any non-medical face coverings and stay out of private or secure areas unless they have a judicial warrant to enter.

“I wish I could tell you with absolute certainty that it is safe for you to leave your home and come to the hospital,” McLean said. “We want you to get the care you need. We are here asking the hospital to support us in caring for you.”

The proposed best practices also would protect health care workers, barring agents from parking lots, break rooms and other staff spaces and allowing for immediate reassignment from areas immigration agents have entered.

The coalition also wants amendments to Fairview’s attendance policy that would accommodate workers experiencing immigration-related safety or legal emergencies.

“These are phenomenal health care workers that show up every day to serve as a vessel for healing and a helping hand for humanity,” Jamey Sharp, a health care organizer with UNIDOS MN, said.



Kirby Crow, a member of SEIU Healthcare Minnesota and Iowa, catalogs the troubling incidents Fairview workers have seen in their facilities since the immigration surge began in late December.

UNIDOS is organizing with workers in other health care systems, including Hennepin Health Care and North Memorial, to establish strong protocols around immigration enforcement.

“Our goal is simple,” Sharp added. “Hospitals must be places of care, healing and trust – not fear.”

Educators union joins two Minnesota districts in lawsuit to keep ICE away from schools

In Inver Grove Heights, ICE agents arrested a special-ed paraprofessional in the Concord Education Center parking lot in that suburb south of St. Paul on Jan. 12.

The same day, in Brooklyn Center, the parent of an elementary school student “was detained by federal agents while waiting at a school bus stop.”

On Jan. 7, ICE agents grabbed teachers at a Spanish language children’s center in Apple Valley and a Spanish immersion academy in Minneapolis. They pulled the second teacher from her car.

And Fridley is where ICE agents used 5-year-old

Liam Ramos as “bait” to lure his parents out of the house.

These are the costs of immigration enforcement near Minnesota’s schools – costs that drove Education Minnesota to join the Duluth and Fridley school districts in a federal lawsuit filed last month.

Their demand: Keep ICE away from of Minnesota schools, school parking lots and school bus stops – a distance of 1,000 feet away from each. That used to be in the federal agencies’ guidelines.

But the Trump administration’s “unexplained and irrational change in agency policy is arbitrary and

capricious and was done without undertaking notice-and-comment rulemaking,” the lawsuit claims.

“We brought this lawsuit because educators cannot effectively teach and students cannot learn with armed, masked agents patrolling school grounds, following families to and from school, and questioning students about their immigration status for no other apparent reason than the color of their skin,” Ed-Mn President Monica Byron said. “Every day that DHS allows agents to operate on or near our schools is a day of fear for our members and lost learning for our students.”

– PAI Union News Service

After strike threat, SEIU members at HealthPartners keep prized health benefits

After putting HealthPartners on notice that they were willing to strike to defend their industry-leading health benefits, union members at clinics across the Twin Cities last month voted to ratify a new contract that does just that.

The three-year agreement also will deliver wage increases - 4% in year No. 1 and 3% in the second and third - to nearly 2,000 members of SEIU Healthcare Minnesota and Iowa.

"This (contract) shows what happens when we stand up for workers and patients and allows us to continue to give the exceptional patient care we pride ourselves on giving," Jean Pfarr, a nurse with 48 years of

experience at HealthPartners, said in a statement issued by the union.

Members of the bargaining unit work in nearly all facets of care, excluding doctors and dentists, at more than 25 HealthPartners clinics.

Citing a sluggish start to negotiations, the union's bargaining team took the extraordinary step of calling for a strike vote several weeks before their contract was set to expire Jan. 31. The vote saw support from 99% for a weeklong strike, if necessary. The union followed up its strike vote with pre-dawn informational picketing Jan. 23 - in sub-zero temperatures - outside the HealthPartners Como Clinic.

HealthPartners got the message. Other highlights of the tentative agreement, according to the union, include addition wage increases for registered nurses, certified medical assistants, medical assistants and EMTs; increased bonuses for workers weekend work; stronger non-discrimination language for LGBTQ+ members; and a new labor-management committee focused on the impact of artificial intelligence on health care workers.

"We fought for everyone in our bargaining unit across all 80-plus job classifications," radiologic tech Crystal Peterson said. "Despite this being just as hard of a fight as we knew it would be, we got a good outcome."

Union representation grew by 1% in Minnesota last year

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

Shuler took aim at the Trump administration for modeling an anti-union approach since the start of its second term, with mass layoffs and executive orders that have attempted to strip federal workers of their collective bargaining agreements.

She also noted that the government shutdown put a pause on National Labor Relations Board elections, further delaying the organizing process for thousands of workers.

"Workers have felt President Trump's billion-dollar-first agenda in action and are hungry to take back their power," Shuler said. "Workers know that the best check on a bad boss is a strong union contract. In 2026, workers will continue to organize in every corner of the country and build power to fight for the lives they deserve."

Notable takeaways from the BLS report include:

- Signs of growth in the South, after a sustained push to organize in so-called "right to work" states. Nearly half of all union growth last year came from Southern states, with younger workers organizing at a rapid pace, too.

- Public workers are looking to unions, especially at the federal level. Union density among federal workers grew to over 31% - the largest single-year increase since 2011. Overall, the number of public-sector workers represented by a union grew by 236,000, or 36.4% of that workforce.

- Private-sector workers made organizing gains in health care, retail, education services and construction. North America's Building Trades Unions reported gaining 4 over 47,000 new members across 14 crafts last year, despite widespread industry disruption. NABTU President Sean McGarvey cited "sound public policy," in part, for the unions' growth.

"The prior administration and Congress prioritized real investments in infrastructure and energy..." McGarvey said. "While the current administration has announced future foreign investments in the U.S., none have yet produced a single work hour for our members.

"Instead, cancellations, delays, withdrawn permits, withheld funds and policy uncertainty have jeopardized these anticipated domestic investments."

- The number of Minnesota workers represented by unions increased from 394,000 to 431,000 last year. The state ranked 10th-highest for share of the workforce with union representation.

- Union members continued to out-earn their non-union peers. The median weekly earnings for all workers last year was \$1,204. Union members had median weekly earnings of \$1,487; for non-union workers the median was \$1,174.



Remy, a Minneapolis bartender, gives a shout out to his co-workers who were detained during Operation Metro Surge. "These aren't just co-workers, they are friends, family, community members," he said. "Some of them I'll never see again."

Union Advocate photo

Hospitality workers demand bosses '86' ICE

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

Hernandez said during the rally, would show that Hospitality Minnesota stands by the business owners who are doing the right thing.

"Most of these demands are already being done by a lot of good community business owners," Hernandez said during the rally. "Of course, there's always bad actors, and we need them to stand up for their staff, too."

Organizers also want restaurants to pledge not to fire or discipline immigrant workers who miss shifts because they fear being harassed or detained.

Operation Metro Surge may be over, but the number of agents, combined, from Immigration and Customs Enforcement and the U.S. Customs and Border Protection remained about three times greater than previous levels as this issue went to press.

For Patti, an immigrant worker in the hospitality industry who asked not to share her last name, attending the "86 ICE!" rally was the first time she had left her home, aside from going to work when it felt safe, for over a month. She said co-workers helped with groceries and other supplies, and her employer offered flexibility and help getting to work safely.

But not everyone she knows in the industry has been as fortunate. Patti said it wasn't until after a friend

who works as a dishwasher was detained at a bus stop on his way to work that his restaurant began offering rides to vulnerable workers.

It's a sad example, she said, of why "we need proactive safety plans and trainings at all restaurants."

Several non-immigrant workers at the rally offered shout-outs to co-workers they worry they will never see again. Hazel, a server whose employer took the "86 ICE!" pledge, said workers in her restaurant were willing to strike to keep their colleagues safe.

"If nothing else, everyone must feel they are safe in their workplace," she said. "They need to be protected by their employer. But more importantly and more personally, I want to say goodbye to my co-workers after a shift and know they will be there the next day."

After the rally, a delegation of workers and business owners attempted to meet with a Hospitality Minnesota representative but were told the offices were closed for the day.

CTUL and ROC said supporters of the campaign have sent nearly 2,000 letters to Hospitality Minnesota, but the industry group has denied requests to "discuss a path forward."

Learn more about the "86 ICE!" campaign at bit.ly/86ICE.

Warmer temps no problem for union volunteers at annual fishing event

The Union Sportsmen's Alliance (USA) hosted 97 kids and their families at the 2026 Take Kids Ice Fishing event Feb. 21 at Lake George Regional Park.

Above-average temperatures across Minnesota last month raised concerns about ice conditions leading up to the event. But Mike Rodger, the lead volunteer and Cement Masons Local 633 member, transported attendees from the parking lot to the ice fishing houses by a UTV pulling a trailer full of hay bales to prevent vehicles from overcrowding on the lake.

Once participants were on the ice, union volunteers had everything prepared to give them a memorable, hands-on outdoor experience. Heaters warmed the fishing houses, holes were drilled through the ice with augers, and equipment ranging from fish finders to floating bobbbers was ready and waiting.

To most people, fishing means warm weather, calm lakes and a boat, but Keith Larson, president of Twin City Concrete Pumping Company, sees ice fishing as more of a community event.

"I have a lake home, and I fish in the summer but nothing like I fish in the winter," he said. "I enjoy being on the ice more than I enjoy fishing on the boat. There are so many bodies of water that you can easily access in the winter when it's frozen. You can move around on the lake more efficiently and fish with more people."

Union volunteers representing Cement Plasters Local 633, Laborers Local 563 and Painters Local 82 were joined by the Anoka County Sheriff's Department and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources.



Participants in the Union Sportsmen's Alliance 2026 Take Kids Ice Fishing event watch as a volunteer hands out a prize. USA photo

"All the volunteers have been hosting this event and several others like it for many years," Maggie Sager, USA conservation coordinator, said. "To

them, it's all about giving back to the community and creating opportunities for everyone to get hooked on fishing. It was awesome to see them all work

together so in sync as if they're on a job-site and help so many people through their passion and dedication for the outdoors."

Saint Paul RLF retirees to nominate officers March 18

The Saint Paul Regional Labor Federation Retirees will meet March 18 at noon at the Saint Paul Labor Center, 353 West 7th St.

The meeting agenda will include nominations to serve as president, vice president, secretary, treasurer and trustee of the organization, which is affiliated with the Minnesota State Retiree Council, AFL-CIO.

Elections, if necessary, will be held at the Retirees' meeting April 15.

Meetings are open to retired members of unions affiliated with the SPRLF. Retirees interested in learning more about the group are welcome to attend.

The group meets the third Wednesday of each month.

Contact Tom Edwards at edwardsapwu2@aol.com for more information.

New play inspired by Willmar 8 to begin History Theatre run

The History Theatre in St. Paul will stage a new comedy inspired by the groundbreaking bank workers' strike in Willmar. "Hungry Like the Wolf" will run from March 19 to April 12.

Playwright Sandra Struthers' script "dives into the critical, ongoing fight for labor rights and gender equity," using the history of the Willmar 8 as a launch-

ing point. The "Willmar 8" refers to the women who launched the first American banking strike in 1977 in an effort to secure pay equity at Citizens National Bank in Willmar, Minn.

The strike lasted nearly two years, after which only one of the strikers returned to her job. But their fight became a rallying cry for the women's

movement - and inspired a 1980s film.

The performance uses the strikers to explore related themes, blending history, humor and social commentary, "all punctuated by an infectious '80s energy and a fierce Duran Duran obsession," according to promoters.

Find tickets, show times and more information at historytheatre.com.



Let's get together, union members!

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

Chisago County Assembly
March 24th, 6 p.m.
To register for the Zoom meeting,
email cnocerini@stpaulunions.org

Dakota County Assembly
March 12th, 7 p.m.
Dakota County United Educators,
6950 West 146th St., Apple Valley

Ramsey County Assembly
March 24th, 6 p.m.
Saint Paul Labor Center,
353 7th Street West

Washington County Assembly
March 25th, 6 p.m.
Washington County Gov't Center,
Stillwater



www.stpaulunions.org



Minutes of the Saint Paul Regional Labor Federation

JANUARY 14, 2026

The Saint Paul Regional Labor Federation met in regular session on the above date and was called to order with the Pledge of Allegiance by President Kera Peterson at 6 p.m. Board members in attendance were Beedle, Beissel, Cook, Edwards, Engeldorf, Guertin, Hoerth, Hunt, Markham-Kocurek, Michelson, Mullin, Peterson, Sansom, Schmidt, Seath, Slattery, Strom, VanDassor and Varco. Excused were Butts, Hill, Madden, Roth, Ryan, and Tastad-Damer and Vanderport. Absent: Gale, Gibbons, Luneburg and Olson.

President Peterson read the Code of Conduct. The RLF will go over the Code of Conduct at the beginning of each meeting. The Code states: The AFL-CIO is committed to providing an environment free from discrimination and harassment. We ask all meeting participants to embrace our values of equity and equality and conduct themselves in this meeting consistent with those values. The RLF meetings that are held the Second Wednesday of the month will have a designee as the first point of contact for anyone who thinks they have experienced discriminatory, harassing or otherwise unacceptable behavior. President Peterson has assigned two designees as points of contact that will be announced at the start of each meeting. We urge you to contact him/her if you have any concerns. The designees are Bernadine Engeldorf, Secretary-Treasurer and Perry Schmidt, Vice President.

CREDENTIALS

Credentials were received from Education Minnesota: South Washington County Local 1125. President Peterson administered the Oath of Obligation to those new delegates and alternates in attendance.

COMMITTEE ON POLITICAL EDUCATION (COPE) MINUTES JANUARY 14, 2026

COPE met in regular session on the above date and was called to order by President Peterson at 5 p.m. Board members in attendance were Beedle, Beissel, Cook, Edwards, Engeldorf, Guertin, Hoerth, Hunt, Markham-Kocurek, Mayer, Michelson, Mullin, Peterson, Sansom, Schmidt, Seath, Slattery, Strom, VanDassor and Varco. Excused were Butts, Hill, Madden, Roth, Ryan, and Tastad-Damer and Vanderport. Absent: Gale, Gibbons, Lohmann, Luneburg and Olson.

Items to come before this committee included:

- President Peterson reported on screenings for CD4 and endorsement timelines, as all Minnesota House and Senate races will be on the ballot this year. She asked delegates to keep her informed on their timelines for screenings.

• M/S/C FOR THE RLF TO MAKE A \$500 CONTRIBUTION TO ROBYN GULLEY, MINNESOTA SENATE DISTRICT 65'S CAMPAIGN.

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

EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES JANUARY 14, 2026

The Executive Board met 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 following:
 - Certificate of Maturity Notice from St. Paul Federal Credit Union that one CD is maturing on 01/15/26.

- The Jean Jones Coats Initiative; collected items will be delivered to Title 1 Project Reach on Thursday, January 15, 2026.

- Fifteenth Annual Labor Bowl, to be held on Thursday, May 7, 2026, at Sun Ray Lanes. Shift times are 2:00, 4:00 and 6:00 p.m. Please contact Laura if you are interested in signing up.

- We are hoping to plan the Union Job and Resource Fair in April or May 2026. If you are interested in planning sessions contact the Saint Paul RLF.

- ORGANIZING UPDATES/CAMPAIGNS. Education Minnesota, Saint Paul Federation of Educators and SEIU gave updates on their organizing activities. There are family resources available. Volunteers are needed to support a school, sign up for food support and sign up for transportation support. For additional questions, please email the St. Paul Parent Solidarity Network. The National AFL-CIO has suggested that unions should collect emergency contact information. There is a tool kit from the National including "Know Your Rights" cards in multiple languages. The Minnesota AFL-CIO continues training union peacekeepers; if interested contact Todd Dahlstrom. The Minneapolis Regional Labor Federation is in the process of setting up legal resources for members.

- On Friday, January 23, 2026, at 2 p.m. there will be a march and rally for MN ICE Out in downtown Minneapolis. No work, no school, no shopping.

M/S/C FOR THE RLF TO SIGN ONTO THE RALLY.

- M/S/C FOR THE RLF TO PURCHASE TWO TICKETS FOR THE SAINT PAUL BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION TRADES COUNCIL'S GOLD PLATE DINNER AT A COST OF \$200 PER TICKET.

- THANK YOU NOTES from:
 - AFGE District 8 for the Cub Foods gift cards, contributed to support federal employees during the government shutdown.

- St. Paul Labor Studies and Resource Center for the RLF's \$500 contribution to the Labor of Love – Sponsor A Family and for the RLF's \$600 contribution to the Jean Jones Coats Initiative.

- Catholic Charities of St. Paul and Minneapolis, Jewish Community Center and Neighbors Inc. for the Labor of Love – Sponsor A Family Cub Food gift cards.

- Working Partnerships for the RLF's \$850 contribution to their annual Golf Tournament.

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

REPORT OF THE TREASURER

Secretary-Treasurer Engeldorf reported on the financial status of the Federation as of December 2025. The report was accepted as read.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

President Peterson reported on delivering coats to Title 1 Project Reach; the 2026 Union Job and Resource Fair; the Fifteenth Annual Labor Bowl at Sun Ray Lanes on Thursday, May 7, 2026;

communications with the National AFL-CIO; SEIU Local 26 needing volunteers; constitutional observer trainings; trainings for union peacekeepers at community events; supporting MN ICE Out march and rally on Friday, January 23, 2026; and Special Elections on Jan. 27, 2026, for 47A and 64A. Those results will determine the makeup of the State House.

REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES

- Brian Beedle reported on behalf of the Washington County Labor Assembly. Members are collaborating with Community Thread on volunteering. Next events will be the Youth United Way Empty Bowls and the LSRC Labor Bowl Fundraiser. The assembly meets on the fourth Wednesday of the month at 6 p.m.

- Martin Hoerth reported on behalf of the Ramsey County Labor Assembly, which had no meeting in December but will hold screenings soon. The assembly meets on the fourth Tuesday of the month at 6 p.m.

- Connie Beissel reported on behalf of the Dakota County Labor Assembly. We passed the hat to purchase Cub Food Gift Cards to support AFGE workers who had no pay when the government shutdown. The assembly will support a food-distribution site at La Vina Church in Burnsville on Monday, Tuesday, and Saturday, and there is a Go Fund Me for Tom Edwards. The assembly meets on the second Thursday of the month at 7 p.m.

NEW BUSINESS

- Tom Edwards gave a report to the delegation.

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

Submitted by,
BERNADINE ENGELDORF
Secretary-Treasurer

FEBRUARY 11, 2026

The Saint Paul Regional Labor Federation met in regular session 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 Beissel, Butts, Edwards, Engeldorf, Gale, Gibbons, Guertin, Hoerth, Hunt, Madden, Michelson, Peterson, Roth, Sansom, Schmidt, Slattery, Tastad-Damer and Varco. Excused were Beedle, Hill, Luneburg, Markham-Kocurek, Mullin, Ryan, Seath, Strom, VanDassor and Vanderport. Absent: Cook and Olson.

President Peterson read the Code of Conduct, as printed in the January 2026 minutes above.

President Peterson called for a moment of silence for union brother Alex Pretti, AFGE Local 3669.

CREDENTIALS

Credentials were received from Heat and Frost Insulators and Allied Workers Local 34 and IUPAT: Painters Local 61. President Peterson administered the Oath of Obligation to those new delegates and alternates in attendance.

MINUTES

- M/S/C TO APPROVE MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 12, AND DECEMBER 10, 2025, AS PUBLISHED IN THE UNION ADVOCATE NEWSPAPER AFTER THE SECRETARY-TREASURER NOTES THERE ARE NO ADDITIONS OR CHANGES CALLED FOR.

COMMITTEE ON POLITICAL EDUCATION (COPE) MINUTES FEBRUARY 11, 2026

COPE met in regular session on the above date and was called to order by President Peterson at 5 p.m. Board members in attendance were Beissel, Butts, Edwards, Engeldorf, Gale, Gibbons, Guertin, Hoerth, Hunt, Madden, Mayer, Michelson, Peterson, Roth, Sansom, Schmidt, Slattery, Tastad-Damer and Varco. Excused were Beedle, Hill, Luneburg, Markham-Kocurek, Mullin, Ryan, Seath, Strom, VanDassor and Vanderport. Absent: Cook, Lohmann and Olson.

Items to come before this committee included:

- Request for Labor Endorsement recommendation from the Ramsey County Labor Assembly for Betty McCollum, CD4.

M/S/C TO RECOMMEND LABOR ENDORSEMENT OF BETTY MCCOLLUM, CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT 4, TO THE MN AFL-CIO.

- President Peterson and the committee discussed early legislative screenings in House Districts 52A and 57B, and Senate District 53, including the screening timeline for local elections and the Minnesota AFL-CIO convening a lobbyist meeting on Friday, Feb. 13, 2026. The AFL-CIO will soon be finalizing the Minnesota questionnaire.

M/S/C TO SCHEDULE EARLY LEGISLATIVE SCREENINGS.

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

EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES FEBRUARY 11, 2026

The Executive Board met 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 Saint Paul RLF 2026 budget, Day Out for Democracy on February 16, 2026, and the No King's Day on March 28, 2026.

• M/S/C TO APPROVE THE 2026 SAINT PAUL REGIONAL LABOR FEDERATION OPERATING BUDGET AS PRESENTED.

- M/S/C FOR THE RLF TO MAKE A \$950 CONTRIBUTION TO THE FIFTEENTH ANNUAL LABOR BOWL.

- ORGANIZING UPDATES/CAMPAIGNS. AFSCME Local 2508, ATU Local 1005, NALC Local 28, and SEIU Healthcare MN and IA gave updates on their organizing activities. The Minneapolis RLF is raising funds to assist union members statewide related to ICE occupation of Minnesota. The MN State Retiree Council's fundraiser will be on May 16, 2026.

REPORT OF THE TREASURER

Secretary-Treasurer Engeldorf reported on the financial status of the

Federation as of January 2026. The report was accepted as read.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

President Peterson reported on the death of union brother Alex Pretti; events in the community and Minnesota people standing up to support our communities; the next No King's Day on March 28, 2026; and the Minnesota AFL-CIO's Day Out for Democracy march on February 16, 2026. Peterson will be present to walk with union members. The federation has Legislative screenings coming up, and the MN AFL-CIO has begun the Labor Lobbyist group meetings.

STAFF REPORTS

- Michael Moore, Union Advocate newspaper editor, shared that one union member of the MN Newspaper Guild was abducted by ICE. He is an organizer at the CTUL worker center. The organization will have a link to click and sign "to bring him home."

- Colleen Nocerini, political organizer, reminded the delegation to check for upcoming screenings.

- The Fifteenth Annual Labor Bowl will be May 7, 2026, at Sun Ray Lanes. Information is posted on the website.

REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES

- Michael Madden reported on behalf of the Chisago County Labor Assembly. The third attempt to pass the school bonding referendum in the Chisago County Area failed. Please inform your members living in the Chisago County Area that we meet on the fourth Tuesday of the month via zoom at 6 p.m.

- President Peterson reported on behalf of the Washington County Labor Assembly. Its next meeting will be the fourth Wednesday of the month at 6 p.m.

- Martin Hoerth reported on behalf of the Ramsey County Labor Assembly. Its members screened and recommended endorsement of Betty McCollum for CD4. Future screenings are in the works. The assembly meets on the fourth Tuesday of the month at 6 p.m.

- Connie Beissel reported on behalf of the Dakota County Labor Assembly. The assembly will discuss screening dates for HD52A and 57B and SD53 before the March RLF meeting if possible. Organizers are in the planning process for a Worker's Memorial Day event. The assembly's next meeting will be on the second Thursday of the month at 7:00 p.m.

NEW BUSINESS

- President Peterson called for a floor vote to recommend that the MN AFL-CIO grant Labor Endorsement to Betty McCollum CD4. **M/S/C TO RECOMMEND LABOR ENDORSEMENT OF BETTY MCCOLLUM CD4 TO THE MN AFL-CIO.**

GOOD AND WELFARE

The annual AFL-CIO Retiree Fundraiser is May 16, 2026.

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

Submitted by,
BERNADINE ENGELDORF

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