**Labor Endorsed**

Nov. 5 General Election

St. Paul City Council
- Ward 2: Rebecca Neeleker
- Ward 3: Chris Tolbert
- Ward 4: Mitra Jalali Nelson
- Ward 5: Amy Brendmoen
- Ward 6: Nelsie Yang
- Ward 7: Jane Prince
- Ramsey County Board
  - District 1: Nicole Frethorn
- St. Paul Trash: Vote Yes
- Cottage Grove City Council: Justin Olsen
- Falcon Heights City Council: Adam Sychla, Yakasah Wehyye
- Mounds View School Board: Heidi Danielson, James DeMay, Jonathan Weinkehagen
- Rosemount-Apple Valley-Eagan School Board: Joel Albright, Sachin Isaacs, Jackie Magnuson
- South Washington County School Board: Melinda Dols, Louise Hinz, Simi Patnaik
- White Bear Lake School Board: Margaret Newmaster, Angela Thompson, Scott Wilson

**School Referendums - Vote Yes:** Burnsville-Eagan-Savage, Lakeville (levy + bond), Mounds View, Rosemount-Apple Valley-Eagan, White Bear Lake

**Union Members Endorse**

Union members from across the U.S. and Canada marched together through the streets of downtown Minneapolis Oct. 5 during the Tradeswomen Build Nations conference banner parade. Led by an all-tradeswoman drum corps from Chicago, the parade stretched across multiple city blocks, as tradeswomen proudly celebrated their crafts, their unions and the potential for more women to join their ranks. The conference, organized by North America’s Building Trades unions, set a record for attendance. **Union Advocate photos**

**Building Nations, Breaking Barriers**

Annual conference draws record number of tradeswomen to Minneapolis

By Michael Moore

Union Advocate editor

Tradeswomen from across the U.S. and Canada descended on the Twin Cities last month for the union-sponsored Tradeswomen Build Nations conference, the world’s largest gathering of women working in the skilled construction trades. In its ninth year, the annual event set a record for attendance, drawing 2,800 tradeswomen, labor leaders, elected officials and industry experts to the Hilton in downtown Minneapolis Oct. 4-6. Conference attendees came from 48 states and 10 provinces.

“On a lot of job sites, you’re the only woman there,” Tamika Foster, a member of St. Paul Plumbers Local 34, said during a volunteer event on the event’s opening day. “This conference is a nice reminder that you’re not the only one.”

That became even clearer Saturday afternoon, as conference attendees paraded shoulder to shoulder through the downtown streets, carrying their local union banners and celebrating the pride tradeswomen take in their craft.

The parade stretched several city blocks and drew cheers from onlookers. *(Continued on Page 7)*

**Election 2019**

**Labor gets behind school bonds, levies in East Metro**

Organized labor is boosting efforts to fund new investments in several East Metro public school districts, including a record-breaking building referendum in the White Bear Lake Area Schools.

Levy and bond referendums empower communities to invest in their schools’ programming, facilities and technology – investments that always pay off in the long run, St. Paul Regional Labor Federation President Bobby Kasper said.

“Great schools are the bedrock of every strong community,” Kasper said. “They educate our future workforce and attract good employers to our area.

“That’s why, as a labor movement, we usually support operating levy and bond referendums as down payments on our economic future.”

The St. Paul RLF, which unites local unions from Ramsey, Chisago, Dakota and Washington counties, has endorsed levy requests on the Nov. 5 ballot in the Burnsville-Eagan-Savage, Lakeville, Mounds View and Rosemount-Apple Valley Eagan districts, as well as a separate bond request in Lakeville.

But the referendum in White Bear Lake is the biggest *(Continued on Page 8)*
We won’t win in 2020 without working together

Ray Waldron

“If we spend too much energy fighting each other, we will give President Trump a clear run at four more years in office.”

Ray Waldron

$1 trillion infrastructure investment or a $10 federal minimum wage.

And as for that newly renegotiated trade agreement with Mexico and Canada? It’s just NAFTA with a different name, giving a green light to corporations looking to outsource American jobs, but without strong, enforceable labor standards to ensure a level playing field for workers.

As the 2020 election approaches, we can expect President Trump to gloss over his failures with lies, Twitter insults and divisive rhetoric. Given the loyalty of his base and the deep pockets of his donors, it would be foolish to underestimate Trump’s chances at reelection.

But as we saw in the midterm elections last year, our base is energized to fight back, and polling shows most Americans are growing tired of Trump’s act. We can win back the White House in 2020, but only if we’re united in our purpose and committed to doing the work.

Whatever our differences, as union members and retirees we share a common interest in removing Trump from office. Whether you’re a millennial or a retiree, whether you live in the city or a small town, whether you work with your hands or at a computer – that common interest is greater than the things that divide us.

Let’s remember that as the field of Democratic presidential nominees narrows down over the next few months. Permanent fractures in our unity only serve this president’s interests. We may not agree now, but after the process plays out, we’ve got to unite behind one candidate. Whoever that turns out to be is surely a better choice for working people than Trump.

Ray Waldron is a retired member of Local 96 of the United Union of Roofers, Waterproofers and Allied Trades. He served as president of the state’s largest labor federation, the Minnesota AFL-CIO, from 2001 to 2009.
Breakfast with the Sisters

Carpenters Local 322’s Sisters in the Brotherhood group will host its annual pancake-breakfast fundraiser Saturday, Nov. 2, from 9 a.m. to noon at the North Central States Regional Council of Carpenters union hall, 710 Olive Street, St. Paul.

Proceeds will benefit the children of Josh Blackledge, a recently deceased Local 322 member, as well as the Steve Rummel Hope Network, an organization focused on treating chronic pain with wellness rather than drugs.

The breakfast, in its second year, is open to the public. The suggested donation is $10. The event will include a silent auction.

If you cannot attend but would like to make a donation, mail a check payable to “SIB Pancake Breakfast” to Carpenters Local 322, 730 Olive St., St. Paul, MN 55130.

Politics is ugly. How did we get here?

The East Side Freedom Library in St. Paul will host a discussion led by two Minnesota historians to answer a question on many voters’ minds as we head into the 2020 election cycle: How did our political culture get here?

Elaine Tyler May, professor of American Studies at the University of Minnesota, and Scott Laderman, a history professor at the University of Minnesota-Duluth and president of the campus’ faculty union, will guide a discussion that’s free and open to the public, beginning at 1 p.m. Nov. 2.

The independent, nonprofit library is located at 1105 Greenbrier St.

To learn more about ESFL programs and events, go to eastsidefreedomlibrary.org.

Show off your selfies (or other photos)

Entries are due Monday, Nov. 4, for the annual Women Building Success apprentice photo contest. In its second year, the contest, open to union apprentices, aims to celebrate the work of women in the building trades.

The contest will issue awards in three categories: photo at work, photo of the job site or building, and photo of your tools or craftsmanship. Only one photo per category may be submitted.

Winners will be announced at a free event Nov. 13 at the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 110 hall, 1330 Conway St., St. Paul. The event is open to the public.

To RSVP or submit photos, e-mail administrator@womenbuildingsuccess.org.

After more than a month on strike, nearly 50,000 union autoworkers from General Motors facilities across the U.S. were voting on a tentative agreement for a new contract as this edition of The Union Advocate went to press.

As voting progressed, picket lines remained up, including one outside GM’s Hudson, Wis., facility. The parts-distribution center employs 75 members of United Auto Workers Local 722, who stood together – without crossing the picket line – as their international union held out for a better deal.

A big reason why workers in Hudson were able to hold the line, Local 722 President Jennifer Grabczyk said, was the support they received from members of other unions, particularly those based in the Twin Cities.

“We were very worried about how long we could sustain everybody and keep everybody’s spirits up, but with all these people coming in every single day, it helps so much,” Grabczyk said. “It’s been amazing.”

Local 722 hosted a “union family day” on the picket line Sept. 28, and members of several East Metro unions answered the call for support.

“Solidarity knows no borders,” St. Paul Regional Labor Federation President Bobby Kasper said, noting that the RLF through its nonprofit Labor Studies and Resource Center, helped arrange financial assistance for striking workers in Hudson, many of whom reside in Minnesota.

“I’m incredibly proud of the support our affiliate unions showed for striking UAW members in Hudson,” Kasper said.

U.S. Sen. Tina Smith also joined the Sept. 28 event, which fell on the first day of a two-week Senate recess. The DFLer said striking workers are fighting not just for themselves, but for all working people.

“They’re fighting for the basic principle that people should get paid equally for equal work,” Smith said. “I think that’s really important.”

GM’s use of temporary workers emerged as a major sticking point in contract negotiations, as did the system of wage tiers allowing GM to compensate union members differently depending on when they were hired. Autoworkers hired since 2007 are paid depending on when they were hired. Autoworkers hired since 2007 are paid even less, with fewer benefits and no formal process to become permanent employees.

The UAW agreed to those concessions in 2007, when GM was on the brink of bankruptcy.

Now, with an assist from a federal bailout in 2009, GM is more profitable than it’s ever been. The company has reported $35 billion in profits over the last three years, and CEO Mary Barra last year took home $22 million in total compensation.

“Steve Frisque, a Local 722 steward who lives in Woodbury, said workers haven’t forgotten the sacrifice they made to keep GM alive, even if the company’s executives have.

“This company has made record profits the last four years, and they got there with help from two sources – their employees and the taxpayers in this country,” Frisque said. “And the thanks they show the taxpayers and employees is to ship more and more work to Mexico, more and more work to China.”

Frisque and Grabczyk are legacy GM workers, but both identified the issue of equal pay as their top priority.

“You are standing next to somebody for 60 or 70 hours a week, and they’re doing the same exact job as you,” said Grabczyk, who works in inventory control. “It is not OK to know that they are struggling.”

The proposed contract would not completely eliminate wage tiers or temporary hires, but it does include increases in wages, a quicker path to permanent employment for temps and an $11,000 signing bonus.

The Hudson parts distribution center serves dealerships across the Midwest. All 75 workers who are eligible to join the UAW have done so, Grabczyk said, even though Wisconsin is a right-to-work state.

GM relocated the parts distribution facility to Hudson from Edina 15 years ago, and many workers still make the commute from Minnesota.
Does your financial institution offer access to over 5,600 branch locations?

NO? THEN...

CHOOSE ST. PAUL FEDERAL

WHEN IT COMES TO YOUR DEPOSITS, YOU HAVE A CHOICE. WE OFFER BONUS DIVIDEND RATES OF UP TO 4.99%¹ ON OUR CHECKING ACCOUNTS. DOES YOUR CURRENT CHECKING ACCOUNT? NO?

Then CHOOSE St. Paul Federal.

Or, if you are looking to borrow, compare our 2.89% APR² - 60 month Car Loans to your current financial institution, then CHOOSE St. Paul Federal.

1Bonus rates of up to 4.99% will be paid on balances up to $25,000, as long as the following monthly statement cycle requirements are met: 20 debit card transactions (not including ATM transactions) to meet bonus deadline; 15 debit card transactions (not including ATM transactions) to meet top bonus deadline; staffer enrollment and staffers enrollment into staffers card; use of staffers card and earning deposit into your checking account. Minimum balance to earn dividends on deposit accounts is $250. Minimum balance to open a checking account is $500. APR = Annual Percentage Rate. Rates and terms are effective as of 1/10/2019 and are subject to change at any time without notice. Actual rates are based on applicant credit history. For example, a $25,000 auto loan for a term of 60 months with a rate of 2.89% APR, the monthly payment will be $410.64. Rules governing accounts are available upon request. Rates, terms and fees are subject to change. See our website or one of our offices for complete terms and conditions. Membership eligibility requirements apply. Fees may reduce earnings. Branch location counts include Co-Op Shared Branching outlets, branch locations and service centers. For a complete listing of all branch locations, please visit our website.

1.800.782.5767 | www.stpaulfcu.org

CONNECT WITH US!  NCUA  Federally Insured by the NCUA

St. Paul Federal CREDIT UNION
1330 Conway Street, Suite 200 | St. Paul, Minnesota 55106
St. Paul boxers with a union in common enter Minnesota Hall of Fame together

By Michael Moore
Union Advocate editor

Two St. Paul natives who traded in their boxing gloves for work gloves were inducted into the Minnesota Boxing Hall of Fame last month.

Brian Brunette and Matt Vanda, both members of Local 563 of the Laborers International Union (LIUNA), received the honor during a banquet Oct. 11 at Mystic Lake Casino.

After working in the field for 15 years, Brunette, 61, is now a marketing representative for LIUNA’s Great Lakes Regional Organizing Committee. He joined the union in 1976 as a teenager, after his father discovered he had no prospects for a summer job.

“My dad said, ‘Get in the car,’ and he drove me down to the Laborers hall,” Brunette said. “I eventually went to college, but I always found my way back into the Laborers union in the summer.”

Brunette and Bobby Kasper, now president of the St. Paul Regional Labor Federation, worked together as business agents for St. Paul Laborers Local 132, which has since merged into Local 563.

“I congratulate Brian on receiving this well-deserved honor from the Minnesota Boxing Hall of Fame,” Kasper said. “I’ve known Brian for years, and he’s always fought just as hard for working people as he fought in the ring.”

Vanda, 41, joined LIUNA in 2012 after taking a job with a local excavating company. The choice to go to a boxing gym was made after one of the gym’s fighters dropped out of a school year, advising his players to commit to a conditioning program during the school year.

Brunette could think of only one place to go – the boxing gym.

When one of the gym’s fighters dropped out of a program in February 1978, a coach approached Brunette with a question.

“He asked me, ‘What do you weigh?’ And that was pretty much the start of my career,” Brunette said. “I fought the next night and won.”

Brunette fought the next two years as an amateur, continuing to play baseball for the Gophers, then turned professional as a 21-year-old. By 1980 he was on the undercard of a Larry Holmes fight produced by famed boxing promoter Don King.

Brunette didn’t lose a bout after turning pro until 1986, when he challenged Patrizio Oliva for the world light-welterweight championship in Naples, Italy. Brunette took an accidental thumb to the eye in the first round. Two rounds later, at the urging of his manager, Brunette threw in the towel.

“The fight didn’t turn out the way I wanted it to, but the way I look at it, I was a champion just getting there,” Brunette said. “Not everybody gets a chance to fight for a world championship.”

The loss in Naples turned out to be his only as a professional. He signed on to fight for the championship again – this time in South Africa – but after reinjuring his eye in training, Brunette retired from boxing at 28.

Still, Brunette remained active in the sport. His family opened an amateur gym, Brunette Boxing, in 1983, and after hanging up his gloves, Brian took on a more active role in working with young fighters in St. Paul.

“It provides structure for so many young kids,” he said. “The work ethic, having to be somewhere at the same time every day, the diet, the training. And when they go home at night, all they want to do is go to sleep.”

The ‘Sainty City Slugger’

Boxing is in Brunette’s DNA. His father was an accomplished Golden Gloves fighter in the 1930s, and Brian began boxing in the backyard with brothers Tom, Bobby and Al as a young kid.

Growing up on St. Paul’s East Side, he remembered, “it was either boxing or baseball.”

Initially, Brunette chose baseball. He excelled as a middle infielder in high school and accepted a scholarship to play for coach Dick Siebert at the University of Minnesota. But when Siebert, during a fall meeting, advised his players to commit to a conditioning program during the school year, Brunette could think of only one place to go – the boxing gym.

When one of the gym’s fighters dropped out of a program in February 1978, a coach approached Brunette with a question.

“He asked me, ‘What do you weigh?’ And that was pretty much the start of my career,” Brunette said. “I fought the next night and won.”

Brunette fought the next two years as an amateur, continuing to play baseball for the Gophers, then turned professional as a 21-year-old. By 1980 he was on the undercard of a Larry Holmes fight produced by famed boxing promoter Don King.

Brunette didn’t lose a bout after turning pro until 1986, when he challenged Patrizio Oliva for the world light-welterweight championship in Naples, Italy. Brunette took an accidental thumb to the eye in the first round. Two rounds later, at the urging of his manager, Brunette threw in the towel.

“The fight didn’t turn out the way I wanted it to, but the way I look at it, I was a champion just getting there,” Brunette said. “Not everybody gets a chance to fight for a world championship.”

The ‘Sainty City Slugger’

Boxing is in Brunette’s DNA. His father was an accomplished Golden Gloves fighter in the 1930s, and Brian began boxing in the backyard with brothers Tom, Bobby and Al as a young kid.

Growing up on St. Paul’s East Side, he remembered, “it was either boxing or baseball.”

Initially, Brunette chose baseball. He excelled as a middle infielder in high school and accepted a scholarship to play for coach Dick Siebert at the University of Minnesota. But when Siebert, during a fall meeting, advised his players to commit to a conditioning program during the school year, Brunette could think of only one place to go – the boxing gym.

When one of the gym’s fighters dropped out of a program in February 1978, a coach approached Brunette with a question.

“He asked me, ‘What do you weigh?’ And that was pretty much the start of my career,” Brunette said. “I fought the next night and won.”

Brunette fought the next two years as an amateur, continuing to play baseball for the Gophers, then turned professional as a 21-year-old. By 1980 he was on the undercard of a Larry Holmes fight produced by famed boxing promoter Don King.

Brunette didn’t lose a bout after turning pro until 1986, when he challenged Patrizio Oliva for the world light-welterweight championship in Naples, Italy. Brunette took an accidental thumb to the eye in the first round. Two rounds later, at the urging of his manager, Brunette threw in the towel.

“The fight didn’t turn out the way I wanted it to, but the way I look at it, I was a champion just getting there,” Brunette said. “Not everybody gets a chance to fight for a world championship.”

The loss in Naples turned out to be his only as a professional. He signed on to fight for the championship again – this time in South Africa – but after reinjuring his eye in training, Brunette retired from boxing at 28.

Still, Brunette remained active in the sport. His family opened an amateur gym, Brunette Boxing, in 1983, and after hanging up his gloves, Brian took on a more active role in working with young fighters in St. Paul.

“It provides structure for so many young kids,” he said. “The work ethic, having to be somewhere at the same time every day, the diet, the training. And when they go home at night, all they want to do is go to sleep.”

The ‘Predator’

Vanda began boxing at 12 and compiled a 12-2 record as an amateur before turning pro in 1996, at the age of 17. At the time, only a handful of states allowed minors to box professionally, and Minnesota wasn’t one of them. So Vanda hit the road, boxing in South Dakota, Indiana and Colorado before finally returning home a year later.

It didn’t take long for Matt Vanda to become a hometown favorite. He won his first 11 professional bouts by knockout.

“After a few fights people came to watch,” Vanda said. “They liked watching me fight, I guess.”

Vanda fought in five middleweight title bouts. He won one, defeating Luis Ramon Campos for the IBA Americas Title in June 2005. He ended his career with a 45-16 record and 25 knockouts. His last bout came in January 2014 at Madison Square Garden, where Vanda lost a title challenge by technical knockout.

Vanda jokes that his wife, Cyndi, forced him to retire, but he knew his days were numbered.

“I was 34 years old, and I had a good run,” he said. “But it gets to a point when they start using you as bait, as someone who they know can go the distance against an up-and-coming young guy but probably not win. That’s when you could get hurt.”

Everyone works together

Retirement hasn’t been easy for Vanda. He and Cyndi briefly separated, but they reunited after Vanda embraced sobriety three years ago. The couple has since welcomed a new daughter, 2-year-old Magdalena, into their family, which also includes 15-year-old Gabriella and 10-year-old Viviana.

“People think I’m crazy, but I enjoy getting up at 4:30 a.m., going to work and getting away,” Vanda said. “Since I quit drinking, the only time I get out is to go to work. It’s almost like a party for me. The guys at work call me a social butterfly.”

Brunette and Vanda see a few similarities between boxing and working as a laborer.

“You’re there to work hard, and you have to get out there and work with your co-workers, share the responsibilities,” Brunette said. “It’s the same thing in the boxing gym. You might have 50 kids on the floor, but everyone’s treated equal, no matter where you’re from or what your background. When you’re in the gym, everyone works together.

“You go from one hard job to the next, breaking down whatever’s in your way,” Vanda said. “And you’ve got to be in shape to go the distance in a fight, just like you’ve got to be in good shape to be a Laborer.”
The Minnesota Wild rolled out the red carpet for union members Oct. 20 during Building Trades Night, held in partnership with the St. Paul Building and Construction Trades Council. Before the game, a 4-3 Wild win over the Canadiens, union members enjoyed dinner and drawings for autographed memorabilia at the St. Paul Labor Center. Afterward, they had a chance to walk on the Xcel Energy Center ice. Trades Night is in its second year, and will likely continue to take place in October going forward.

St. Paul Labor Center pledges support for Salvation Army’s holiday toy drive

As the headquarters of the St. Paul Regional Labor Federation, the St. Paul Building and Construction Trades Council and several local union offices, the St. Paul Labor Center attracts a steady stream of visitors to union meetings, volunteer events, rallies and other happenings.

Parking can be hard to come by on West 7th Street, and oftentimes Labor Center traffic spills over into the neighboring lot, owned by the Twin Cities Salvation Army. The organization has been a patient and gracious neighbor since the Labor Center opened its doors four years ago.

To show appreciation for this deepening partnership – and as part of labor’s tradition of supporting good causes in our communities – the Labor Center will host a toy drive in support of Toy Shop. The Salvation Army program provides toys each year to over 20,000 Twin Cities children who may not otherwise receive holiday gifts. Toys for older children – from ages 10 into their teens – are a particular area of need.

To support the drive, donate an unwrapped toy (or two!) during business hours at the Labor Center, 353 West 7th St., before Dec. 13.
Tradeswomen Build Nations conference draws record crowd in Minneapolis

(Continued from Page 1)

“This conference is a celebration of these trailblazers and a testament to the growth of tradeswomen among our ranks,” North American Building Trades Unions (NABTU) President Sean McGarvey said.

Additionally, the conference offered opportunities for tradeswomen to share experiences and best practices for thriving in the industry, to learn about career-advancement opportunities and to engage with labor, political and industry leaders.

They also enjoyed a rare shout-out from a Supreme Court justice.

“Women who build are here to stay,” Justice Ruth Bader Ginsberg told tradeswomen in a video greeting, which thrilled the standing-room-only crowd inside the Hilton ballroom.

A major focus of the conference was increasing women’s participation in the construction workforce. About 3 percent of construction tradespeople nationwide are women, but the rate is increasing thanks, in part, to the efforts of building trades unions to recruit more women into their apprenticeship training programs.

“NABTU is committed to empowering current and future tradeswomen as we increase opportunities for and retention rates of women in fulfilling union trade careers,” McGarvey said. “Every day, we recruit more women into great union construction apprenticeships and careers, and these trailblazing tradeswomen are moving up in the top ranks of leadership.”

There are plenty of benefits to a career in the building trades: family-sustaining wages, high-quality health insurance, retirement security and, notably for women, pay equity.

Women working in the construction trades earn about 96 cents for every dollar earned by men, and under a union contract, the pay scale works the same for men and women workers alike.

“You can support your family all on your own,” said Monique Lewis, a member of Steamfitters Local 469 from Phoenix. “It’s an amazing feeling to wake up and have all that earning opportunity in front of you.”

“We’re half the population, and maybe 2 percent on the job site?” Foster added. “That’s a whole untapped labor market – half the world!”

Early arrivals to the conference participated in a Day of Service Friday morning, coordinated by Minnesota’s tradeswomen group, Women Building Success.

Some 200 tradeswomen packed 11,000 pounds of food for local food shelves at Second Harvest Heartland in Brooklyn Park. And 200 more spruced up Haven Housing’s Ascension Place, a women’s shelter in North Minneapolis.

As she stood atop a ladder painting a hallway in Ascension House, Timesha Beattie, a member of Bricklayers and Allied Craftworkers Local 5 in Houston, said she was excited to reconnect with the union sisters she met a year ago, when the conference was in Seattle.

“Last year I was completely amazed that we had so many strong women working in the building trades. It was inspiring,” Beattie said. “I’m looking forward to seeing what everyone has been able to do, the ideas they’ve come up with to recruit and inspire more girls to join us.”

Jessica Looman, director of the Minnesota State Building and Construction Trades Council, said the record-breaking conference was the latest feather in her state’s cap.

“We are proud that Minnesota has one of the strongest economies in the nation, the best wage theft law in the country, strong prevailing wage laws and incredible apprenticeship programs that continue to increase the diversity and inclusion of our unions,” she said.

“Now, we can also say that we have hosted the largest group of union tradeswomen in the world.”
District leaders have pitched a $326 million package of technological, facility and safety improvements that would touch every building and program in the school system.

It's the largest school bond referendum ever to appear on a ballot in Minnesota, and it comes on the heels of months of strategic planning, which brought together residents with and without children, business owners, teachers and other district staff.

Even if it passes, property owners in the White Bear district would still be paying less toward school debt, about $275 per year, than their counterparts in neighboring districts, who average about $317 per year. And taxpayers who file for the state's property tax refund would see their burden cut by as much as 80 percent.

Meanwhile, the building referendum provides an opportunity to address issues that have been bubbling to the surface within the community for over a decade, like concerns about school safety and changing technology, as well as an expanding student population.

Tiffany Dittrich, president of the White Bear Lake Teachers Association, said the district anticipates an influx of up to 2,000 students over the next 10 years.

"We're currently at capacity," Dittrich said. "So it's critically important that we have additional classroom space to be able to support those students."

The building referendum also would fund construction of a unified high school in the district, which currently splits students between north and south campuses. Dittrich, in her 23rd year as a language arts teacher at White Bear, said a single-site high school is "something the community has wanted for a long time."

With improvements proposed at every school site, and a brand new elementary school in Hugo, the White Bear bond would create hundreds of construction jobs. It would also strengthen and support existing jobs in the district, which maintains 11 different collective bargaining agreements with local unions.

Dittrich said she isn't taking anything for granted, but she remains hopeful the referendum will pass Nov. 5.

"In my experience, the residents of the White Bear community support their schools," she said. "That support has contributed to an environment that empowers me to support students and allow them to thrive educationally."

Volunteers from LIUNA Local 563, ATU Local 1005 and IUPAT District Council 82 filled a Regional Labor Federation phone bank in support of the bond last month.
In November 2015, when St. Paul last held regular City Council elections, the city had no earned sick and safe time ordinance on the books, and hardly anyone at City Hall was talking about a $15 minimum wage.

What a difference four years make.

When voters in St. Paul go back to the polls Nov. 5, they will weigh in on an historic shift in the council’s work. Raising labor standards within the city limits, many council members said, is work that would not have gotten done without the partnership of local unions.

“It was definitely the catalyst,” said Ward 3’s Chris Tolbert, a lead author of both the sick leave ordinance and the $15 minimum wage. “My plan is to continue to partner with labor and look for ways we can enhance those protections, make sure there’s compliance across the board and continue to look for ways to have better working conditions for St. Paul workers.”

Tolbert is one of five labor-endorsed incumbents seeking reelection, along with Rebecca Noecker in Ward 2, Mitra Jalali Nelson in Ward 4, Amy Brendmoen in Ward 5 and Jane Prince in Ward 7. Nelsie Yang, a member of the Communications Workers of America, is the labor-endorsed candidate in Ward 6.

In interviews with The Union Advocate, all six endorsed candidates voiced support for backing up the city’s new labor standards with education and enforcement. Nelson called it “the next step to protecting our hard-fought victories … so working families in St. Paul receive every dollar and day off they have earned.”

Already, workers have come forward with complaints they are not getting the sick leave mandated by the new ordinance. Prince said that’s something the city needs to fix soon — before the city-wide minimum wage kicks into effect next year.

“People have come forward with complaints they are not getting the sick leave mandated by the new ordinance,” Prince said. “So now that we are, it’s really important that we be deliberate and intentional about it.”

“Our endorsed candidates have proven they’re serious about listening to working people,” St. Paul Regional Labor Federation President Bobby Kasper said. “They’ve earned our support Nov. 5.”

Read more of what the endorsed candidates had to say on Page 10.
Ward 2: Rebecca Noecker

Rebecca Noecker isn’t running for school board, but she is putting public education at the forefront of her reelection campaign in Ward 2. Noecker is leading the push for St. Paul 3K, a city-led effort to ensure all families have access to high-quality, affordable early childhood education. Noecker lists the initiative among her top priorities, along with affordable housing and supporting small businesses.

“I am deeply invested in creating opportunities for young people,” the former middle school science teacher said. “While the St. Paul School Board sets major policy for schools in the city, I believe the city has an important role to play in supporting children and families.”

Quality child care and preschool are unaffordable for too many working families, preventing some parents from entering the workforce and leaving too many children unprepared for kindergarten. St. Paul 3K seeks to create more equitable access to early education by creating more options, simplifying the education system and joining forces with the county, school district and community.

It’s just one way the council member is putting kids first. “I am a strong voice on the council for the city’s Right Track youth-employment program, and have consistently supported increased funding for Parks and Recreation programs that are free to all kids in the city,” she said.

Online: www.rebeccanoecker.com

Ward 3: Chris Tolbert

Chris Tolbert doesn’t make the labor endorse lightly, and he’s proved it over the last eight years representing Ward 3.

He was the lead author of ordinances to raise the citywide minimum wage and guarantee earned sick and safe time to all workers. And Tolbert championed a measure to extend paid parental leave to all city employees.

A big reason why Tolbert supports labor’s issues is he’s a dues-paying member of a union himself. Tolbert works as a lawyer in the Hennepin County Attorney’s office, and he is a member of Local 2938 of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees.

“I’m grateful for all that labor has done to improve the lives of workers not just in St. Paul, but across the state and across the country,” Tolbert said. “And I continue to appreciate the confidence unions have in me. It’s been an honor.”

While the council’s work to raise standards for people in low-wage jobs has drawn much attention, Tolbert is also working to attract good jobs to the city. He co-founded Full Stack, a public-private partnership focused on attracting, retaining and growing innovative jobs and businesses, last year.

“We have to continue to make sure not only do we have living-wage jobs, but we’re continuing to create more living-wage jobs,” he said, “so more people can support their families and be able to live in a city like St. Paul.”

Online: www.chistolbertmn.com

Ward 4: Mitra Jalali Nelson

Running in a special election to fill the Ward 4 seat last year, Mitra Jalali Nelson campaigned eagerly in support of measures to address inequities that plague the city. She won decisively, just in time to cast a vote in favor of the $15 minimum wage.

But Nelson isn’t about to stop fighting.

“We have a lot of work to do to make sure that St. Paul is an equitable and safe place for working people to call home,” she said. “But we’ve made tremendous progress in just the one year alone that I’ve been in office.”

As someone who rents her home, Nelson has been a fierce advocate for measures that make housing more attainable and affordable in the city. It’s an essential part, she says, of making St. Paul a place that’s livable for working families.

Nelson is currently working to pass new protections for renters, and she helped secure a $10 million investment in the city’s Affordable Housing Trust Fund. At the same time, she works to make sure city-backed development deals uphold community – and labor – standards.

“City development deals that receive public subsidy or other public benefit should always have to meet community benefits agreements that include strong hiring, labor, prevailing wage and contract standards for developers and workers involved with the project,” she said.

Online: www.mitranelson.com

Ward 5: Amy Brendmoen

In the eight years Amy Brendmoen has served on the City Council, St. Paul has emerged as a leader in advancing policies that improve working families’ quality of life.

Now, she says, it’s time for the rest of the country to catch up.

“The $15 minimum wage and earned sick and safe time will be the best policies when they’re statewide and national policies,” Brendmoen said. “We need to take the momentum from the city level and help move that platform on a statewide basis.”

That won’t happen, she added, unless the city can show its new labor standards work. That means the council must take steps to adequately educate the community about the new labor standards and enforce them.

After being elected council president last year, Brendmoen now chairs the city’s budget committee. That means she’ll play a critical role in securing funds for the city’s new office dedicated to implementing labor standards.

Brendmoen knows how likely to hear from her partners in the labor community along the way.

“They know that I’m approachable, so I feel like I get calls, texts, emails and in-person visits often,” she said. “It helps make sure we plan our policies right from the get-go.

“It seems like with lots of other advocates, the response comes after a policy is in place. But with labor it happens before, after and during.”

Online: www.amyforslcouncil.com

Ward 6: Nelsie Yang

The culturally diverse East Side neighborhoods in St. Paul’s Ward 6 include some of the city’s highest levels of concentrated poverty.

It’s a very different city than the one Nelsie Yang sees in other neighborhoods.

“When I drive to more affluent, predominantly white areas, these places look drastically different from the East Side,” Yang said.

Now, the community organizer and daughter of Hmong refugees is running for City Council to make sure the people who live in her neighborhood get their fair share—“because we are not getting that on the East Side of St. Paul right now,” she said.

Yang wants to see the East Side get more infrastructure investments, like roads, transit, bike lanes and walkways. She wants the East Side’s rec centers to stay open longer and support children whose parents work multiple jobs. She wants the city to strengthen renters’ rights and mandate that developers doing business in the city commit to a minimum amount of affordable housing.

Yang is a steward in the Minnesota Newspaper Guild-CWA’s bargaining unit at TakeAction Minnesota, wants to partner with unions to get those things done.

“Having the people power of labor unions and people working alongside each other, that’s how we will build toward a progressive future for all of us,” she said. “People are so ready to get invested and activated.”

Online: www.neisleyang.com

Ward 7: Jane Prince

After taking her seat on the City Council in 2016, Jane Prince posed a question to folks at City Hall, and she heard the same answer from pretty much everyone she asked.

‘There’s no way St. Paul will ever open a new city-staffed rec center again.’

Three years later, Prince proved the doubters wrong, as she secured funding to reopen Highwood Hills, a rec center closed in 2008 when the city faced a deep budget shortfall. Prince and Mayor Melvin Carter cut the ribbon on Highwood Hills in last April. And yes, the facility is staffed by AFSCME-represented city employees.

It’s a victory for families in Ward 7 and an example, Prince said, of what the city can accomplish by partnering with organized labor.

“Many of the best initiatives in our city come from our union brothers and sisters,” Prince said. “The workers know what’s best, so when things aren’t going right, there’s no one better to turn to than our employees.”

The rec center isn’t the only example Prince can cite.

When the mayor floated the idea of eliminating fines and fees to make the city’s libraries more accessible, AFSCME backed it. And the city’s approach to snow plowing vastly improved last year after Public Works sought input from workers and their unions.

“Complaints went down,” she said, “and I really feel confident that it was listening to our employees that made all the difference.”

Online: janeprinces7.com
Support your labor-endorsed candidates!

Iron Workers Local 512

Support your labor-endorsed candidates!

Make a difference.
Vote LABOR Nov. 5th.

A message of solidarity from the members of Machinists Local Lodge 459.

Make Your Voice Heard On
ELECTION DAY
TUESDAY
NOVEMBER 5, 2019

LOCAL ELECTIONS ARE IMPORTANT
Off-year elections can include voting for:
• City Council
• Township Council
• School Board
• County Commissioner
• Local ballot questions

These offices decide what work happens in your area, and who is going to build it

BAKERY, CONFECTIONERY, TOBACCO WORKERS & GRAIN MILLERS UNION LOCAL 22
For your next party or event, please buy Local 22-made products at your local union grocery store!

Fresh-baked cakes for special occasions and other goodies created by Local 22 members available at:
• Almsed’s Fresh Market (Crystal)
• County Market (North Branch, Hudson)
• Cub Foods
• Driskill’s Foods (Hopkins)
• Jerry’s Foods
• Lunds & Byerlys

Quality grocery favorites produced locally by Local 22 members:
• Country Hearth & Lakeland (Pan-O-Gold Bakery)
• Dream Fields Pasta
• Old Dutch products
• Pearson’s Candy Company
• Sara Lee buns & bread, Ballpark buns (Bimbo Bakeries USA)

Support labor-endorsed candidates!

A message from the
International Union of
Elevator Constructors
Local 9

www.local9.com

VOTE NOVEMBER 5th

“Let us never forget that
government is ourselves and not
an alien power over us.
The ultimate rulers of our
democracy are not a President
and senators and congressmen
and government officials,
but the voters of this country.”

— FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT

Saint Paul Building & Construction Trades Council
The local labor movement lost two longtime union activists last month. Debbie Wallace, general manager of Impact Printing in St. Paul, died Oct. 1 at the age of 58. Dick Savard, former secretary-treasurer of Machinists Local Lodge 459, died Oct. 4 at 76.

Wallace, who ran the union print shop on Rice Street for 30 years, was a familiar face to almost everyone active in labor or DFL politics in the Twin Cities. Impact Printing put its union bug on picket signs, bumper stickers, campaign pins, fliers and anything else that needed printing.

Over the years, Impact assembled an impressive archive of campaign materials in the shop’s lobby, where Wallace greeted customers with her kind personality, wealth of selflessness and friendly smile.

Impact Printing remains open for business as a union shop, although the company has a new email address, impactprintingink@gmail.com.

Savard remained active in the Machinists union well into his retirement, receiving a 50-year membership pin at the State Council’s meeting last March. He also carried on his work in the community, particularly with Guide Dogs of America, the union’s preferred charity.

“Dick spent countless hours volunteering for this charity, primarily coordinating the Guide Dogs motorcycle run,” John Steigauf, directing business rep for District Lodge 77, told the Minneapolis Labor Review. “Even when his health was waning this year, he made it a priority to attend the event because it meant that much to him.”

Savard was a longtime delegate to the St. Paul Trades and Labor Assembly, a forerunner to the St. Paul Regional Labor Federation, throughout his career, and he was an active member of the Assembly’s Community Services Program.
$15 CLOSE TO LANDING AT MSP

The Metropolitan Airports Commission (MAC) introduced an ordinance Oct. 7 that would raise the minimum wage for all workers at Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport, putting the facility’s labor standards on par with those in the City of Minneapolis.

If approved by commissioners, the airport’s minimum wage would increase to $13.25 per hour July 1, 2020. It would increase by another dollar July 1, 2021, and reach $15 on the same date in 2022. The rate would adjust for inflation Jan. 1 of each subsequent year.

Unions applauded the proposed ordinance, which covers all work done at the airport with no exemptions for tipped workers or employees covered by collective bargaining agreements.

Concerns that the MAC might carve out lower minimum-wage rates for some workers prompted hundreds of Minnesotans to attend a public hearing on the airport minimum wage Sept. 23 in Bloomington. Of more than 50 people who spoke at the hearing, not one voiced opposition to $15.

“To make ends meet I have to work two jobs. Because of this reality I am rarely able to see my kids and family,” Herbert Lubega, a cook at MSP and member of UNITE HERE Local 17, said at a press conference staged by worker groups before the hearing. “One job should be enough. That’s why we need $15 for all workers at MSP.”

In addition to Local 17, worker groups supporting the fight for $15 at MSP include the Service Employees International Union, IAM Delta Workers Unite, Teamsters Local 120, and Restaurant Opportunities Center Minnesota.

STRIKE AVERTED IN ELK RIVER

A week after voting to authorize their bargaining committee to call a 10-day strike, SEIU Healthcare Minnesota members who work at Guardian Angels Care Center in Elk River reached a tentative agreement with their employer on a new union contract. They voted overwhelmingly in favor of ratifying the pact three days later.

The three-year contract includes pay increases of 7.5% over the life of the contract, with retroactive pay for hours logged since the previous contract expired. The union also won improvements to staffing, hiring bonuses and access to Guardian Angels’ facility for its representatives, giving SEIU members a true voice on the job for the first time in 30 years.

Workers hope the new contract will help address staffing shortages and the employer’s use of temporary workers – issues that prompted a two-day strike at the facility in June.

The bargaining team released the following statement following the membership vote to approve the agreement:

“After a long and drawn-out fight, we voted to approve our contract today and won an important victory for workers, residents and our whole community. We are so proud that we won the right to have union access, retro pay and pay increases that will help recruit and retain the staff that make this the Five Star facility that it is. We learned through the last six months that SEIU’s saying is true: When We Fight, We Win!”

2020 is Labor’s Moment to drive down Health Care costs for all. Yes unions can add more Choice & Flexibility to Benefit Plans. Keep your Health Care Dollars on your street, stop sending them to Wall Street. Vote Health Care Public Option.

A STAGEHAND BELIEVES IT’S TIME

HEALTH CARE PUBLIC OPTION

Unions add more Choice & Flexibility to Benefit Plans...

Health Care Public Option competes with for profit insurance companies, driving prices down for everybody...

Makes sense for employees & employers...

Yes Unions can support Health Care Public Option because it’s good business & good collective bargaining.

Paid for by Aaron Keith IATSE Local 13 Candidate for Business Representative
As winter approaches, union pipefitters ensure ‘Heat’s On’ for low-income, senior homeowners

Some 200 union pipefitters fanned out across the state Oct. 5, giving up their Saturday to provide free furnace repairs and inspections to senior, low-income and disabled homeowners as part of Project Heat’s On.

The community-service program prepares residents for winter by repairing furnaces, helping reduce energy costs and prevent heat failure.

Project Heat’s On is made possible by three United Association local unions: St. Paul and Mankato Pipefitters Local 455, Minneapolis and St. Cloud Pipefitters Local 539 and Rochester Plumbers and Pipefitters Local 6, as well as the Minnesota Mechanical Contractors Association.

The unions and their contractors work with Community Action Partnership agencies to identify homeowners in need of assistance. This year 120 homeowners – from the Twin Cities, St. Cloud and Rochester areas – were treated to no-cost assistance from a local union member.

Since Heat’s On started in 1986, union pipefitters have volunteered more than 36,000 hours of skilled labor, with a value of over $3.8 million. In total, 8,244 households have received assistance.

Labor Blood Drive Dec. 3

The American Red Cross Bloodmobile will make its annual stop at the St. Paul Labor Center Dec. 3, and union members, retirees and friends of labor are needed to donate blood.

To schedule an appointment between 2 and 7 p.m., contact Lynne Larkin-Wright, AFL-CIO Community Services liaison, at 651-222-3787, extension 116, or at llwright@stpaulunions.org.

The Labor Center is located at 353 West 7th St., St. Paul.

The annual blood drive is co-sponsored by the St. Paul Regional Labor Federation, St. Paul Labor Studies and Resource Center and its AFL-CIO Community Services program, Greater Twin Cities United Way and the American Red Cross.

Make a holiday gift to Labor of Love

St. Paul Labor Studies and Resource Center, the nonprofit arm of the St. Paul Regional Labor Federation, will collect cash donations to the annual Labor of Love Sponsor a Family holiday drive through Nov. 19.

Each year, Labor of Love donations are pooled to purchase gift cards from union grocers. LSRC staff then distributes the gift cards to St. Paul-based agencies – including Catholic Charities, Sponsor A Family MN, Jewish Community Center and the LSRC’s own Emergency Fund – so that families in need will not go without food during the holidays.

All gifts are tax-deductible. To contribute, mail a check to “Labor Studies Resource Center (LSRC) Labor of Love – Sponsor a Family” and mail it to LSRC – AFL-CIO Community Services Program, Attn: Laura, 353 West 7th St., Suite 201, St. Paul, MN 55102.

Raise your voice in the Labor Chorus

The Twin Cities Labor Chorus is seeking new voices. The chorus, which performs at union rallies, on picket lines and elsewhere within the labor community, rehearses the second, fourth and fifth Tuesdays of each month at the Minnesota AFL-CIO offices in St. Paul, at 175 Aurora Ave.

All voice parts and ages are welcome to join the chorus. Contact director Josh Wise at tclaborchorus@gmail.com or 952-818-5474 for more information.
A Aaron Young, a Regional Labor Federation delegate from the American Postal Workers Union, held the winning ticket for the Wall of Beer drawing during last month's Oktoberfest fundraiser.

Proceeds from Wall of Beer, as well as food and drink sales during Oktoberfest, benefitted theRLF's nonprofit St. Paul Labor Studies and Resource Center, which provides guidance and support to union members and families facing financial hardship. Thank you to everyone who made the event a success!

Union Advocate photo

Minutes of the Saint Paul Regional Labor Federation

OCTOBER 9, 2019

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 Kasper at 6 p.m. Board members in attendance were Beedle B, Beedle G, Beissel, Deyo, Dreyer, Engeldorf, Faber, Gibson, Gorman, Guertin, Kasper, Luneburg, Maki-Green, McCarthy, McNamara, Mullin, Robles, Sanson, Schmidt, Slattery, St. Aoro, Terry, VanDassor, Varco, and Wise.

- President Kasper called for a moment of silence for Deb Wallace, Impact Printing, and Richard "Dick" Saward, IAMAW Local 459.

GUESTS
- David Welkey, Assistant Director of Censuses Operations and Engagement, spoke to the delegation regarding determination of district lines. We need to fill out the census forms so that we can get a complete count in the State of Minnesota. This helps us determine whether the money goes.
- The President of the Minnesota Postal Workers Association spoke to the delegation regarding the fight for the preservation of the Postal Office. They submitted a request to Governor Walz to proclaim Nov. 27, 2019, Public National Post Office Day.
- Mayor Melvin Carter thanked the COPE Committee and the RLF. We have an appropriate partnership with labor and there are opportunities to build on the big vision and reinvest in the City of Saint Paul.

MINUTES

- M/S/C TO APPROVE MINUTES OF AUG. 14, 2019, AND SEP. 11, 2019, AS PUBLISHED IN THE UNION ADVOCATE NEWSPAPER AFTER THE SECRETARY NOTES THERE ARE NO ADJUSTMENTS OR CHANGES CALLED FOR.

COMMITTEE ON POLITICAL EDUCATION (COPE) MINUTES OCTOBER 9, 2019

COPE met in regular session on the above date and was called to order at 5 p.m. Board members in attendance were Angrimson, Beedle B, Beedle G, Beissel, Deyo, Dreyer, Edwards, Engeldorf, Faber, Poenke, Gibbons, Gorman, Guertin, Hoorth, Kasper, Luneburg, Madden, Maki-Green, Mayer, McCarthy, McNamara, Mullin, Robles, Sanson, Schmidt, Slattery, St. Aoro, Terry, VanDassor, Varco, and Wise.

- Items to come before this board included:
  - The RLF COPE board members screened and requested consideration of granting Labor Endorsement to Adam Excluded were Ryan. Absent were Haugen, Hoppe, Krey, Lohmann, Markham-Kocurek, Meyer, Monsour, Quon, Seath and Varco.
- Items to come before this board included:
  - The RLF COPE board members screened and requested consideration of granting Labor Endorsement to Adam Excluded were Ryan. Absent were Haugen, Hoppe, Krey, Lohmann, Markham-Kocurek, Meyer, Monsour, Quon, Seath and Varco.
- The RLF COPE board members screened and requested consideration of granting Labor Endorsement to Adam Excluded were Ryan. Absent were Haugen, Hoppe, Krey, Lohmann, Markham-Kocurek, Meyer, Monsour, Quon, Seath and Varco.
  - Request for Labor Endorsement recommendations from the following assemblies.
  - RANDS COUNTY LABOR ASSEMBLY: Heidi Danielson, Mounds View School Board; Jim DeMay, Mounds View School Board; and Jonathan Weinaghen, Mounds View School Board.
  - M/S/C TO APPROVE MINUTES OF AUG. 14, 2019, AND SEP. 11, 2019, AS PUBLISHED IN THE UNION ADVOCATE NEWSPAPER AFTER THE SECRETARY NOTES THERE ARE NO ADJUSTMENTS OR CHANGES CALLED FOR.

COMMITTEE ON POLITICAL EDUCATION (COPE) MINUTES OCTOBER 9, 2019

COPE met in regular session on the above date and was called to order at 5 p.m. Board members in attendance were Angrimson, Beedle B, Beedle G, Beissel, Deyo, Dreyer, Edwards, Engeldorf, Faber, Poenke, Gibbons, Gorman, Guertin, Hoorth, Kasper, Luneburg, Madden, Maki-Green, Mayer, McCarthy, McNamara, Mullin, Robles, Sanson, Schmidt, Slattery, St. Aoro, Terry, VanDassor, Varco, and Wise. There were Ryan. Absent were Haugen, Hoppe, Krey, Lohmann, Markham-Kocurek, Meyer, Monsour, Quon, Seath and Varco.

- Items to come before this board included:
  - The RLF COPE board members screened and requested consideration of granting Labor Endorsement to Adam Excluded were Ryan. Absent were Haugen, Hoppe, Krey, Lohmann, Markham-Kocurek, Meyer, Monsour, Quon, Seath and Varco.
- Items to come before this board included:
  - The RLF COPE board members screened and requested consideration of granting Labor Endorsement to Adam Excluded were Ryan. Absent were Haugen, Hoppe, Krey, Lohmann, Markham-Kocurek, Meyer, Monsour, Quon, Seath and Varco.
- The RLF COPE board members screened and requested consideration of granting Labor Endorsement to Adam Excluded were Ryan. Absent were Haugen, Hoppe, Krey, Lohmann, Markham-Kocurek, Meyer, Monsour, Quon, Seath and Varco.
  - Request for Labor Endorsement recommendations from the following assemblies.
  - RANDS COUNTY LABOR ASSEMBLY: Heidi Danielson, Mounds View School Board; Jim DeMay, Mounds View School Board; and Jonathan Weinaghen, Mounds View School Board.
  - M/S/C TO APPROVE MINUTES OF AUG. 14, 2019, AND SEP. 11, 2019, AS PUBLISHED IN THE UNION ADVOCATE NEWSPAPER AFTER THE SECRETARY NOTES THERE ARE NO ADJUSTMENTS OR CHANGES CALLED FOR.

COMMITTEE ON POLITICAL EDUCATION (COPE) MINUTES OCTOBER 9, 2019

COPE met in regular session on the above date and was called to order at 5 p.m. Board members in attendance were Angrimson, Beedle B, Beedle G, Beissel, Deyo, Dreyer, Edwards, Engeldorf, Faber, Poenke, Gibbons, Gorman, Guertin, Hoorth, Kasper, Luneburg, Madden, Maki-Green, Mayer, McCarthy, McNamara, Mullin, Robles, Sanson, Schmidt, Slattery, St. Aoro, Terry, VanDassor, Varco, and Wise. There were Ryan. Absent were Haugen, Hoppe, Krey, Lohmann, Markham-Kocurek, Meyer, Monsour, Quon, Seath and Varco.

- Items to come before this board included:
  - The RLF COPE board members screened and requested consideration of granting Labor Endorsement to Adam Excluded were Ryan. Absent were Haugen, Hoppe, Krey, Lohmann, Markham-Kocurek, Meyer, Monsour, Quon, Seath and Varco.
A fighter for working families in the U.S. Senate

Tina Smith isn’t on the ballot this November, but for Minnesota’s junior U.S. senator, the reprieve from campaigning will be brief. The seat Smith won in 2018 goes back on the ballot in November 2020, and the race already has attracted a well-funded opponent in former 2nd District Rep. Jason Lewis.

For working families, the contrast couldn’t be sharper.

While Lewis’ signature achievement was a tax break that overwhelmingly benefited corporations and the wealthy, Smith has a track record of putting working people first, one that dates back to her work in Gov. Mark Dayton’s administration, when she worked closely with Minnesota’s unions.

Smith has maintained those ties in the Senate, where she’s emerged as a leading voice on the secretary’s confirmation hearings. What did you learn?

TS: I voted against Gene Scalia for labor secretary because I felt that a person who dedicated his life to fighting for management and against labor is not the kind of leadership we need at the Department of Labor. The DOL was established as an agency that was solidly fighting for the needs of workers, whether it’s fair working conditions, safe working conditions, fair wages, a secure retirement – that’s the purpose of the DOL. To have somebody nominated who has consistently fought on the other side of all those issues seemed to be completely wrong.

But now he’s in this role, and I will do everything I can to make sure he fulfills the promise of the DOL.

UA: You’ve been active in the fight to protect pensions since before you were appointed to the Senate. Where does that work stand, and what barriers are you running into?

TS: I’m proud to be a co-sponsor of the Butch Lewis Act, which is a practical and common-sense way to make sure people who did everything right, who paid into their pensions, who sacrificed current earnings for their retirement security aren’t penalized.

I raised this (issue) with Mr. Scalia when he came to my office for an interview, and I raised it again during the confirmation hearing. And I’m going to continue to raise it. This is an issue that is really important to the Central States Pension Plan, with upwards of 22,000 Minnesotans enrolled in it.

I tell my Republican colleagues this is an issue that’s not only affecting workers, but also affecting businesses. Many businesses also did everything right and paid into these pensions that now are facing a lot of insecurity... This is not an example of mismanagement or somebody doing something wrong. It is through no fault of anybody that these pension plans are struggling, and it’s going to be to the benefit of all of us if we step in and make sure they get stabilized.

What happens with Butch Lewis is really an open question after the work we did last year to try to come up with a compromise plan. We weren’t able to persuade the Republicans to come up with something, but we’re continuing to try to find a way. Time is of the essence.

UA: So much of the focus in Washington is on the president, whether it’s his Tweets or his scandals. Is there room for action on issues of importance to working families – like an infrastructure jobs bill – where there might be common ground?

TS: I think that the House of Representatives has demonstrated they can move forward positive legislation to improve people’s lives. They passed the Butch Lewis Act. The problem we have right now is that the U.S. Senate is the place where good ideas go to die. Mitch McConnell moves forward nominations like Gene Scalia for the DOL, but dozens of bills that would help working families sit at the doorstep of the U.S. Senate and he refuses to take them up. He doesn’t have to do that, but that’s what he chooses to do. He’s turned the U.S. Senate into a personnel agency for the White House, and it’s a big problem.

UA: Minneapolis recently hosted a convention with 2,500 tradeswomen from across the country and Canada. What can Congress do to get more women into high-paying jobs like these?

TS: I had a chance to go and hang out with some of those amazing tradeswomen, and drink a beer made by a Minnesota women-owned brewery. I played hammerschlagen and did not do well, but it was great just to be with these powerful, energetic tradeswomen who are really breaking barriers every day in the building trades, fighting for their opportunity to fill those jobs. It was wonderful that the Twin Cities was able to host that group.

I know that many of my brothers and sisters in the building trades are focused on expanding opportunities for women. We need to especially support union apprenticeship programs in the building trades and other areas, and make sure that there’s lots of room for women. And I think we need to do the work in high schools and even middle schools so that young women are exposed to career opportunities, so they can find the good-paying jobs that are more than jobs, they are careers.

The other thing, since you mentioned infrastructure, I remember the work I did when I was lieutenant governor to get the new Vikings stadium built, and the large number of women tradesmen who participated on that work site. That’s just one example of the kind of big infrastructure projects we ought to be funding and supporting because they make our country more competitive, and they create such great jobs.

UA: You’ve worked closely with organized labor going back to your time in the Dayton administration, when we watched the tide turn for unions in Wisconsin. That pendulum has swung back. Unions have never been as popular as they are now. Why do you think that is, and what can federal lawmakers do to seize that momentum and help more people win a voice on the job?

TS: Wherever I go, when I’m talking to people, I remind them of the contributions organized labor has made. Whether you’re a union member or not, if you enjoy a weekend off, thank a labor union. If you enjoy overtime or a safe pension, thank a labor union. If you work in a safe job with good working conditions, thank a labor union – and remember the 150 who died in the Triangle Shirtwaist fire.

One of the challenges we have in this country is there has been a concerted, coordinated effort to weaken organized labor. You see it in so-called right to work laws. You see it in the challenges and barriers that have been thrown up to stop people who want to come together and organize for better wages and working conditions. And, I think, as people become more aware of those challenges, we become better able to fight back.

Last, I’ll say the blatant inequity in CEO salaries compared to the wages regular workers are making is becoming more and more apparent. We were talking about this last week while I was walking the picket line with UAW workers. The CEO of General Motors took home $22 million in total compensation last year, yet UAW workers are fighting to get rid of this two-tiered wage system, which has people working side by side on the line and the non-legacy or temporary worker is making a fraction of what the long-term worker makes. That’s just wrong. And I think people are ready to rise to the occasion and fight back.