A few hours before their union’s first mediated contract talks with the St. Paul Public Schools began Dec. 12, about 50 educators went caroling through the district’s offices, seeking out administrators on the bargaining team.

The carols they sang were familiar, but the lyrics were punched up to highlight the student-centered contract proposals educators have brought to negotiations this year.

“To support our students’ health, we need the health support,” they sang to the opening tune of “Jingle Bells.” “Of psychologists and social workers, and nurses too – of course!”

Union members say they have no choice but to find creative ways to get the district’s attention.

Since SPPS and the St. Paul Federation of Educators began bargaining their 2019-21 contracts May 30, the union has presented 30 proposals. The district has tentatively agreed to one, and has countered only three.

“That’s been disappointing.” SPFE President Nick Faber said. “We’re just trying to get something back in writing from the district that we can work with.”

The talks moved into mediation after nine public bargaining sessions, which offered frontline educators, parents and other stakeholders who are not on the union’s bargaining team the opportunity to have their voices heard.

By Michael Moore
Union Advocate editor


The governor helped 41-year-old Jay Spika, who has primary progressive multiple sclerosis, bathe, dress and depart his St. Paul home. Walz worked alongside one of Spika’s home health aides, SEIU Healthcare Minnesota member Deb Howze.

The “walk-a-day” event offered Walz and Lt. Gov. Peggy Flanagan, who participated in a similar event in Minneapolis, a unique perspective on the state’s home health industry.

Federal and state subsidies allow thousands of Minnesota seniors and people with disabilities to stay in their homes, saving taxpayers the cost of providing institutional care.

But home care workers and clients have sounded the alarm in recent years about a worsening labor shortage in their field, and they say low wages and lack of benefits are primary factors behind the shortage.

(continued on page 4)
Go Figure

41.5 percent
Share of union elections conducted by the National Labor Relations Board in 2016-17 in which employers were charged with violating federal labor law

19.9 percent
Share of union elections in which an employer was charged with illegally firing a union activist

$340 million
Amount U.S. employers spend annually on “union avoidance”

Source: “Unlawful,” a report issued last month by the Economic Policy Institute

Labor Voices: Bobby Kasper

The strength of our union family is solidarity

It’s the time of year when families gather together to celebrate the holidays. Those gatherings take many different forms. Sometimes we gather as a nuclear family, just parents and their children. Other times we gather with our extended family, bringing together the grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins or in-laws.

The ties that bind us together as family are many, and in that sense, our union movement is like family. Our local unions and bargaining units bring together working people who have the most in common, like a nuclear family. And our international unions and regional councils are like extended family, gathering union members of different stripes under one big umbrella.

In my career in the labor movement, I’ve been fortunate to serve at almost every level of the labor family, from business agent with my LIUNA local and member of Laborers Local 563 to, most recently, president of the St. Paul Regional Labor Federation, AFL-CIO. I’ve seen how important every branch of the labor family tree is.

Our local unions give us power on the job and a voice at work. The old saying is true: If you don’t have a seat at the table, you’re probably on the menu. By joining together and supporting each other, union members negotiate higher wages and better benefits, and we have a say in our conditions of employment.

But everything that we need to thrive can’t be gained at the bargaining table with our employers. That’s where our extended family comes into the picture. Labor councils and federations organize on behalf of all union members — all working people, really — for public goods like quality schools, accessible child care, a robust safety net and fair trade.

Like a family, unity is our labor movement’s strength. The stronger our solidarity, the better the contracts we negotiate. The same goes for our work in the community. When we focus on what we have in common as union members, we focus on improving people’s lives and when we commit to doing the work it takes to make change, that’s when we win.

As union members, we stand on the shoulders of those who made great sacrifices — sometimes with their lives — to secure the rights and advantages we take for granted today. And we risk losing those rights if we do not stay in the fight. Don’t believe me? Next time you’re in Wisconsin, ask a union member there how Scott Walker’s two terms as governor turned over.

It falls on us, as union members, to take on the work of protecting our union heritage.

— Bobby Kasper

Editor’s Note: “Voices” is a forum for opinions from across the labor movement. It appears regularly in The Advocate. We encourage readers to respond to our columnists’ opinions. To write a letter to the editor, see the upper-right-hand corner of this page. To inquire about contributing to “Voices,” call 651-222-3787, extension 112. This column does not reflect the position of the St. Paul Regional Labor Federation or its assemblies.
March together in the Grande Day Parade

Union members are invited to march in the Winter Carnival’s King Boreas Grande Day Parade through downtown St. Paul on Jan. 25.

The St. Paul Regional Labor Federation’s AFL-CIO Community Service Program and Greater Twin Cities United Way will co-sponsor a parade unit to celebrate the long-standing partnership shared by union members and United Way in service to local communities.

The parade begins at 2 p.m., and marchers will gather at the Labor Center, 353 West 7th St., at 1 p.m. After the parade, the Labor Center will host a warm-up party with food, door prizes and family fun.

For more information or to RSVP, call Lynne Larkin-Wright at 651-222-3787, ext. 116, or email llwright@spaulunions.org.

Get the scoop on restaurant organizing

In recent years, workers not organized in a union have found ways to band together through worker centers to organize for real gains on the job. Minnesota is home to 10 local chapters of Restaurant Opportunities Centers United, a worker center committed to improving wages and working conditions for the 13 million workers in food-service nationwide.

ROC Minnesota has been active in organizing restaurant industry workers to participate in recent local campaigns for a $15 minimum wage, safe and sick time, wage theft enforcement, and fair scheduling.

Meet ROC Minnesota members and staff and learn more about their work at a reception Jan. 8, co-hosted by the Minneapolis Regional Labor Federation, AFL-CIO, and UNITE HERE Local 17. The event will take place from 6:30-8 p.m. at the United Labor Centre, 312 Central Ave., Minneapolis, in Room 444.

Freedom Library offers help with History Day

Junior and senior high students undertaking History Day projects can get help and advice at free weekly workshops offered at the East Side Freedom Library in St. Paul. The drop-in workshops will run each Saturday from 10 a.m. to noon through April 25.

History Day is a national competition inviting students to explore topics within a yearly theme through creation of live performances, documentary films, websites or research papers.

The East Side Freedom Library is located at 1105 Greenbrier St. Learn more at eastsidefreedomlibrary.org.

Voters back labor candidates, campaigns in local elections

Candidates carrying the unified labor endorsement performed well in local elections across the east metro Nov. 5, and union members helped pass several school-funding measures as well.

The St. Paul Regional Labor Federation, AFL-CIO, endorsed 25 candidates on the ballot in 2019, and 23 won their races. All six school levy and bond referendums endorsed by the federation won voter approval, including a record-breaking, $326 million facilities investment in the White Bear Lake school district.

“It was great to see our communities support investments in our schools – in both learning and infrastructure,” said Kera Peterson, the St. Paul RLF’s political director. “Our communities also voted to elect school board candidates who support public education and the schools our students deserve.”

In St. Paul, all six labor-endorsed candidates for City Council won in their respective wards.

Incumbent council members Amy Brendemuen, Mitra Jalali Nelson, Rebecca Noecker, Jane Prince and Chris Tolbert took a majority of first-choice votes, tallied by officials on election night.

Three days later, after the city’s ranked-choice-voting process played out, Nelsie Yang emerged the winner in Ward 6. A member of the Minnesota Newspaper and Communications Guild-CWA, Yang ran with the RLF’s endorsement.

Additionally, Council Member Dai Thao won reelection in Ward 1 with the support of several local unions. (The St. Paul RLF did not endorse a candidate in the race.)

All three unified labor-endorsed school board candidates in St. Paul won, as did Nicole Frethem, the labor-endorsed candidate in a special election for the District 1 seat on the Ramsey County Board.

Peterson said the election results confirm that most voters in east-metro communities share labor’s values, from fighting wage theft to lifting working families out of poverty.

“It’s exciting to know that union members helped re-elect the members of the St. Paul City Council who passed the city’s $15 municipal minimum wage and earned sick and safe time ordinances,” she said. “And it’s exciting to think about how we will work together to continue improving standards for workers in our community.”

Yang, meanwhile, was among several union members and retirees who won their campaigns for local office this year.

Tolbert, who won reelection in St. Paul’s third ward, is a member of Local 2938 of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees. Allen, newly elected to the St. Paul school board, is a member of the St. Paul Federation of Educators. And Angela Thompson, a member of Office and Professional Employees Local 12, won reelection to the White Bear Lake school board.

Three union retirees, all former members of Education Minnesota, also won seats on local school boards: Louise Hinz in South Washington County, Jackie Magnuson in Rosemont-Apple Valley-Eagan and Margaret Newmaster in White Bear Lake.

The St. Paul Regional Labor Federation unites more than 100 local unions in Ramsey, Dakota, Washington and Chisago counties. Together, they represent over 50,000 working people.

Kasper to retire, Peterson elected to lead St. Paul labor federation

The St. Paul Regional Labor Federation will have new leadership in the coming new year.

After a decade in office, RLF President Bobby Kasper will retire at the end of December. Delegates at the federation’s Dec. 11 meeting unanimously elected RLF Political Director Kera Peterson to succeed Kasper as president. She will be sworn into a four-year term in January.

“I want to thank our federation’s delegates for their trust and confidence in electing me to represent them and their powerful unions,” Peterson said. “We’ve accomplished a lot together over the years, but there’s still much to do. I look forward to rolling up my sleeves with all of you.”

Peterson is a member of Machinists Local Lodge 459, and she has been on the RLF political staff since 2008. Previously, she served as an AFL-CIO Community Services Liaison with the St. Paul RLF’s non-profit St. Paul Labor Studies and Resource Center; and with the St. Croix Valley Central Labor Council.

Peterson signed her first union card in 1997, when she took a job as a living-skills instructor at a mental-health facility in Minneapolis, joining Service Employees Local 113 (now SEIU Healthcare Minnesota).

She currently serves as vice president of her local lodge, vice president of Machinists District Council 77 and second vice president of the Machinists State Council.

During her time on staff with the St. Paul RLF, Peterson has worked closely with labor assemblies in Chisago, Ramsey and Washington counties, helping establish support for labor campaigns in those areas.

She has directed efforts to elect more labor-endorsed candidates in the east metro’s swing legislative districts. And she has represented the federation in coalitions working to raise the statewide minimum wage and establish new local labor standards in St. Paul.

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
Jan. 23, 4:30 p.m.
Wyoming Public Library,
26855 Forest Blvd.

Ramsey County Assembly
Jan. 27, 6 p.m.
St. Paul Labor Center
353 West Seventh St.

Dakota County Assembly
Jan. 9, 7 p.m.
Dakota County United Educators,
6950 West 146th St., Apple Valley

Washington County Assembly
Jan. 22, 6 p.m.
County Gov’t Center (lower level)
14949 62nd St. N., Stillwater

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www.spaulunions.org
Walz ‘walks a day’ in union home care worker’s shoes

(Continued from Page 1)

As the state’s population ages, they fear the crisis will only worsen.

As they worked together to get Spika’s socks and shoes on, Howze told Walz it’s difficult to retain good workers in such a demanding job at $13.25 per hour, the minimum wage in SEIU’s most recent union contract with the state.

“This job is exhausting,” she said. “We have so much turnover. I feel the pay is not enough. You should be able to get a PCA job and be able to live on it without working two extra jobs.”

Earlier this year, Walz and other lawmakers approved the $13.25 minimum wage as part of a two-year union contract covering 25,000 home care workers statewide.

The 10.4% increase was “a starting point,” the governor acknowledged, to addressing the industry’s labor shortage. Walz noted the state has a backlog of thousands of qualified individuals and families who want a home care attendant but can’t get one.

“That means spouses leaving their work, giving up their careers to make sure the care is there,” he said.

Later in the event, Walz turned to Spika and asked what elected officials can do better from his standpoint.

“I think we need to invest in the PCA program,” he said. “It’s not a matter of if you’re going to need these services; it’s a matter of when… And you need a professional.”
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While Delta rakes in billions in profits, many workers who cater the airline’s flights out of Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport can’t afford health insurance.

Faisal Abdallah, who has worked nearly 11 years for Delta caterer LSG Sky Chefs, is among them. "If I get sick, I take pills and go back to work," the Fridley resident said during a union rally at MSP the Tuesday before Thanksgiving. "I don’t have a choice. I can’t afford the insurance even though I work two other jobs. I don’t know what I would do if I got seriously sick.”

MSP was one of 17 U.S. airports where unionized catering workers, members of UNITE HERE, led demonstrations during Thanksgiving week, raising awareness of their ongoing campaign for fair contracts with two major employers in the industry, Sky Chefs and Gate Gourmet.

UNITE HERE represents some 20,000 airline catering workers nationwide, including 488 members of Twin Cities-based Local 17. They are pushing for higher wages – nearly half of MSP catering workers earn less than $15 an hour, according to the union – and more affordable health care options.

And they want airlines like Delta to support their cause.

As they marched from the sidewalk across the street from Terminal 1 to a mezzanine overlooking MSP’s main ticketing area, about 200 workers and supporters directed many of their chants at Delta, calling the carrier “cheap and mean.”

Several travelers applauded the protest and joined in the chants.

“I serve Delta flights every day at work,” Abdallah said. “Delta makes billions in profit, but I have to work three jobs just to pay my bills. I often work over 80 hours per week at my jobs, and I barely get to sleep.”

The demonstration was the second at MSP Airport since Sky Chefs workers voted to authorize a strike in June. Among Local 17 members, 99.7% of Sky Chefs workers who participated in the vote supported a strike, according to the union.

The contract, covering roughly 11,000 workers, became amendable under the Railway Labor Act (RLA) in December 2018. Federally mediated talks have been ongoing for months, but a strike can’t take place unless the National Mediation Board, which administers the RLA, declares an impasse and releases the two sides from negotiations. A nationwide strike could impact services on board American, Delta and United airlines.

‘AN INDUSTRY IN DISTRESS’

When a notorious wage broker pleaded guilty to two felony charges in Hennepin County Nov. 18, it was welcome news for unions and community groups working to rid Minnesota’s construction industry of labor abuses.

(Continued on Page 7)
“We are grateful that the legal system is holding those who commit wage theft and illegal trafficking of construction workers seriously,” said Jessica Looman, the Minnesota Building and Construction Trades Council’s executive director, after Ricardo Batres pleaded guilty to labor trafficking and insurance fraud.

The plea deal confirms that Batres recruited immigrant workers to fill jobs on Twin Cities construction sites, and he denied some their legally guaranteed rights on the job by exploiting their undocumented status.

Sentencing is not until January, but prosecutors will recommend Batres serve up to nine months in the county workhouse and five years of probation. He could also be barred from inclusion in future state or federal construction contracts.

The Building Trades Council, which represents the state’s unionized construction workforce, called Batres’ case the first big test of Minnesota’s labor trafficking and wage theft laws.

It’s unlikely to be the last.

In July, 14 Minnesota construction unions launched “Not On My Watch/Ya No Mas,” a campaign to heighten awareness of wage theft and labor trafficking and to assist exploited construction workers.

Dan McConnell, manager of the Minneapolis Building and Construction Trades Council, said Batres’ plea is an indication of the new initiative’s potential.

“The case against Ricardo Batres shows the strength of the construction community when we stand together against wage theft and labor trafficking,” he said. “It’s imperative that we protect the health of the construction community by continuing to call out bad actors who exploit our workers for their own gain.”

Unions are teaming up with community groups like Advocates for Human Rights and the local worker center CTUL to educate workers and identify abuses. CTUL organizers say they are currently investigating three other cases of labor trafficking and over a dozen cases of wage theft in the Twin Cities construction industry.

CTUL Co-Director Veronica Mendez Moore said the Batres case reflects “an industry in distress,” but she noted that the problem goes beyond labor brokers.

“Real estate developers and their financial backers are directly profiting from this kind of labor exploitation,” she said. “While some sectors of the construction industry are unionized and abide by human rights standards, there is a dark underbelly that does not.”

Minnesota’s new wage-theft law, among the toughest in the nation, will make it easier for officials to patrol that dark underbelly. Passed last year, the law creates additional protections for workers and stiffens penalties for employers that commit wage theft.

Labor traffickers like Batres don’t just show up on construction projects, of course.

“This is a big problem in the industry,” said Burt Johnson, a spokesperson for the North Central States Regional Council of Carpenters. “Construction contractors and developers can no longer hide behind hiring a low-bid contractor when those bids are based on a criminally low price.”

(Continued from Page 6)

(Continued on Page 9)
Happy Holidays
& A PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR

HOLIDAY GREETINGS
to all union families!

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Laborers’ Union
Local 563

Have a safe
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members of
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Local #34

Merry Christmas
and Best Wishes for a
Very Happy &
Prosperous New Year!
MAYO NURSES PICKET IN MANKATO

Mankato members of the Minnesota Nurses Association held informational picketing around the Mayo Mankato hospital Dec. 5 to take their contract issues straight to their employer.

Nurses are demanding hospital management come to the bargaining table with the entire negotiating team of nurses to discuss a new contract. Mayo, at this point, has refused to bargain with all the nurses, whose previous contract expired in July.

Despite meeting five times since September, “we have not done a lick of bargaining whatsoever,” Kris Stenzel, a registered nurse with 20 years of experience in the Mayo system, said.

Stenzel, a member of the union’s bargaining team, said Mayo objects to nurses who aren’t elected to the bargaining team being present during talks. But the union has good reason to want to keep negotiations open to all members, she noted.

“In the past, what management sends out to our members (regarding negotiations) is not the same as what we send out,” Stenzel said. “It’s really hard to build trust when management says we’re not telling the truth. So we want our nurses in the room so they can hear what is being said firsthand.”

Meanwhile, nurses say their voices have not been heard on critical issues, including workplace safety, staffing, wages and benefits.

“We’re not asking to move heaven and earth,” Stenzel said. “We’re asking, ‘What are we doing to keep our nurses here? How can we keep these skilled nurses at the bedside, and appreciate what they give to us?’

“If you ask any nurse here, they’ll tell you the same thing: ‘I feel like I’m a number and I’m replaceable.’”

Both Mayo and the MNA have filed charges of unfair labor practices with the National Labor Relations Board.

– Union Advocate staff reports
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Season’s Greetings
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Wishing you and your family the happiest and healthiest of Holidays!
By Michael Moore
Union Advocate editor

Latesha Hayes’ career path came full circle in November.
A fourth-year apprentice with the Carpenters union, Hayes was one of six tradeswomen who led 33 eighth-grade girls from Roseville on a tour of the union’s St. Paul training center. The students put on hard hats and safety glasses, worked with tools of the trade and peppered their tour guides with questions about the craft.
Afterward, Hayes, 31, remembered being at a similar event just six years ago. Her son’s class went on a field trip to JA BizTown, an experiential learning lab for youth that simulates life in a city.
“He got to play the role of a carpenter,” Hayes said. “When I got a look at his benefits and wages, I had to ask if it was accurate. They told me it was, and I knew I had to look into it.”
On Day 1 of their union apprenticeship, local Carpenters earn $21 per hour with great health and retirement benefits, “even without ever having held a hammer in your hand,” Scott Panek, an assistant training director with the union, told students.
That’s more than Hayes was making as the manager of a local cell phone store. It’s more than her fellow tour guide, first-year apprentice Shetara Round, was making at Victoria’s Secret before she joined the union.
And forget swinging a hammer. Round fully admits she “didn’t even know what the hell” carpentry was back then.
“Somebody on Facebook shared a post and was like, ‘Hey, anyone interested in a career in carpentry?’” Round remembered. “And I’m like, ‘Oh, so they lay carpets and stuff?’”
Much has changed in the last year, as Round, 34, now works on a job site in East Bethel, building an addition to the local hospital.
“I wish I would have done an event like this when I was their age,” Round said of the middle-school students touring her training center.
The fact is Building Trades unions are doing a lot more outreach events these days – and, in particular, during National Apprenticeship Week, held each year during November.
In recent years, with the construction industry facing a shortage of skilled tradespeople, unions and contractors have boosted their marketing and recruitment efforts. Amanda Phillips, an apprenticeship instructor with the North Central States Regional Council of Carpenters, said the union is doing outreach events several times a month.
“And I can tell it’s having an impact,” Phillips said. “In their first week of training, apprentices introduce themselves and talk about how they found out about the union. It’s becoming much more prevalent that they mention they came on a tour or know someone who did and told them about it.”
The eighth-grade girls, whose tour of the training center was just one stop during a day of career exploration activities arranged by local contractors, likely won’t make their decision about what to do after high school anytime soon. But if they didn’t know a union apprenticeship was an option before today, they know it now.
“If you’re just riding past a job site, you’re like ‘oh those are construction workers,’” Hayes said “No, there are electricians, laborers, carpenters, pip-
efitters – and they all come from different unions to put it together.
“It’s basically generalized as a man’s job, but women can do this too. We can do whatever we put our minds to.”
Learn more about apprenticeship opportunities in the Building Trades online at constructioncareers.org.

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For a list of UFCW1189 on the web http://ufcw1189.org/worksites
**Solidarity Spotlight**

**Labour rallies to support over 200 striking Steelworkers in Blaine**

**BLAINES** – Bosses at Carley Foundry learned an important lesson Nov. 8. Pick a fight with one Minnesota union, and you’ll get a fight with them all.

About 220 members of United Steelworkers Local 63B staged an unfair-labor-practices strike in November at the Blaine plant, which supplies parts to aerospace and other firms. They have since ended the strike and returned to work.

But the Steelworkers’ picket line swelled with supporters over the lunch hour Nov. 8, after a call for solidarity circulated throughout the local labor movement.

Among those who answered the call: seven union autoworkers from Hudson, Wis., who recently went back to work after a strike of their own at General Motors.

Steven Frisque, a steward in United Autoworkers Local 722, said the labor community’s support never wavered during their 40-day strike. Now, UAW members are motivated to pass that solidarity “back to the people who showed up for us,” he said.

“We just feel it’s what we need to do,” Frisque added. “Whoever else goes on strike, we’re going to be out there helping, showing that we have solidarity with them.”

“Workers here (at Carley Foundry), they’re going through the same thing we are. And it’s everywhere. It’s a common theme in this country.”

Indeed, just as UAW members made eliminating wage tiers from their contract a rallying cry during negotiations with Carley was the company’s demand for a new, lower wage tier for new hires.

The work stoppage at Carley Foundry came amidst an uptick in the number of strikes happening across the U.S.

In 2018, more American workers were involved in major work stoppages than in any year since 1986. In October 2019 alone, some 80,000-plus workers were on strike at GM and in the Chicago Public Schools.

The wave of workplace activism reflects dissatisfaction with the return working people have seen on the last decade of economic growth, said Brad Lehto, secretary-treasurer of the state’s largest labor federation, the Minnesota AFL-CIO.

“Broadly speaking, during the recession there were a lot of concessions given by working people, including by these folks, to help companies survive,” Lehto said on the Carley picket line. “Now, employers generally are doing well and making more money than ever, but they don’t want to give anything back.

“We’re out here today to say no more. We’re not taking any more of this.”

Union autoworkers ended their strike after ratifying a new contract that, although it didn’t include everything they wanted, did succeed in reducing the gap between veteran workers and their more recently hired co-workers. Frisque called it a “stepping stone” that, he hopes, union negotiators will look to build on the next time they negotiate with GM.

“The younger people and the temps did get some improvements in vacation and pay, and the company would not have given us those things just because they like us,” Frisque said. “That’s not how it works. It’s going to be a fight every step of the way.”

The good news for workers who do make the difficult decision to strike? They’re not fighting alone.

“One union’s fight is every union’s fight,” Lehto said.

**Workers fight back as HealthPartners aims to pass on health care costs**

More than 1,800 workers at about two dozen HealthPartners clinics are facing dramatic increases in their own health care costs under management proposals.

But members of SEIU Healthcare Minnesota, whose contract expires at the end of this month, are fighting back.

“We’re fighting to keep the health insurance we have, which is something we’ve bargained for over the years,” said Kate Lynch of Roseville, who works as an LPN at the Arden Hills clinic. “We feel like we deserve the good health insurance we have, and everyone deserves good insurance, regardless of your employer.”

Under management’s proposal, clinic workers would see $600-$800 increases in individual insurance premiums and about double that amount for family coverage.

In addition to the large premium increases, HealthPartners is closing all its clinic-based pharmacies – putting 100 SEIU pharmacists out of work – and shuttering an integrated home care program, laying off another 30 SEIU Healthcare members.

The union expects to take a strike vote after the final scheduled bargaining session Jan. 31.

– Minneapolis Labor Review
If you’re interested in picking up some extra hours to pay those holiday bills, a new union temp service is recruiting staff to work events at U.S. Bank Stadium.

The new temp service, Triada, is a nonprofit based in Milwaukee and recently has begun working in the Minneapolis area through a partnership with the Minnesota AFL-CIO, Service Employees International Union Local 26 and UNITE HERE Local 17.

“It’s an opportunity for us to organize in an industry that crosses all of our sectors,” said Todd Dahlstrom, organizing director for the Minnesota AFL-CIO. Temp work and gig-economy work currently doesn’t have much union presence, he noted. “We want to change that.”

Currently, Triada is seeking staff for light janitorial work at U.S. Bank Stadium.

Workers hired will become members of SEIU Local 26 and receive union wages. “We want folks to get as close to full-time as they want,” Dahlstrom added.

Apply at triadaworks.com or call Jerome Balsimo at 651-335-2896 or Dahlstrom at 651-955-6225.

– Minneapolis Labor Review
HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

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Gov. Tim Walz issued a proclamation declaring Wednesday, Nov. 27, Public Post Office Day in the state of Minnesota. The proclamation, signed by both the governor and Secretary of State Steve Simon, is a token of the state’s gratitude for the U.S. Postal Service and its employees as they face a busy holiday mailing season.

Aaron Young, president of Local 7019 of the American Postal Workers Union (APWU), began lobbying Walz’s office for a Public Post Office Day in Minnesota after learning Gov. Jay Inslee of Washington had signed a similar decree last year.

“I was very grateful to Gov. Walz that he did this for us,” Young said. “Hopefully, other states can follow our lead.”

Many post offices across the state were expected to print and display Walz’s proclamation, Todd Elkerton, president of the APWU’s St. Paul-area local, said. He called it a well-timed gesture to postal workers and letter carriers.

“Our members work a lot of overtime, trying to deliver the packages and letters for Christmas,” he said. “So it’s great that we’re appreciating the workers that deliver the mail during the holiday season.”

But the proclamation also comes at a pivotal time for the agency.

Postmaster General Megan Brennan has announced plans to retire Jan. 31, 2020. Members of the Postal Service Board of Governors, who are appointed by the president, have begun the process of appointing Brennan’s successor.

The APWU and other postal unions fear President Trump will push the board to appoint someone who shares his hostility to the agency’s public mission.

Last year, Trump formed a task force on postal reform that recommended selling off the USPS to private corporations. Unions warn that would result in higher shipping and mailing costs, reduced service and the end of guaranteed delivery.

The USPS delivers 470 million pieces of mail each day, serving all 159 million addresses in the country. In contrast, private companies likely would deliver only to areas where they can turn a profit.

Trump’s privatization plan has stalled since its unveiling earlier this year, but union members, Young said, worry that could change if a privatizer replaces Brennan as postmaster general.

“A lot of people get depressed when they hear this constant push out of DC for privatization,” Young said. “It seems like it is inevitable, like we’re not going to be able to stop it.”

But the APWU, the National Association of Letter Carriers and other postal unions aren’t giving up so easily. To keep the USPS public, unions are enlisting public support, gathering over 33,000 signatures (and counting) on a petition to “stop the postal sell-off” and ensure the new postmaster general doesn’t support privatization. (Add your name to the petition online at usmailnotforsale.org.)

Unions are also lining up support in Congress and from elected officials like Walz.

“This proclamation, it gives people hope that we can stop the privatization push,” Young said. “It doesn’t have to be an inevitability.”
In partnership with St. Paul Regional Labor Federation’s Labor Studies and Resource Center, St. Paul Federal Credit Union this year joined more than 2,000 local worksites helping raise money for Greater Twin Cities United Way.

“Running a United Way campaign is another way we do business guided by our values. It is the right thing to do,” CEO Tom Glatt said.

Additionally, credit union employees, many of whom are members of Office and Professional Employees Local 12, assembled 100 healthy snack packs for Casa de Esperanza, a United Way agency. And St. Paul Federal is hosting a Toys for Tots drive, with a donation box in the lobby of its offices next door to IBEW Local 110.

St. Paul Federal was chartered in 1953 by a group of electricians from Local 110. Membership is now open to members of most local unions and all St. Paul residents.

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On a national day of service for their union's minority caucus Nov. 16, about 25 volunteers from St. Paul-based Local 110 of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers spent the morning roughing in a Habitat for Humanity home in Faribault.

The service project brought together journey-level workers, apprentices and their family members. Volunteer turnout was the highest Local 110 has seen since the union began participating in the day of service five years ago.

Mike Roberts, a journey-level worker who participated in the volunteer project, said Local 110's minority caucus is growing.

"IBEW members are recognizing that the Electrical Workers Minority Caucus is not just a minority committee," said Roberts, who serves as caucus president. "They're recognizing the important work happening in the committee, and they're getting behind us. We're all doing this together."

The Habitat build offered several newly registered apprentices an opportunity to sharpen their skills working alongside more experienced Electrical Workers, connect with fellow union members and have some fun.

"Everybody likes to do Habitat houses," Roberts said.

"We're very grateful for the strong partnership with IBEW," Dayna Norvold, executive director of Rice County Habitat, said. "The crews are great to work with, and we couldn't fulfill our mission of building safe, decent and affordable homes without their partnership."

The home IBEW volunteers wired is a one-story rambler with two bedrooms, one bathroom and a two-car garage. Norvold said she hopes to see it completed in March 2020, with a deserving family taking ownership in the following weeks.

Roberts said union members take pride in every job they do, but there's something unique about projects that improve people's lives.

"As IBEW members, we feel like we are obligated to give back and serve our communities," he said.
across from administrators and explain how SPFE’s proposals would impact their classrooms, schools and children.

St. Paul educators have drawn national recognition for using the collective bargaining process not just as an opportunity to negotiate their wages and benefits, but to make progress toward building “the schools St. Paul students deserve.” This year, union proposals include setting weighted case-loads for special-ed professionals, increasing support for English-language learners and hiring more staff to address students’ mental-health needs.

“Our students have unmet needs,” Faber said, “needs that aren’t getting met because of staffing. And there are highly talented educators … who are trying to meet those needs, but when they ask for help, they either get none – or they get a coach or an administrator with a clipboard sitting in the back of the room telling them what they’re doing wrong.”

Rather than engaging with educators’ concerns at the bargaining table, the district is pushing forward with a strategic plan it finalized last year – without much input, Faber said, from the “classroom educators or professionals who are working with kids every day.”

Entering mediation means the remainder of the bargaining process will play out behind closed doors.

But whether it’s caroling at district headquarters or marching in the street, union educators are likely to stay in the public eye as they continue trying to get district administrators to address their concerns.

**Show your support!**

To support teachers in the contract campaign, sign their petition online at supportstpaulstudents.org.
Minutes of the Saint Paul Regional Labor Federation

NOVEMBER 13, 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, Beedle, Beissel, Dreyer, Engeldorf, Faber, Gibbons, Gorman, Kasper, Madden, Maki-Green, Markham-Kocurek, McCarthy, McNamara, Mullin, Ryan, Sansom, Schmidt, Seath, Slaterry, Terry, VanDasser and Varco. Excused were Haugen, Meyer and Robies. Absent were DeRoy, Guertin, Hoppe, Luneburg, Monsour, St. Aoro and Weed.

GUEST SPEAKERS
Vicki Beebe, Community Relations Officer at Saint Paul Federal Credit Union, spoke to the Executive Board and delegates about the benefits of the credit union. Members enjoy access to more than 5,600 credit union branches and more than 30,000 surcharge-free ATMs across the country.

CREDENTIALS
CREDENTIALS were received from BEW Local 110 and the Twin Cities Musicians Union Local 30-73. President Kasper reported on the following:
- Kasper also encouraged union members to support the St. Paul teaching contract. The contract is an important component of the school board to see community support.
- Thank you for supporting the White Bear Lake School Board contract agreements have been settled with most of the unions.
- AFSCME will be hosting a Behavioral Health Summit in November 2020 to organize mental health workers.
- Thank you for supporting the UAW strike. The contract is settled.
- The APWU reported that Nov. 27, 2019, has been declared as State Post Office Day. Governor Walz’s office will conduct a tour of the current Postmaster General will be retiring at the end of January. There is concern about privatization. Go to the APWU website for their online petition to not swap a Postmaster General who will favor privatization.

CREDENTIALS were received from BEW Local 110 and the Twin Cities Musicians Union Local 30-73. President Kasper reported on the following:
- The RLF’s $250 contribution to their golf tournament.
- The RLF’s $10,000 contribution for the St. Paul Winter Carnival Parade on Saturday, Jan. 25, 2020. We need marchers, please volunteer, but you must sign a waiver. We will be making packages for vets to include warm hats and other supplies.

REPORT OF THE TREASURER
Secretary-Treasurer Engeldorf reported on the financial status of the Federation as of October 2019. The report was accepted as read.

STAFF/LABOR LIASON REPORTS
We will be marching in the St. Paul Winter Carnival Parade on Saturday, Jan. 25, 2020. We need marchers, please volunteer, but you must sign a waiver. We will be making packages for vets to include warm hats and other supplies.

M/S/C FOR THE RLF TO DONATE $500 TO THE SAINT PAUL LABOR STUDIES AND RESOURCE CENTER FOR THE VETERANS PROJECT.

REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES
• Colleen Nocerini announced our annual blood drive will be held on Dec. 3 from 2 to 7 p.m. To give blood please contact Lynne Larkin-Wright as there are many openings.
• Perry Schmidt announced that the latest Side Freedom Hospital will be hosting a Women’s Committee Open House on Dec. 4, 2019, from 5 to 8 p.m.
• The AFL-CIO Retirees will be having their annual Holiday Party on Wednesday, Dec. 18, 2019, from noon to 2 p.m.

NEW BUSINESS
• M/S/C TO DONATE $500 TO THE 2019 HOLIDAY TOY DRIVE.
• M/S/C FOR THE RLF TO MATCH THE JEAN JONES COATS INITIATIVE COLLECTION UP TO THE ALLOWABLE AMOUNT.

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

Submitted by:
BERNADINE ENGLEDOF
Secretary-Treasurer

Military veterans in attendance at the November 2019 delegate meeting were brought to the front of the hall for special recognition and cake. Pictured (L to R) are Adam Meyers, Steelworkers Local 11-418; Bruce Gutzkke, Postal Workers Local 65; Justin Recla, Local 11-418; Camille Tucker, Local 65; Daniel Murphy, Local 11-418; Jason West, Painters and Allied Trades Local 1324; Tom Edwards, Postal Workers; Mark Doble, Operating Engineers Local 49; Travis Lohmann, Steelworkers District 11; Mike Kriazack, Carpenters Local 322; Tom Quinn, Stagehands Local 13; and Thomas Fox, Letter Carriers Branch 28.

Tiffany Dittrich, president of the White Bear Lake Teachers Association, thanked the RLF for its support of a $326 million bond referendum, passed by her district in voting Nov. 5. It’s the largest school bond in state history.

Saluting their service

A bear of a school bond
Decision to step down ‘bittersweet’ for St. Paul labor federation president

Bobby Kasper, a proud member of LIUNA Laborers Local 563, retired last month after serving a decade as president of the St. Paul Regional Labor Federation, AFL-CIO.

Kasper began his union career in New York, where he was a member of Service Employees International Union Local 1199 and UNITE HERE before joining Laborers Local 66.

He remained in the Laborers after moving to Minnesota, joining St. Paul-based Local 132.

Kasper worked as the local’s business agent before running for president of the St. PaulRLF. Previously, he served as secretary-treasurer of the RLF’s forerunner, the St. Paul Trades and Labor Assembly, and has been secretary-treasurer of the St. Paul Building and Construction Trades Council for 15 years.

“In the last 11 years, we’ve grown the St. Paul Regional Labor Federation by building new relationships with unions in our area, and our local labor movement is stronger and more unified as a result,” Kasper said. “We’ve set a high bar for ourselves when it comes building power for working people, whether it’s at the Capitol or at the bargaining table.”

Kasper will be succeeded in office by the RLF’s political director, Kera Peterson.

“Kera’s leadership has been a big part of our success, and I know she will only set the bar higher in the future,” he said. “I’m really proud of where our organization stands right now. We have an engaged, balanced Executive Board, and a strong network of union leaders ready to support Kera during the transition. I couldn’t be happier that a union sister is going to take over our organization.”

Before leaving office, Kasper looked back on his career in the labor movement during an interview with The Union Advocate, which is the federation’s official publication.

**UA:** You often say that moving to Minnesota in 1992 changed your life. How so?

**BK:** I came out here to get sober. I don’t hide it. For me, it was an opportunity for a positive change in my life.

I’d worked in New York as a Laborer for the previous five years. When I got out here, I went over to Local 132’s office, and they were very helpful to me. I ended up working out in the old Ashland oil refinery in St. Paul Park. People sounded a little different to me, and I was very frightened by the whole ordeal.

But the Laborers were nothing but helpful to me. My best friend, Tom Besaw, was a member of Local 322, and he introduced me to the business manager, John McGinn. He was a little rough, a little tough to me, and I was very frightened by the whole ordeal.

“I started getting involved with the St. Paul Building Trades. They ran for president when Dick Anfang was there. People didn’t think I would get elected, but I did. After Dick retired, I worked closely with Harry Melander and, later, Don Mullin. And I was a delegate to the St. Paul Trades and Labor Assembly, where I got to know Shar Knutson. I used to do the recruiting for volunteers during election time, and we worked very well together. We clicked.”

When Shar left, some people approached me about running for the position. I wasn’t crazy about it, but when push came to shove I needed another one. We’ve had some training in organizing and politics, and with help from my friends Todd Pufahl and Jim Brady, both retired Laborers District Council presidents, we put together a really good campaign.

It was the best decision I ever made. I missed the Laborers, but I still ended up working with them in this position.

**UA:** How did your expectations of the job compare to the reality?

**BK:** I was told by Shar that, at the beginning, it’s a very overwhelming job because you wear four or five different hats. I didn’t think it was going to be that tough, but it was. You have to really stay on top of things, keep relationships and show up for a lot of events. It’s a time-consuming. You’re never home. I had to kind of put my position before anything else, and in some ways I’ve paid the price. But because of that, we were very successful.

**UA:** What did you learn over 10 years in the job?

**BK:** I’ve learned that it’s very important to surround yourself with very good people. I always wanted to hire people who have experience, who have been around the block with their own unions. I never really realized how I could depend on the staff in our office. There were times I would confide in them and take advice, where years ago I was very stubborn and wouldn’t have. When (former political director) Bree Halverson worked for me, there were days I would say no to her idea, but I would go home at night and really think about it. I’d come back and Bree would be smiling at me because she knew I’d changed my mind.

I want to thank Lynne Larkin-Wright and Vicki Beebe for their help with the Community Services program, Michael Moore for his work on The Union Advocate and Colleen Nocerini for wearing a lot of hats around the office. Last but not least, our office manager Laura is the backbone of our organization, getting the day-to-day business done. I don’t know what I would have done without any of the staff, and I’m very appreciative.

And you have to be willing to try new ideas. We didn’t do that well politically when I first got in, but in 2011 and 2012 we turned things around. We picked up a couple of legislative seats in Dakota County and Washington County.

Another thing we worked on – Kera Peterson and myself – was growth. The big piece of our success has been internal organizing. The only way we’re going to win political elections is if we grow our organization. When I started we had a little over 30,000 affiliated members, and we leapfrogged to almost 60,000.