

The St. Paul Union Advocate

123rd Year, No. 9, Issue 5436

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

April 2020

Do Something!

2020 Census counts for plenty

Minnesota is at risk of losing one of its seats in the U.S. Congress this year, but there are two easy ways we can act to keep that from happening: complete your census form and encourage others to do the same!

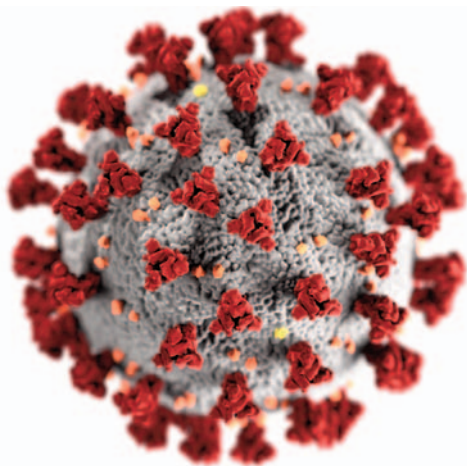
Participation in the 2020 census is important for many reasons.

Census data helps determine boundaries for state legislative districts. If we don't get a complete count, our districts get bigger, making it harder for working people to get their voices heard at the Capitol.

A complete and accurate count helps our state gets its fair share of federal funding, too.

Census data is used to allocate \$15 billion annually in federal funds that support Minnesota's schools, hospitals, agriculture, first responders, roads, businesses and households.

So be counted! It's easy to complete the census by mail, by phone or, for the first time ever, online at 2020census.gov. Your participation will help shape our state's future for years to come!



COVID-19 coverage inside

- Events canceled, postponed. **Page 3.**
- Resources for workers, families impacted by COVID-19 outbreak. **Page 5.**
- Facing shortages, nurses' union holds protective gear collection drive. **Page 8.**

NO WORKER LEFT BEHIND

Unions call for bold pandemic response to protect workers' health, keep families afloat

By Michael Moore
Union Advocate editor

State and local officials are taking unprecedented steps to prevent the novel coronavirus from spreading in Minnesota. While the effectiveness of those measures remains to be seen, it's already clear the COVID-19 pandemic is not just a public health crisis, but an economic one as well.

The state's highest-ranking labor leaders March 19 sent Gov. Tim Walz and legislative leaders a to-do list of policy changes necessary, they say, to protect working people on the front lines of the pandemic response and those likely to

suffer most from its impact on Minnesota's economy.

In the letter, the Minnesota AFL-CIO's executive officers, President Bill McCarthy and Secretary-Treasurer Brad Lehto, back higher standards to ensure hospitals and fire departments provide adequate personal-protective equipment to nurses and first responders. They urge an extension of unemployment-insurance benefits and paid time off. And they call on lawmakers to pass bills guaranteeing school districts' hourly employees get paid during closures and putting tradespeople to work.

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 5)

SPFE Strike

St. Paul educators make history – and gains – with state's first #RedForEd strike

By Michael Moore
Union Advocate editor

St. Paul educators set out last May to bargain a contract in the public good.

When they went on strike last month, the public was right there standing with them.

On the picket line and social media, at union rallies and in the streets, public support poured in for the 3,600 members of the St. Paul Federation of Educators, who went on strike March 10 to demand the district take action on their student-centered contract proposals.

The strike ended after three days, as negotiators for SPFE and the district reached an early-morning tentative agreement March 14 on new two-year contracts that will begin to address union members' concerns.

The agreement would commit the district to hiring more staff to support students' mental health needs and assist multilingual families. It would expand the district's restorative approach to discipline, create more manageable workloads for special-ed teachers and raise SPFE members' wages.

Nick Faber, the union's president, said educators would have pushed for more were it not for the coronavirus pandemic — and the district's willingness to use potential statewide school closures as leverage to force a settlement.

"Our teachers were ready to stay out ... to get all of the supports our students need," Faber said. "Had it not been for the coronavirus, we would have been able to do better."



Striking SPFE members marched with parents, students and community supporters to the St. Paul Public Schools' district offices on the first day of their strike last month.

Union Advocate photo

Schools never reopened to students, as Gov. Tim Walz eventually did issue an executive order closing schools, but union members reported to their buildings for work at 1 p.m. March 14, bringing an end to a historic week of activism and solidarity in the capital city, which saw its first teacher strike in 74 years.

Each morning from Tuesday to Thursday, SPFE members put up picket lines outside their school buildings, drawing a steady chorus of honks from passing

vehicles. Each day after picket lines came down, educators came together for an afternoon rally and march through the streets.

Their ranks swelled with parents, students, elected officials, labor leaders and other community members inspired by SPFE's campaign "for the schools St. Paul students deserve." Together, they turned parts of the city into a sea of red, marking the latest stop in the nationwide

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 5)

Well Said!

“Frontline workers are risking their lives to save others. They are running toward this virus...”

Workers of every stripe are supporting those in need – the sick, the laid off, the isolated, the vulnerable – with money and encouragement and love and solidarity. Our bond cannot be broken. Our spirit cannot be shaken. We will get through this. We will pass this test.”

– **AFL-CIO
President Richard
Trumka**

Watch Trumka's full “State of the Unions” address at www.facebook.com/afficio



Labor Voices: Nick Faber

Strike, contract campaign led to real gains for our schools

No one should doubt St. Paul educators’ unwavering commitment to our students. We care so much about what our children need, we were willing to strike for them.

And the short-term sacrifices we made during the three-day strike were worth the long-term gains made for our students and families and the collective power we built as educators.

Our strike was about getting our students the resources they deserve and breaking down racial disparities in our schools, so all students, no matter what they look like or where they are from, can thrive and succeed.

The contract ratified March 20 by members of the St. Paul Federation of Educators puts the St. Paul Public Schools on the path to building the schools our students deserve.

The new contract guarantees the district will spend an additional \$5 million to hire more counselors, social workers, intervention specialists, nurses, psychologists and bilingual educational assistants next school year to give students the mental health and multilingual support they need.

Educators understand how important these supports are to the health and well-being of our students and families. In the 2019 Minnesota Student Survey, 19 percent of eighth-grade girls in St. Paul Public Schools said they seriously considered suicide in the last year. And 40 percent of fifth-graders agreed with the statement, “I worry a lot.” We need more staff to tend to these increasing mental-health needs.

Hiring more staff who speak different languages also is critical so all families feel welcome and supported at their school. Families in St. Paul schools speak 129 different languages, but many don’t have access to multilingual staff to help them feel welcome and fully participate in their school community. SPPS only has 13 full-time Spanish interpreter positions working in 63 schools and nine Somali interpreters in 45 schools that need them.

This isn’t just important for our families, but our multilingual staff as well. Many are people of color, some immigrants themselves, who are being pulled away from their primary duties working with students to interpret because there just isn’t enough staff.

Educators also won on another important issue –

“We’re not done advocating for our students – this is just the beginning.”

– Nick Faber



expanding restorative practices across the district to end the school-to-prison pipeline. Restorative practices are one way to build community and a positive school climate without pushing students of color out of school.

We knew the community had our backs in the days leading up to the strike. St. Paul has long valued public education – our schools are always at the heart of our community. But once we went on strike, the support was truly overwhelming. Students came out in droves – some even whipped up pancakes from the back of minivans. Parents brought their babies, future SPPS students, sporting SPFE onesies and buttons to rallies. St. Paul businesses fed educators on the picket lines. I could go on and on.

The strike empowered St. Paul educators. But we’re not done yet. We’re not done advocating for our students – this is just the beginning.

Educators across the nation are frustrated. Policymakers need to start listening to the experts – educators and parents – when decisions are made about our public schools.

Closing our state’s racial and economic disparities requires real investments – a multi-billion-dollar increase in state funding for public schools – so we can provide every student with the resources they need. No exceptions.

And St. Paul educators will demand to be heard at the local level. Budgets reflect priorities. We are with our students every day and know we need to focus first on hiring more adults who work directly with our children.

Elected officials at all levels should be on notice. Educators are willing to take mass action to get the schools our students deserve.

– Nick Faber is president of the St. Paul Federation of Educators.

Letters

- Send letters to: 353 W. 7th St., Suite 201, St. Paul, MN 55102
- Fax them to 651-293-1989
- Email them to: mmoore@stpaulunions.org

The Union Advocate

Official publication of the St. Paul Regional Labor Federation, AFL-CIO
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This issue went to press March 24
It was scheduled to go in the mail March 27
Next news deadline: Friday, April 17

Remaining publication dates in 2020:
April 24, May 22, July 24, Aug. 28, Sept. 25,
Oct. 23 and Dec. 11.

News and advertising deadlines precede our publication dates by seven days.
To advertise, contact the *Advocate* office for display options and rate information, or download an ad flier online at advocate.stpaulunions.org/advertise.

Subscriptions are \$15 for calendar year 2020. Mail payment to Union Advocate, 353 W. 7th St., Suite 201, St. Paul, MN 55102.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to: The Saint Paul Union Advocate, 353 W. 7th St., STE 201, St. Paul, MN 55102-2314. Published monthly except during July and December by the St. Paul Regional Labor Federation, 353 W. 7th St., STE 201, St. Paul, MN 55102-2314. (USPS 647820) (ISSN 24723320)
Periodicals postage paid at St. Paul, MN.



Member International Labor Communications Association.

Stay home, stay healthy

Adhering to public health guidelines related to the COVID-19 pandemic, local unions and labor organizations have canceled or postponed public events into mid-April, and many have moved meetings online or to conference calls. Be sure to ask your local union about its plan of action during this public-health crisis.

Postponements of note include:

- The Union Job and Resource Fair, scheduled for April 2, has been postponed to June 4. The site remains the Electrical Industry Building, 1330 Conway Ave., St. Paul

The on-site hiring event, in its fifth year, is an opportunity for union employers, apprenticeship programs and nonprofit agencies to meet people interested in learning more about the advantages of a union job.

Learn more about the event online at www.eastsidefreedomlibrary.org.

- The 33rd annual Nellie Stone Johnson Scholarship Dinner, which raises funds to support educational opportunities for minority union members and their families, has been rescheduled to June 16 at the same location, the DoubleTree by Hilton in Bloomington.

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

Additionally, the St. Paul Regional Labor Federation has temporarily suspended meetings of its local labor assemblies in Chisago, Dakota, Ramsey and Washington counties, and meetings of its retirees group.

Updates to this list will be posted online at stpaulunions.org, and on the St. Paul RLF's Facebook page: www.facebook.com/SaintPaulRLF.

Workers Memorial Day

Unions across the country pause each year in April to remember working people who died as a result of injuries or illnesses sustained on the job.

Events planned this year are subject to cancellation or postponement, depending on public health guidelines. Monitor stpaulunions.org for updates.

Building Trades Councils from St. Paul and Minneapolis will hold a ceremony at 11:30 a.m. April 24. The event is outdoors at the Workers Memorial Garden on the State Capitol grounds, near 12th and Cedar. In the event of poor weather, it will be moved to the St. Paul Labor Center, 353 W. 7th St.

The Dakota County Labor Assembly will hold a Workers Memorial Day observance April 28 at Lebanon Hills Cemetery in Apple Valley, near the corner of County Road 42 and Pilot Knob Road.

Senators push back against Trump's union-busting

In his administration's latest swipe at federal unions, President Trump gave Defense Secretary Mark Esper unprecedented authority in February to strip collective bargaining rights from nearly 750,000 civilian workers at the agency.

Democratic senators, including Minnesota's Amy Klobuchar and Tina Smith, urged Esper in a letter last month "to exercise great restraint" with his new authority and avoid setting a "dangerous precedent."

Smith, a member of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, said Democrats are committed to making sure the Department of Defense (DOD) continues bargaining with civilian workers, as it has for the last 60 years.

"As union members know, sometimes you have to fight to win fair treatment," Smith said. "My colleagues and I are right there fighting with (union members), and that's why we're pushing back on the administration's efforts to undermine collective bargaining."

DOD workers potentially impacted by the new policy include janitors, firefighters, food-service workers, teachers, depot maintenance technicians, welders and other professionals. Their collective bargaining rights, Trump claimed in a document published in the Federal Register, could be "incompatible" with the agency's "national security mission."

Democratic senators aren't buying it.

"There's simply no evidence that this is true," Smith said. "In fact, my Democratic colleagues and I believe having a unionized workforce actually enhances the security of our nation."

In their letter to Esper, the senators pointed out that federal unions have helped expose health and safety hazards at the DOD, and rid the agency of "waste, fraud and abuse on the part of contractors."

Federal employees gained the right to join a union and bargain collectively in 1962, when President Kennedy issued an executive order. Presidents since then have used executive power to narrow or, sometimes, expand the pool of federal workers eligible to join unions.

But a White House memo leaked last fall revealed Trump was weighing a much more drastic use of executive power: purging the federal workforce of unions altogether.

"Government unions impede the efficiency of federal operations and direct the government to put the interests of government employees first," the memo reads. "Curtailing collective bargaining in government serves the public good."

Nearly 500,000 DOD workers are currently covered by union contracts, including 300,000 represented by the American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE). Everett Kelley, AFGE's national president, called it



Sen. Tina Smith



Sen. Amy Klobuchar

insulting for the Trump administration to suggest the bargaining rights of civilian employees, who support the military during wars and other conflicts, somehow threaten national security.

"More than a third of these workers are veterans, and it's an insult to these employees' military service and their continued service to their country for the administration to claim that their union affiliation somehow threatens our national security," Kelley said.

In their letter to Esper, senators

noted that collective bargaining has helped establish the department as an attractive employer, with fair wages and benefits, and attract highly skilled workers.

"In short, we believe that the Department's unionized workforce has enhanced our security, not detracted from it," the senators wrote. "President Trump's Memorandum arbitrarily and needlessly threatens this positive relationship."

— Michael Moore, *UA editor*

Smith earns labor endorsement in re-election bid

The state's largest labor federation, the Minnesota AFL-CIO, issued its first endorsements of the 2020 election cycle last month, backing Sen. Tina Smith's reelection campaign and DFLers in the 1st and 7th Congressional Districts.

Smith, who will be back on the ballot just two years after winning an election to serve the remainder of Al Franken's term in the Senate, serves on the Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions.

Already, she has emerged as a leading advocate for several of organized labor's top legislative priorities, including pension reform and protections for workers employed by federal contractors.

Last month, she introduced a bill that would prevent companies that mistreat their employees and repeatedly break workplace-protection laws from receiving taxpayer-funded federal contracts. The Fair Pay and Safe Workplaces Act is largely similar to an executive order issued by President Obama and repealed in 2017.

"If companies break the law, then they should not receive taxpayer-funded government contracts," Smith said. "But right now too many federal contracts are being awarded to companies with egregious and repeated violations



of worker protection laws. While most contractors treat their workers fairly, we should be cracking down on the bad actors that put workers' lives and livelihoods at risk."

The Minnesota AFL-CIO General Board also voted to endorse 7th District Rep. Collin Peterson's re-election bid, and Dan Feehan in the 1st.

"No matter where we were born or what we look like, the members of Minnesota's labor movement are united in common purpose to elect leaders who share our values of dignity, justice and freedom for working people." Minnesota AFL-CIO President Bill McCarthy said, adding that endorsed candidates "have demonstrated a strong commitment to working Minnesotans and our values."

More labor endorsements are expected in the coming months.

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COVID 19 resources

Stop us if you've heard this before: The best way to keep yourself, your co-workers and your community safe during the outbreak is to wash your hands and stay home if you're sick.

Beyond that, here's a list of resources and opportunities that may be helpful to working people during the public health crisis.

- **Laid off? Hours reduced?**

Immediate, emergency relief for workers impacted by COVID-19 is available through the state's Unemployment Insurance fund. Apply online at uimn.org.

- **Health coverage.**

The state's health insurance marketplace, MNSure.org, opened a 30-day special enrollment period last month. It runs through April 21.

- **Got questions?** Call Greater Twin Cities United Way's 211 hotline. It's staffed 24 hours each day by specialists ready to answer questions and connect people to GTCUW's nonprofit partners.

- **Looking to help out?**

GTCUW has launched a COVID-19 fund dedicated to ensuring access to food, shelter, child care, sanitary supplies and financial assistance. To contribute, text GTCUWCOVID19 to 51555.

- **More info:** mnaflcio.org.

Unions to lawmakers: Leave no worker behind in response

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

The letter also included a warning: "Emergencies shouldn't be an excuse to relax labor standards. Do not allow roll-back of any labor rights or protections."

The dizzying number of demands included in the letter reflects the all-encompassing nature of the pandemic and efforts to combat it. Unions from all industries, from the public and private sectors, were bracing for the fallout – and scrambling to address members' economic and health concerns.

Kelly Gibbons, president of Service Employees International Union Local 284, called the public health crisis "quite the nightmare."

Local 284 represents about 10,000 workers in 140 school districts statewide. Although Walz had ordered all schools to close through March 27, some Local 284 members are still reporting to work, helping provide care for elementary-age children of health care workers and first responders. Other members are furloughed with pay – for the time being.

"There's been a lot of confusion, but we'll get through this," Gibbons said. "We know this will pass."

In the days after he declared a statewide emergency March 13, Walz ordered schools, restaurants, museums and other public spaces to close, hoping to limit community spread of the virus and prevent a surge of hospi-

tal visits due to COVID-19. But the governor also moved to ease the financial strain on working people impacted by those measures.

In an executive order March 16, Walz made the state's unemployment insurance program more robust, waiving certain restrictions and waiting periods so that anyone whose paycheck takes a hit from the pandemic – from layoffs, furloughs or schedule cuts – has swift access to relief.

Walz also called on businesses that remain open during the pandemic to do their part to prevent its spread by making it easier for employees to work from home and, critically, stay home with pay when feeling sick. Leading by example, Walz granted emergency paid leave to any state employee impacted by the pandemic, and he suspended the waiting period typically required of new hires before they can enroll in health insurance coverage.

That's good news for many members of AFSCME Council 5, which counts state employees among its 43,000 members. But Executive Director Julie Bleyhl said all Minnesota employees deserve the same guarantees.

"AFSCME Council 5 is demanding that all employers in the state of Minnesota pay their workers in full during this time of crisis," she said. "We must all be united and work together to

ensure that no worker has to choose between their lives and a paycheck."

The Minnesota AFL-CIO, in its letter to Walz and legislative leaders, called on the state to mandate that employers provide 15 days of emergency paid time off to all employees, and that school districts continue to pay furloughed employees, who are not eligible for unemployment insurance, for all scheduled days.

"To avoid impacting small businesses for 15 days off, we are calling on the state to implement a separate tax on the largest businesses in the state including Amazon, U.S. Bank, Wells Fargo, Target, Ecolab and others, and small to medium sized businesses can apply for a tax credit equal to 100% of the paid sick leave benefit they have paid out," the letter reads.

Other union demands – like a robust infrastructure jobs bill and extending unemployment benefits to a full year – look to soften the blow to Minnesota's economy in the long term.

A statement issued by the Minnesota Building and Construction Trades Council argues a strong bonding bill, with investments in roads, bridges, transit and public buildings, would "be the economic stimulus needed to jump start the economy, and especially the construction industry, after the worst of the coronavirus impacts have passed."

Strike ends, but SPFE vows to fight on for public schools

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

the latest stop in the nationwide #RedForEd fight to fund public education.

It's what happens, St. Paul Regional Labor Federation President Kera Peterson said, when you bargain for the common good.

"We know what you guys are fighting for, and we're with you every step of the way," Peterson, whose organization represents 100-plus local unions with over 50,000 members, told educators during a massive rally in Rice Park March 11.

With school cancelled, students flocked to union events as an opportunity, Harding junior Paris Smoot said, "to show student voices are also very powerful." Her classmate Ashanti Williams said it's inspiring to see students and educators joining together "to make a change and create a better environment for people."

Many students carried signs supporting the union's efforts to funnel more resources into mental-health supports for themselves and their schoolmates. Smoot, who attended the rally Wednesday, said she experienced depression and suicidal thoughts last school year.

"I didn't even know Harding had a therapist," Smoot said.

Faber acknowledged the new contract won't fix every problem they set out to address. But educators are going back to work "ready to keep fighting for their students," he said.

"That energy, we've heard from our members already, they're not putting it away," Faber added. "It's not going back in their pockets."

More, union leaders hope the strike – and the public support union members received – delivered a message to board members and administrators that they won't get away with ignoring educators' concerns.



"People were out in the rain for this," bargaining team member and science teacher Todd Marder said. "The power of that was just heartwarming and touching. Thank you."

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Minnesota tradeswomen honored at Women Build Success awards

Union tradeswomen celebrated the most badass among them at a spirited awards ceremony in Minneapolis Feb. 26.

“Six women, selected from dozens of nominees for apprentice, journey worker and advocate of the year, took home honors at the Women Building Success Awards Ceremony.

Board members for Women Building Success include Jenny Winkelaar, Operating Engineers Local 49; Jennifer Mudge, IBEW Local 292; Carrie Robles, Laborers Local 563; Matt Fairbanks, Sheet Metal Workers Local 10; Tasha Lawrence, Plumbers Local 34; Barry Davies, Ironworkers Local 512; Teri Stave, Elevator Constructors Local 9; and Barb Pecks, North Central States Regional Council of Carpenters

Two high-profile guests of honor handed out the awards: Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry Commissioner Nancy Leppink and Lt. Gov. Peggy Flanagan, who encouraged tradeswomen in the room to continue building each other up, both on the job site and with events like the awards ceremony.

“Empowered women empower women,” Winkelaar said.

Advocate of the Year

Connie Smallman, a member of Operating Engineers Local 49 in her 33rd year working construction, received Advocate of the Year honors. Smallman co-founded Local 49’s women’s group, the first of its kind among Operating Engineers locals. Since then, she has helped other unions across the country launch women’s groups of their own.

“I used to be the only girl on the job site,” Smallman said. “The last job I worked on, I had the pleasure of working with over 50 tradeswomen. How cool is that?”

Honorable mention in the category went to Amy Peterson, a member of Painters and Allied Trades District Council 82. Terry Nelson, the council’s business manager, said Peterson



Pictured after the Women Build Success awards ceremony are (L to R) Megan Ringwelski, Labor Commissioner Nancy Leppink, Lt. Gov. Peggy Flanagan, Amy Peterson, Clara Schiller, Connie Smallman, Rachel Malmer and Derra Range.

Union Advocate photo

works as an apprenticeship instructor with the Finishing Trades Institute of the Upper Midwest, and has trained hundreds of union apprentices in drywall finishing and thousands in workplace safety.

“She is always there to help other women,” Nelson said. “Amy has worked hard to get where she is, and she is always there for other women to help them make their way in the trade.”

Journey Worker of the Year

St. Paul Steamfitters-Pipefitters Local 455’s Clara Schiller took home Journey Worker of the Year honors. Jim Sloan, a business representative with the local, said Schiller “consistently proves to be one of our local’s most vocal and dedicated members.”

Schiller puts in extra time both with the local, as an apprenticeship instructor, and in the community, exposing underrepresented commu-

nities to opportunities in the union trades. “She embodies what it means to be a union tradeswoman,” Sloan said.

Schiller offered words of encouragement to union tradeswomen in the banquet room. “Remember your heart out there on the job,” she said. “Remember who you are.”

Honorable mention in the category went to Derra Range of LIUNA Laborers Local 563. Sixteen years after leaving her job as a hairstylist, Range now works as a foreman on the job site, Local 563 Business Manager Joe Fowler said.

Range told Fowler she earned the respect of her all-male crews the old fashioned way: “by working my ass off five times harder than most everyone else.”

Apprentice of the Year

Megan Ringwelski, in her fourth

year of training with Sprinklerfitters Local 417, was named Apprentice of the Year. As an example of the dedication she brings to the craft, Local 417 Business Manager Trinidad Uribe III said Ringwelski recently kept working into the eighth month of her pregnancy.

“They literally had to pull her away from the tools,” Uribe said. “She’s a hard worker and dedicated, to say the least.”

Honorable mention in the category went to Rachel Malmer, a member of Local 110 of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers.

Local 110’s business manager, Jamie McNamara, said he nominated Malmer for the award, in part, because she has volunteered in support of the union’s political program – “phone banking, door knocking” – while simultaneously working toward her journey-level certification.

In victory for unions, Trump administration leaves construction out of new apprenticeship rule

Loud and clear, union tradespeople and their supporters delivered a message to the Trump administration last year: Don’t lower the bar when it comes to training, safety and labor standards in the construction industry.

The administration listened.

The U.S. Department of Labor last month issued its framework for expansion of a new apprenticeship model – Industry Recognized Apprenticeship Programs (IRAPs) – in several sectors of the economy. Following the recommendation of North America’s Building Trades Unions, the new rule does not expand the model to construction.

As the administration weighed new apprenticeship rules last year, Building Trades unions mobilized a historic

public response. Some 325,000 people submitted public comments opposing expansion of IRAPs in construction – more public comments than the DOL has ever received about a rule, according to NABTU.

“We are pleased that their voices were heard and that the final rule recognizes the protections for, and success of, registered apprenticeship in the construction industry,” NABTU President Sean McGarvey said.

“We thank those in the administration who supported the construction industry’s high-road training standards that empower workers to reach and remain in the middle class. We appreciate the time spent by all – especially our rank and file members –

who petitioned their government during the public comment period.”

Allowing IRAPs in the construction industry, unions argued, would have created a shortcut around the rigorous standards of registered apprenticeship, in which programs must register with a governing agency.

The governing agency regulates how long apprentices must spend learning on the job site and in the classroom, setting standards that ensure apprentices get supervision, mentorship, safety training and, not least of all, fair pay.

Under the IRAP system, private organizations can write their own standards for apprenticeship. That may fit the needs of other industries, unions say, but it would undermine high standards

already in place for apprenticeship programs in construction.

“Building Trades unions’ apprenticeship programs are the most successful model of skilled job training in the nation, and this ruling recognizes the unique role they play in the economy, preserving high standards for the entire construction industry,” International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers President Lonnie Stephenson said.

Locally and nationally, construction apprenticeships make up the overwhelming majority of registered programs. Most are sponsored by unions, which, in partnership with their employers, invest \$1.6 billion annually of private funds into apprenticeship training.

Minutes of the Saint Paul Regional Labor Federation

MARCH 12, 2020

The Saint Paul Regional Labor Federation met in regular session on the above date and was called to order with the Pledge of Allegiance by President Peterson at 6 p.m. Board members in attendance were Beedle J, Beissel, Dreyer, Edwards, Engeldorf, Gibbons, Guertin, Madden, Markham-Kocurek, McNamara, Peterson, Robles, Sansom, Schmidt, Seath, Slattery, St. Aoro, Vandassor, Varco and Weed. Excused were Beedle B, Faber, Froemke, Maki-Green, Meyer and Mullin. Absent were Gorman, Hoppe, Luneburg, McCarthy, Ryan and Terry.

CREDENTIALS

Credentials were received from AFSCME Local 607 and NALC Branch 28. President Peterson administered the Oath of Obligation to those new delegates and alternates present.

MINUTES

M/S/C TO APPROVE MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 12, 2020, AS PUBLISHED IN THE UNION ADVOCATE NEWSPAPER AFTER THE SECRETARY NOTES THERE ARE NO ADDITIONS OR CHANGES CALLED FOR.

COMMITTEE ON POLITICAL EDUCATION (COPE) MINUTES MARCH 12, 2020

COPE met in regular session on the above date and was called to order by President Peterson at 5 p.m. Board members in attendance were Angrimson, Beedle J, Beissel, DeRoy, Dreyer, Edwards, Engeldorf, Gibbons, Guertin, Hoerth, Lohmann, Madden, Markham-Kocurek, McNamara, Naseth, Peterson, Qualy, Robles, Sansom, Schmidt, Seath, Slattery, St. Aoro, Vandassor, Varco, Weed and Wise. Excused were Beedle B, Faber, Froemke, Maki-Green, Meyer and Mullin. Absent were Gorman, Hoppe, Krey, Luneburg, Mayer, McCarthy, Ryan and Terry.

Items to come before this committee included:

- The Saint Paul Regional Labor Federation requested recommending Labor Endorsement of Angie Craig CD2 and Betty McCollum CD4 to the MN AFL-CIO.

- President Peterson reported on the Legislative priorities at the Capitol. The governor proposed a \$2 billion in obligation bonds for safe and affordable housing. The house held an informational hearing on the new wage theft law. AFSCME is working on asking for support on House Bill 2899, which is asking for a study by the commissioner of education who is doing the work of care statewide.

- We will be holding a Listening Session with Representative Hunter Cantrell HD 56A and Representative Alice Mann HD 56B on Wednesday, March 18, 2020, at Burnsville City Hall from 6 to 8 p.m. We are asking for your support to get this information out to members.

- M/S/C TO UNANIMOUSLY RECOMMEND LABOR ENDORSEMENT OF ANGIE CRAIG CD2 AND BETTY MCCOLLUM CD4 TO THE MN AFL-CIO.**

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

EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES

MARCH 12, 2020

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

Items to come before this board included:

- PRESIDENT'S REPORT.**

President Peterson reported on:

- The Minnesota Nurses Association's Board of Directors' Executive Committee has appointed Jennifer Michelson to fill Deb Haugen's position on the RLF Board and as the RLF Geographical Representative to the Minnesota AFL-CIO Board.

- Strike Sanctions for SEIU Local 284 for Mounds View Schools. They have filed a one-day tentative strike for Friday, April 10, 2020.

- The Tenth Annual Labor Bowl for St. Paul Labor Studies and Resource Center will be held on Thursday, May 7, 2020. Shift times available are 2 and 4 p.m.

- The Fifth Annual Union Resource and Job Fair will be on Thursday, April 2, 2020, at the Electrical Industry Building located at 1330 Conway Street in St. Paul from 3 to 6 p.m.

- The Midwest AFL-CIO Training Conference that was to be held in a couple of weeks has been cancelled.

- ORGANIZING/UPDATES/CAMPAIGNS:**

- Postal Workers, IAMAW and the Steelworkers updated everyone on their organizing activities.

- SPFE Local 28 is scheduled to picket at the St. Paul Schools on Tuesday, March 10, 2020. Rallies are scheduled on March 12, 2020, at Central High School. The union has been negotiating with the St. Paul School Board since May 2019. The district has sent layoff notice letters to other union members working in schools. To support SPFE members, please put pressure on members of the school board by emailing sb.members@spps.org or Superintendent Joe Gothard at joe.gothard@spps.org.

- Phil Qualy, UTU State Legislative Director, spoke to the delegation regarding this administration going after the Railroad workers through the elimination of Public Safety.

- REQUESTS:**

- M/S/C TO ACCEPT JENNIFER MICHELSON, MINNESOTA NURSES ASSOCIATION NOMINATION TO THE RLF BOARD AND AS THE RLF GEOGRAPHICAL REPRESENTATIVE TO THE MINNESOTA AFL-CIO BOARD.**

- M/S/C TO GRANT STRIKE SANCTIONS TO SEIU LOCAL 284 FOR MOUNDS VIEW SCHOOLS.**

- M/S/C TO MAKE A \$2,500 CONTRIBUTION FOR 2020 TO THE NEW BROOKWOOD LABOR COLLEGE.**

- M/S/C TO SPONSOR A TEAM FOR \$500 FOR THE ST. PAUL LABOR STUDIES AND RESOURCE CENTER'S TENTH ANNUAL LABOR BOWL.**

- M/S/C FOR THE RLF TO PURCHASE "TOTE BAGS" THAT WILL BE GIVEN OUT TO BOWLERS AT THE EVENT.**

- THANK-YOU NOTES** received from the SEIU Healthcare Minnesota to the RLF and its affiliates for support urging HealthPartners to bargain for a fair contract; from Catholic Charities of Saint Paul and

For New Brookwood, year No. 1 is in the books



One year ago, activists and academics launched the New Brookwood Labor College in St. Paul, pursuing a mission to "advance the working class and build an inclusive labor movement for a more just world." The Regional Labor Federation and the East Side Freedom Library co-hosted a fundraiser March 5 at the Labor Center to celebrate the new college's success – and look forward to year No. 2.

Minneapolis for the Cub Foods gift cards that were donated through the St. Paul Labor Studies and Resource Center's Labor of Love – Sponsor A Family Program; from Jean Baudhuin for a ticket to attend the CD2 Mardi Gras Celebration; and from New Brookwood Labor College for the RLF's 2019 contribution of \$2,500.

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

REPORT OF THE TREASURER

- Acting Secretary-Treasurer Engeldorf reported on the financial status of the Federation as of February 2020. The report was accepted as read.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

President Peterson discussed SEIU employee organizing to get members of the Saint Paul RLF to strike lines, members of Gerdau Steel plant idle this year. The local will put together a plan and we will support as much as possible. She also reflected of the impact of the teachers strike and requested that union members make calls to the school board and superintendent to request they settle.

Please share the Saint Paul Regional Labor Federations actions/activities on Facebook.

Starting this meeting Peterson will be adding an agenda item – "Get to know SPRFL Affiliate." She will be asking individuals from specific unions to make a presentation. This is so we can understand and know what they do.

GET TO KNOW SPRFL AFFILIATE

Aaron Young, APWU Twin Cities Data Center Local 7019 spoke to the delegation. Their local's mission is to include members who work in the fields of Internet Technologies and Accounting Services. The bulk of their work deals with assisting Postal units in the Field who encounter IT issues and handling the financial business of the United States Postal Service. We

have consistently maintained a membership of around 400 union members.

STAFF/LABOR LIAISON REPORTS

- We will be hosting a Listening Session on Wednesday, March 18, 2020, at the Burnsville City Hall from 6 to 8 p.m.

- The Fifth Annual Union Job and Resource Fair will be on Thursday, April 2, 2020.

- Michael Moore, Union Advocate editor, announced that the RLF will be sending out its annual advertising request letter to all the unions next week. On Saturday, May 2, 2020, State History Day judging will take place at the University of Minnesota. The RLF supports two \$100 prizes awards. One in the Junior and one in the Senior Division.

- The Tenth Annual Labor Bowl will be held on Thursday, May 7, 2020, at Sun Ray Lanes. Shift times available are 2:00 and 4:00 p.m. Call Laura to sign up.

- The Letter Carriers Annual Food Drive will be on May 9, 2020. We will need help at Clarence and University (North of Highway 36 and White Bear Avenue).

REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES

- Theresa St. Aoro reported on behalf of the Ramsey County Labor Assembly, which did not meet in February. Its regular meeting will be on Monday, March 23, 2020, at 6 p.m. at the St. Paul Labor Center.

- Connie Beissel reported on behalf of the Dakota County Labor Assembly. It will be holding a Listening Session on Wednesday, March 18, 2020, from 6 to 8 p.m. at the Burnsville City Hall. The assembly is currently in the planning process of the Worker's Memorial Day, being held on Tuesday, April 28, 2020, at Lebanon Hills Cemetery in Apple Valley, near the corner of County Road 42 and Pilot Knob Road.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- Painters Local 61 discussed

White Bear Lake Schools passing the largest referendum last year. Union members who live in the school district are asked to reach out to school board members.

- The Minnesota AFL-CIO Retirees will be hosting their annual fundraiser on May 9, 2020. Money raised through the silent auction will be used to do political actions.

- Congressional District 4 needs volunteers to help sign people in and a Sergeant at Arms.

NEW BUSINESS

- President Peterson called for a floor vote to grant strike sanction to SEIU Local 284 Mounds View Schools and to recommend that the MN AFL-CIO grant Labor Endorsements of Angie Craig CD2 and Betty McCollum CD4.

- M/S/C FOR THE ST. PAUL RLF TO GRANT STRIKE SANCTIONS TO SEIU LOCAL 284 MOUNDS VIEW SCHOOLS AND TO RECOMMEND LABOR ENDORSEMENTS OF ANGIE CRAIG CD2 AND BETTY MCCOLLUM CD4 TO THE MN AFL-CIO.**

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

Submitted by,
BERNADINE ENGELDORF
Secretary-Treasurer

Job Openings

The Saint Paul Regional Labor Federation, AFL-CIO, is seeking to fill two full-time job openings on its professional staff:

- Political organizer
- AFL-CIO Community Services liaison

Job descriptions and details about the RLF's hiring process will be posted online:
www.stpaulunions.org/jobs

Exit Interview: Mary Turner, R.N.

Nurses seek protective gear to combat pandemic safely

As the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases in Minnesota grew steadily last month, prompting most of the state's restaurants, museums and other public spaces to close, registered nurses held a collection drive at their union headquarters in St. Paul, accepting donations of personal protective equipment (PPE) and other supplies.

The public's support in just the first two days of the drive, scheduled to continue through March 29, was overwhelming, Minnesota Nurses Association President Mary Turner said.

"I think we got 30,000 masks on Saturday," she said. "On Sunday we didn't get quite as many, but we had a steady stream of cars... No one could go to church, so they came to visit the nurses instead."

For Turner, who works on the designated COVID-19 floor at North Memorial Hospital, the scene was an encouraging sign that Minnesotans understand we're all fighting the pandemic together, even as health care workers ready themselves for work on the front lines at a time when so much – like the availability of testing and protective gear – remains unknown. She discussed the challenges ahead in this Union Advocate interview, which has been edited for length and clarity.

UA: What are nurses seeing in their hospitals now?

MT: You've got the moratorium on any kind of elective surgery now, so places like St. Paul and Minneapolis Children's hospitals are negotiating potential layoffs. Their census is way down, so nurses in some hospitals are not working, which is ironic. You've got a hospital like Bethesda in St. Paul, which – remember? – not even two or three weeks ago laid off 75 nurses. And now all of a sudden they're going to

have a COVID-19 floor, and all the nurses have found other positions, so they have to put ads out for traveling nurses. Not a lot of foresight on that situation.

But things are changing day to day, and to give them their due, hospitals are constantly having to adjust things. Floors are changing from step-down to an ICU or other care level, adjusting plans daily. That being said, you've got surgical floors and even ICU's where managers are locking up N-95 masks, and deciding who gets masks and who doesn't. And you'd better have a darn good reason if you want one.

I heard someone say on the news, though, that they're encouraging people to make cloth masks for us to wear. This is not the dark ages! A little handkerchief is not going to save us. It's almost insulting.

UA: It's a bit alarming, isn't it, that nurses need to hold their own equipment drive during a pandemic?

MT: People have gotten a little crazy with having stuff that they don't need.

UA: MNA has tried to get hospitals to meet to discuss issues like this.

MT: And they're not. It's so frustrating. We've got managers who are locking up the supplies and only handing them out if you've got a good reason. They're supposed to be consolidating and rerouting the supplies to where they're needed. But here's the problem: they're not doing any testing! So nurses in the ICU and on the surgical floors are saying, "We don't know who is and isn't COVID-19 positive." You can understand their angst and anxiety because no one knows who has it.

UA: Locally, MNA has been a leader in efforts to expand people's access to paid sick time. We're seeing the importance of that work now, aren't we?

MT: I am very proud of the fact that as an organization we have been on the front lines of earned safe and sick time and \$15 an hour. I'm also very grateful that our hospital, North Memorial, has stopped all visitors. Over the years, hospitals are wanting to be more welcoming and like a five-star hotel. So I'm happy that most hospitals have shut down that extra traffic.

UA: It does seem like some people have been slow to accept what's required of us to slow the spread of coronavirus, things like social distancing. As a nurse, what do you say to those people?

MT: I was driving up toward MNA today, going by a little park area, and I saw people walking three to five in a group – and that's not social distancing. And it's going to force the governor to get more and more stringent. Nurses, on the job, we can't social distance. We are going to get within inches of our patients. So it's hard to grapple with the idea for us.

UA: And that's why we need to get you the highest-quality protective equipment.

MT: Not a bandana, either. I would rather walk in with nothing or with a piece of typing paper across my face, because that is just insulting.

UA: For people reading this who might have to interact with the health care system in the next few weeks, what do nurses want them to know?

MT: If you've got symptoms that are light, where you're not having a hard time breathing, stay home. Weather it out in lockdown. If you have a really high fever and can't breathe, you need to go to the hospital, and it's best that you let them know you're coming. That's where we can protect our emergency-room workers.



Mary Turner



We'd love to see you, but at a distance. (For now.)

For the health and safety of our members and employees, we have temporarily closed our lobbies at all locations. However, our **drive-ups remain open for you** in Maple Grove and Shoreview, Monday through Friday, 9am to 5pm. For the latest updates, visit our website. Or to speak with us, call 763-315-3888. We look forward to seeing you and bumping elbows with you soon.



buildingtradesCU.com | 763.315.3888