

The St. Paul Union Advocate

124th Year, No. 6, Issue 5443

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

January 2021



Welcome new readers!

Receiving The St. Paul Union Advocate for the first time? Welcome to the mailing list!

The Union Advocate is the official publication of the St. Paul Regional Labor Federation, AFL-CIO. Our federation unites more than 100 local unions in Ramsey, Dakota, Washington and Chisago counties.

Earlier this year the statewide educators' union, Education MN, fully affiliated all of its local unions with our federation. As a result, over 10,000 educators in our four-county area have been added to The Advocate's mailing list.

We're eager to lift up the good work educators and members of all affiliated unions are doing in our area, and to raise awareness of their union campaigns.

To send us a story idea, learn more about our federation or change to your subscription, go to stpaulunions.org.



Kaele Sample, an apprentice with Laborers Local 563, submitted this photo to the annual Women Building Success apprenticeship photo contest, winning third place in the Photo at Work category. **See all the winning photos, reprinted on Pages 10 and 11.**

MAKING THE ADJUSTMENT

Union apprenticeship programs get creative to navigate COVID-19 pandemic safely

By Michael Moore
Union Advocate editor

Early December is usually a festive time at Cement Masons Local 633's facility in New Brighton. The union's cement mason and plasterer apprentices deck the training hall with a holiday display that spotlights their budding mastery of the craft, just in time for the union's holiday party.

Not this year, of course. But while "Concrete Christmas" is on hold during the COVID-19 pandemic, Cement Masons Local 633's apprenticeship program is up and running. Local 633 and other Minnesota Building Trades unions have made adjustments big and small to keep their apprentices' careers on track.

Safety has been the top priority for apprenticeship programs as they navigate the pandemic, just as it is on a union construction site.

"My No. 1 objective is keeping my staff and apprentices coming in here safe," said Dean Mills, director of the Minnesota Laborers Training Center in Lino Lakes.

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 12)

St. Paul ironworker among first tradeswomen honored with national award

By Michael Moore
Union Advocate editor

There are some things Jenna Wittner misses about the Army.

"Waking up every day and putting my uniform on," she remembered. "Having that sense of pride and being excited to get my day started with my brothers and sisters."

Wittner, 32, has regained some of that feeling since beginning an apprenticeship with Ironworkers Local 512 two years ago.

"I still lace my boots up and tuck them in. I put on my hardhat like I put on my helmet," she said. "I'm excited to start the day, to get onto the jobsite and see my guys. It's so wonderful to have that brotherhood back, the brotherhood of being a

union ironworker."

Others have taken notice of Wittner's pride in her new craft. North America's Building Trades Unions, the federation representing more than 3 million skilled union tradespeople, honored Wittner with the Tradeswomen Heroes Award in October.

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 20)

At the Capitol

Unions will press Legislature to act for working people in '21

By Steve Share
Minneapolis Labor Review editor

With the state reeling from the health and economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2021 session of the Minnesota Legislature is set to convene Jan. 5 and adjourn by May 17.

The 2021 session will be a budget year, meaning lawmakers

will determine spending for state agencies and programs – and how to pay for them.

The Minnesota AFL-CIO was still shaping its legislative agenda in early December, but Melissa Hysing, the statewide labor federation's legislative director, said priorities would be the pandemic and economic security.

"The pandemic has hit working people pretty hard," Hysing said, and has exacerbated racial and economic disparities that existed prior to the outbreak.

Hysing said measures advancing workers' rights and safety during the pandemic likely will be part of the AFL-

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 13)



Go Figure

10.7 million

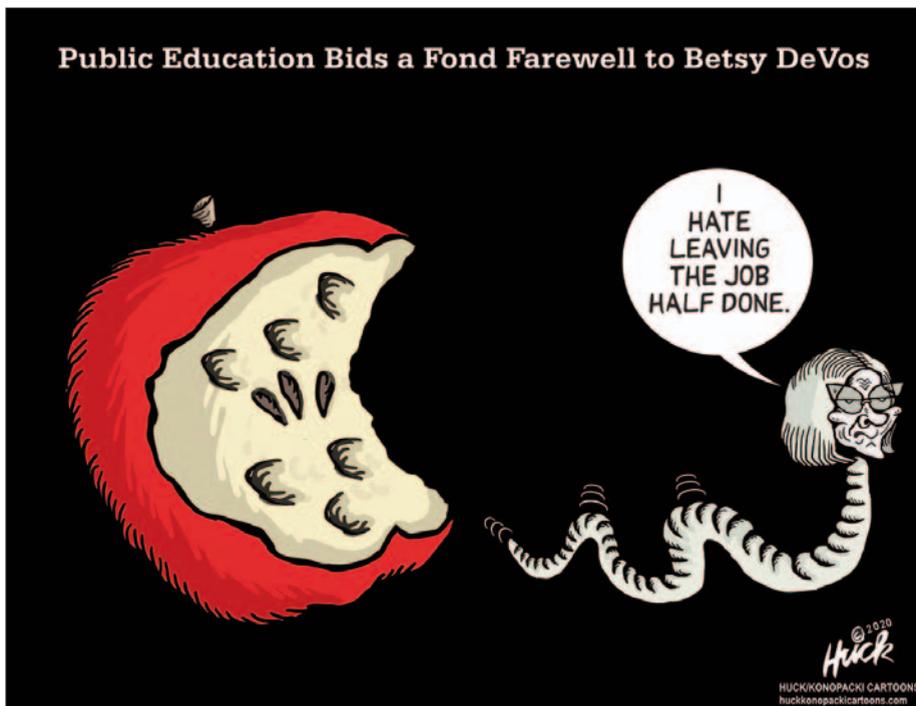
American workers officially considered unemployed as a result of the COVID-19 downturn

26.1 million

True number of Americans hit by the pandemic, a number that includes 5 million who dropped out of the workforce and 7.1 million whose hours and pay have been cut

\$1 trillion

Growth in the collective wealth of America's 651 billionaires since the pandemic began



Labor Voices: Kera Peterson

To build back better, pass the PRO Act

Eager as we are to turn the page from 2020 to 2021, we know that a new calendar year won't magically erase the problems confronting our nation, our communities and working families. But there are reasons to be optimistic. The COVID-19 vaccine rollout has begun, a promising development for health care workers, long-term-care workers and our most vulnerable neighbors. And with the transition of power in Washington comes the promise of new leadership ready to combat the public-health crisis head on, with science and expertise.

Still, millions of working people and their families are hurting in America right now. We saw it firsthand at the St. Paul Regional Labor Federation in November, when our nonprofit Labor Studies and Resource Center gave away a truckload of over 1,300 fresh food packages. The line of vehicles spilled out of the Labor Center parking lot and into West 7th Street. These were families bearing the brunt of our economic collapse, chronic income inequality and systemic racism.

Families are hurting because, after House Democrats passed a second round of COVID-19 relief in May, President Trump and Senate Republicans dragged out negotiations for seven months, holding unemployment benefits hostage to a liability shield protecting their corporate donors from pandemic-related lawsuits. While working Americans face eviction notices and rising health care costs, U.S. billionaires have added a combined \$1 trillion to their wealth during the pandemic.

From Day 1 our federal government's response – both to the COVID-19 pandemic and to the economic collapse that followed – has been bungled. President-elect Joe Biden and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris campaigned on a promise that we, as one nation, will build back even better than before. At a time when working people are holding our country together, we have to do better than building back an economy where the rules are still rigged against us. The incoming administration understands that. The American people, who voted decisively and in record numbers to reject the politics of darkness and division, understand that too.

So what does building back better look like? It starts with direct and significant economic relief for workers and small businesses on Main Street, not Wall Street. Our local

“We have to do better than building back an economy where the rules are still rigged against us.”

– Kera Peterson



governments need aid too, as revenue shortfalls caused by the pandemic could force many to make steep cuts to services more essential than ever right now, like public health and public safety. And job losses resulting from cuts to public services would only deepen our economic crisis.

Building back better also means restoring fairness to our economy. It means leveling the playing field and giving working people more power to join together and bargain better wages, benefits and working conditions. Congress can do that by sending the Protecting the Right to Organize (PRO) Act to President-elect Biden's desk in early 2021. The most significant labor legislation in 80 years, the PRO Act would address several weaknesses in our federal labor laws, giving workers more bargaining power on the job. It would put teeth into rules prohibiting employers from retaliating against workers who try to form a union. It would require employers to disclose payments they make to union-busting law firms and consultants brought in to stifle workers' voices. It would speed up the organizing-election process and establish a mechanism for workers and employers to arrive at a first contract quickly after an organizing drive.

House Democrats passed the PRO Act in February, and President-elect Biden, who has said he wants his to be “the most significant pro-labor, pro-worker administration” ever, has pledged support for the measure. But the ideals behind the PRO Act – collective bargaining, a voice on the job, the belief that all work has dignity – are not Democratic or Republican. They are American ideals. Working people want our leaders to put politics aside, to think big and to act boldly. Our labor movement is ready to build back better, together.

– Kera Peterson is president of the St. Paul Regional Labor Federation, AFL-CIO.

LA Letters

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

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Labor markets are broken. Here's how to fix them

The labor market is broken. Ask just about anyone. Employers will tell you there aren't enough qualified workers to fill their positions. Those seeking work will tell you there are not enough safe and suitable jobs that pay a living wage. Employers and employees alike will tell you there is never enough time to take care of family needs at home given all the time they spent at work.

Here is a proposal to help alleviate all those problems:

1. Establish \$600 as the minimum weekly wage for full-time work. This follows the lead of the "Fight for \$15" movement.

2. Reduce the length of the full-time workweek to 30 hours. It has been more than 80 years since the 40-hour workweek became the standard.

3. Give each working-age adult a voucher for a federally funded Earned Income Supplement worth \$5/hour, capped at 30-hours per week. This will keep workers from losing ground on their paychecks with a 30-hour week, and allow employers to meet the \$600 minimum weekly wage without exceeding \$15/hour.

These three reforms, enacted concurrently, would have the unique ability to stimulate both labor supply and labor demand.

John Crea
St. Paul

- The writer is the author of "Recalibrating the Labor Market."

Labor movement mourns Teamsters' Keegel

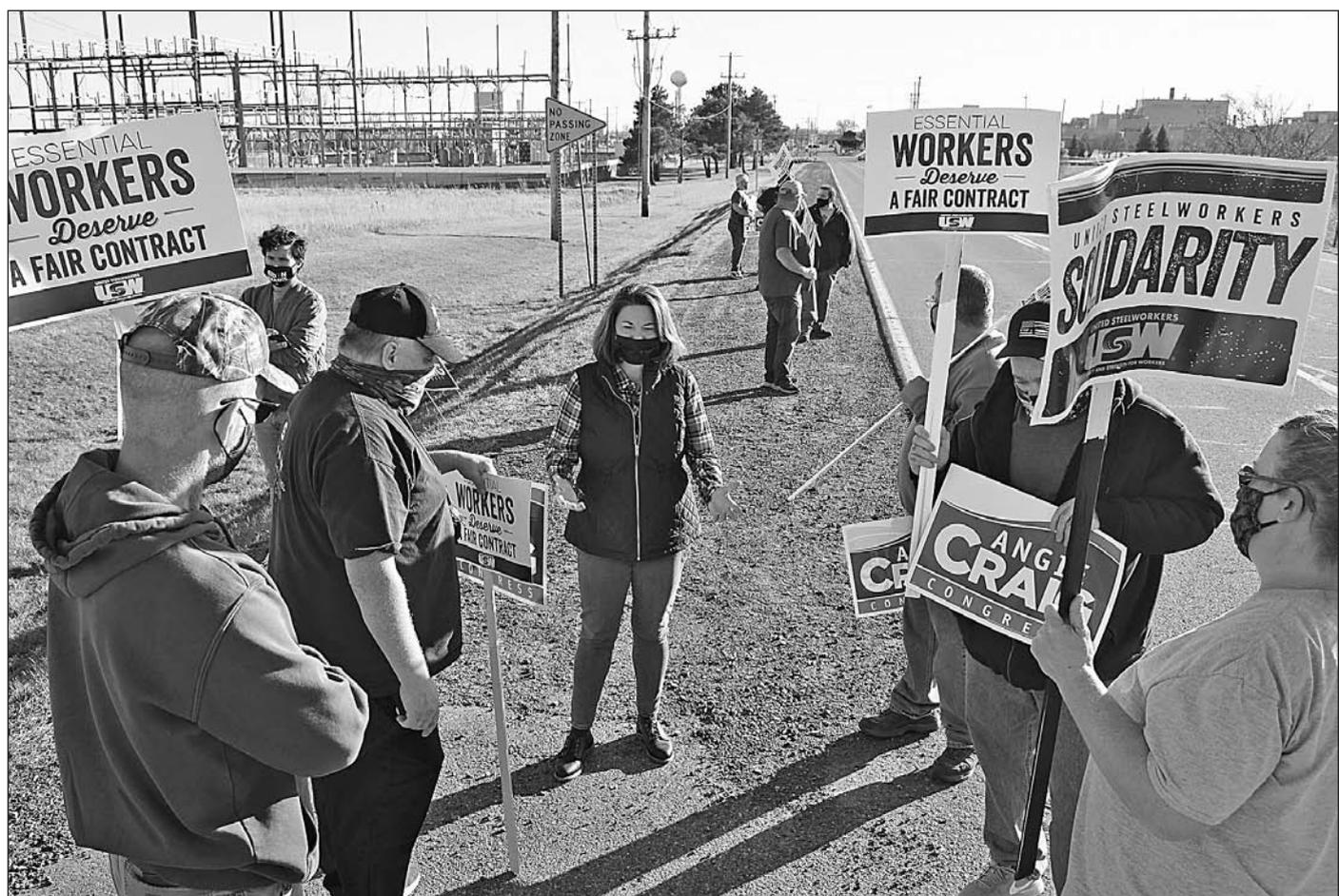
Tom Keegel, the retired Teamsters Secretary-Treasurer and longtime leader of Local 120, died Nov. 19 after a long illness, the union announced. He was 79.

"My heritage is in the labor movement," Keegel said in 2012, when he retired after 52 years in the union.

When Keegel began his career as a truck driver, he worked with colleagues who went through the historic 1934 Teamsters strike in Minneapolis, later saying he "became inspired" by their stories. "These men loved their union and taught me the Teamsters never give up, Teamsters never give in or run from a fight," he said.

Minnesota AFL-CIO President Bill McCarthy called Keegel "one of the nation's strongest advocates for working people."

"Tom's commitment to working people never faltered," McCarthy added. "Even after retiring, he could be found walking picket lines in solidarity with his union brothers and sisters."



U.S. Rep. Angie Craig visits with members of United Steelworkers Local 11-00418 outside the 3M plant in Cottage Grove on Election Day. The union is engaged in a slow-moving round of contract talks with the company, and Craig, who won a second term representing Minnesota's 2nd Congressional District, pledged her support. Union Advocate photo

Union members deliver Minnesota for Biden-Harris, boost labor-endorsed candidates down ballot

Union volunteers got out the vote on and before Nov. 3, helping deliver Minnesota and other battleground states for President-elect Joe Biden and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris, labor leaders said.

The Labor 2020 campaign, unions' coordinated political program, also provided critical support to candidates further down the 2020 ballot in congressional, state and local races.

The Minnesota AFL-CIO, which directed the Labor 2020 campaign, said it was the largest political effort in the statewide union federation's history – a particularly impressive accomplishment, labor leaders said, given the challenges COVID-19 created for political campaigns.

In a typical election year, labor volunteers would hit the streets, engaging voters face to face at their doorsteps. This year, Minnesota AFL-CIO President Bill McCarthy said, unions pivoted to engaging voters online, at work and on the phones.

"Over the course of the campaign, union volunteers organized a massive worksite organizing program, made more than half a million phone calls, and reached more than 400,000 people online to successfully turn out the union vote for Joe Biden, Kamala Harris, Tina Smith, and Labor-endorsed candidates down ballot," McCarthy said.

Smith held onto her seat in the U.S. Senate, where she has been a pro-worker voice on the Labor and Pensions Committee. In the House of Representatives, Angie Craig succeeded in defending her 2nd District seat with labor support, and labor-endorsed Betty McCollum won handily in the 4th District.

Smith, Craig and McCollum were among 60 labor-endorsed candidates who prevailed in Ramsey, Washington, Dakota and Chisago counties, where the St. Paul Regional Labor Federation coordinated Labor 2020 efforts.

The Regional Labor Federation recruited and trained dozens of union members and union retirees who volunteered to call union households across the state and talk about the importance of electing candidates who share labor's values.

Following public health guidelines, the Regional Labor Federation's political organizers limited the number of volunteers allowed to phone bank in the Labor Center. Instead, organizers pivoted to equip volunteers with the tools necessary to make calls from home.

Statewide, union volunteers logged more than 3,300 phone-bank shifts.

St. Paul Regional Labor Federation President Kera Peterson credited

union volunteers and release staff for their resilience in an unprecedented and challenging election cycle.

"At a time when distance is required of us, our Labor 2020 volunteers and release staff were determined to connect safely with fellow working people and join together to elect leaders who will put working people first," Peterson said.

Several current and former union members and union householders seeking office in the east metro won election Nov. 3, including candidates for school board, municipal and county boards and the Minnesota Legislature, Peterson noted.

Nationally, surveys indicate about 58% of union members voting in the presidential election backed Biden and Harris. That means union votes were critical to the outcome in tightly contested swing states like Michigan and Wisconsin, AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka said.

Meanwhile, the nation's highest-ranking labor leader called President Donald Trump's attempt to discredit the election results and overturn Biden's victory in court shameful and dangerous.

"Every vote must be counted," Trumka said. "Voters decide elections. Not judges. Not legislators. Sadly, President Trump does not share that fundamental American belief."

STOP

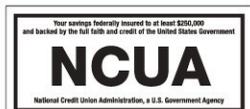
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Minnesota nurse's account of hospital conditions moves Biden to tears

When the president of the Minnesota Nurses Association talked about what front-line workers are facing during the pandemic, the president-elect listened – and wept.

Mary Turner participated in an online meeting in November with President-elect Joe Biden and other health care workers from around the country. The objective was to get Biden up to speed on what workers are facing as the pandemic grows exponentially.

Turner is an ICU nurse at North Memorial Health Hospital in Robbinsdale and told Biden that nurses are feeling “extremely anxious” about the conditions inside and outside hospitals. She said a shortage of personal protective equipment and other supplies are leaving hospitals unprepared to care for COVID patients and those with other issues alike.

“The physical impacts of this virus have been devastating,” Turner told Biden and the other participants. “I myself have held the hands of dying patients, crying out for their family that they can’t see. I’ve taken care of co-workers as they fight for their lives on a ventilator and knowing they got sick because the hospital or their government hasn’t protected them.”

Turner added that “something is seriously wrong when nurses have to take to the streets to beg for protection,” referring to demonstrations in Minnesota and other states by health care workers desperate for PPE and other resources.

“We’re not being given the protection that we need. We need to have



Minnesota Nurses Association President Mary Turner is an ICU nurse at North Memorial Hospital. file photo

optimal PPE for all staff to prevent airborne and droplet transmissions. We need testing of our workers and patients, and contact tracing and notification of exposure for health care workers.”

Biden blotted his eyes after Turner told him she had not yet been tested for the virus. “You’re kidding me,” Biden said. “You got me emotional.”

The meeting was one of many Biden has held to get firsthand information about what health care workers are facing in their workplaces. He acknowledged that the burden on the health care system is putting an “incredible strain on nurses.”

“We need to act now,” Turner said. “We need to act quickly to protect our healthcare workers so that we can save as many lives as possible.”

– Duluth Labor World

Bethesda Hospital's closure adds to mounting health care cuts in St. Paul, workers warn

Over warnings from union nurses and health care workers, M Health Fairview moved forward with its plan to close Bethesda Hospital in St. Paul in November.

The closure, combined with cuts at St. Joseph's Hospital and 16 clinics in the region, meant hundreds of workers were facing job losses. And for community members – particularly the most vulnerable residents of St. Paul – the cuts will make access to care even more limited, union leaders said.

“It is unthinkable that an urban center like St. Paul stands to lose so many patient services at once,” said Rose Roach, director of the Minnesota Nurses Association. Jamie Gulley, president of SEIU Healthcare Minnesota, with 200 members at Bethesda and St. Joseph's, called the likely damage to health care access “insurmountable.”

Ramsey County approved a lease to assume control of Bethesda and turn the facility into a shelter for the homeless population. But workers warned elected officials that the change would



Members of SEIU Healthcare Minnesota and the MNA delivered a list of concerns to Ramsey County commissioners regarding Bethesda's closing.

have real impacts on public health.

“We support any real effort to provide housing for the homeless,” MNA member Melissa Kadrmas, a registered nurse at St. Joseph's, said. “However, we don't trust M Health Fairview, and we worry that their ill-thought-out plan is to provide them cover for closing a facility, laying-off nurses and eliminating key services.”



Our members are working hard to make your holiday special!



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For a complete list of UFCW1189 location: ufcw1189.org/worksites

Seasons greetings from all of us at Education Minnesota!



www.educationminnesota.org

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Merry Christmas AND Happy Holidays



Happy Holidays

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Season's Greetings



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Labor News in Review



Workers at Walker Art Center in Minneapolis are now members of AFSCME Council 5 after their employer agreed to voluntary recognition of their union. submitted photo

THE ART OF ORGANIZING

Here's organizing news to appreciate: Workers at the **Walker Art Center** in Minneapolis have joined together and formed a union with **AFSCME Council 5**. Workers announced the news Dec. 1, after finalizing an agreement with management that includes voluntary recognition of their bargaining unit. (In other words, the Walker agreed not to run an anti-union campaign and force a lengthy election process.)

"To be recognized by management demonstrates the strength of their solidarity," Council 5 said in a public announcement of the news. "Walker Art Center workers successfully banded together to highlight how unionizing will better their workplace, grow the Walker and form even stronger relationships with their fellow co workers."

The new bargaining unit includes 68 workers, who are part of a wave of union organizing in museums nationwide recently, including in Los Angeles, New York, Milwaukee and Philadelphia.

Council 5 also announced that family advocates employed by the **Greater Minneapolis Crisis Nursery** voted unanimously in November to unionize. They are now members of AFSCME Local 3481.

VOICE ON THE AIR AND ON THE JOB

Content creators at Minnesota Public Radio's two music stations, **The Current and Classical MPR**, have signaled their overwhelming support for a voice on the job, voting to authorize **SAG-AFTRA** as their union.

Workers announced the news Dec. 8, the same day the National Labor Relations Board tallied ballots cast by mail. Workers at The Current voted unanimously in support of union representation. At Classical MPR the vote was 17-3.

The victories mean the two newly formed bargaining units will begin bargaining first contracts with their stations soon. Andrea Swensson, a DJ at The Current, said union members are hopeful the process will be mutually beneficial for workers and MPR.

"For the first time in our station's history,

employees have won the legal right to collectively bargain for ourselves in the workplace," Swensson said. "Standing arm and arm in solidarity, we are eager to advance our shared goals of transparency, fairness, integrity and inclusivity."

The new bargaining units include on-air hosts, producers and other professionals who create content for The Current and Classical MPR, including Classical 24 and Performance Today. Classical host Steve Staruch said the vote ensures he and his co-workers have "a seat at the table when decisions are made about our careers and our families."

"With our colleagues at The Current, we look forward to negotiating contracts that acknowledge and reward our work, our dedication and our passion for serving our listeners," Staruch added.

SAG-AFTRA, the Screen Actors Guild - American Federation of Television and Radio Artists, represents about 160,000 media professionals worldwide. The union has seen a flurry of organizing activity at public-media workplaces in recent years, including a successful drive by professionals at MPR News in 2016.

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 8)

HAPPY HOLIDAYS!



International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 23



Season's greetings!

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Affiliated Locals

61, 106, 386, 681, 880, 1324, 1962, 2002

**Painters & Drywall Finishers,
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Holiday Greetings!



to our union
brothers & sisters



*A message from the
members of Local 1005*

Have a safe & enjoyable holiday season.

You earned it!

From the members of St. Paul Plumbers Local #34



(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7)

WAKE-UP CALL AT SAINT PAUL HOTEL

Whether they wanted one or not, guests at the Saint Paul Hotel received an early wakeup call Halloween morning, as members of UNITE HERE Local 17 began picketing loudly outside the property at 6 a.m.

“We wanted to be friendly and greet the guests with pots and pans,” Local 17 Secretary-Treasurer Sheigh Freeberg said. “We definitely got a reaction from the hotel.”

Hotel workers accuse Morrissey Hospitality, which owns the property, of refusing to honor seniority in calling members back to work during the pandemic. They also say the hotel has unilaterally decreased most workers’ pay.

“The Saint Paul Hotel just decided they don’t need to abide by the contract,” Freeberg said. “They’re bringing back people out of seniority order, and they’ve put everyone to \$18 per hour. For some people that’s a bit of an increase, but for most it’s a pretty significant decrease.”

Local 17 has filed charges against the hotel with the National Labor Relations Board, but picketing is on hold in accordance with Gov. Tim Walz’s emergency order prohibiting gatherings.

“When business picks back up at the hotel, you can expect to see us,” Freeberg said.

Local 17 is encouraging supporters to call Morrissey at 651-221-0815 and tell the company to honor its union contract.

About 200 members of Local 17 work at the Saint Paul Hotel.

LETTER CARRIERS, USPS SETTLE

The National Association of Letter Carriers and the U.S. Postal Service have reached a tentative agreement on a new 44-month national labor agreement, covering approximately 205,000 active city letter carriers across the U.S. The agreement emerged after several months of continuous bargaining sessions.

The tentative agreement provides four annual general wage increases and seven cost-of-living adjustments in addition to other wage enhancers. It also includes language to move more “city carrier assistants” into career positions with full benefits.

The agreement would maintain existing protections against subcontracting and layoffs, NALC President Fredric Rolando said.

Union members still must vote to ratify contract before it goes into effect. The NALC Executive Council unanimously recommended ratification.

HOLIDAY GREETINGS to all union families!

LiUNA!

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Construction and General Laborers’ Union Local 563



IBEW Certified Electricians extend Holiday greetings to all union families!

International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 110



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Metro Transit contract talks stuck in low gear

By Michael Moore
Union Advocate editor

Members of Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1005 have authorized a strike, held informational picketing and, most recently, petitioned the governor – all in an effort to shift their contract talks with Metro Transit into high gear.

The union of 2,350 transit operators and mechanics entered bargaining this summer looking to address health and safety concerns related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Those discussions have yet to take place, Local 1005 President Ryan Timlin said, despite the union's pressure campaign.

"The actions we've done have had an effect," Timlin said. "We've seen a little bit of movement, but not nearly enough, in our opinion. The Met Council and Metro Transit are still dragging their feet."

It's not unusual for contract talks at Metro Transit – or any public agency – to progress at a deliberate pace. But Local 1005 members say this round of talks warrants greater urgency.

Transit workers are seeking clear language ensuring access to personal protective equipment and hand sanitizer at Metro Transit facilities. They want language ensuring paid leave for workers who come into contact with the coronavirus on the job.

Union members want hazard pay, too.

In a letter to Gov. Tim Walz sent Dec. 7, Timlin called transit operators "Minnesota's forgotten front-line workers," even though many essential workers rely on public transit to get to and from their jobs.

Between boarding stops, Timlin said, the air inside Metro Transit buses is trapped and recirculated from the back of the bus to the front. Light-rail trains have slightly better airflow.

Sharing confined, modular spaces with the public has almost certainly put transit operators at high risk for contracting the coronavirus.

"We've had quite a few of our members get COVID," Timlin said. "We

Show some solidarity!

Send an email to Metro Transit chief Wes Kooistra in support of ATU Local 1005 members at bit.ly/wherelswes.



haven't had a death yet. We've been lucky. But I use the word 'yet' because I fear it's going to happen down the road with how susceptible the workforce is."

ATU members voted overwhelmingly in September to authorize their bargaining team to call a strike. At that time, Metro Transit was demanding a one-year contract with no wage increases or hazard pay, rather than the normal two- or three-year deal.

While the pandemic has reduced fare revenue, Metro Transit is partially funded by a tax on new car sales, which have increased during the pandemic. The Met Council, which oversees the agency, also has had access to pandemic-relief funds through the CARES Act.

Metro Transit management changed its tune Oct. 26 and agreed to discuss a longer-term contract, after transit workers and their supporters rallied outside the Bureau of Mediation Services offices in St. Paul, where representatives of the two sides were meeting.

Since then, the union has been ramping up public pressure on Metro Transit's general manager, Wes Kooistra, as well as members of the Met Council. The union says it has delivered over 10,000 emails to Met Council members and 500 phone calls. But their concerns have fallen on deaf ears.

"We are not eager to strike, but we are preparing for that eventuality, in the name of safety and justice," Timlin wrote in his letter seeking Walz's help. "We need someone to intervene, to compel Metropolitan Council members to do their jobs with the same vigor we do our own."

The governor's office acknowledged the letter, Timlin said, and was working to set up a meeting.



Happy holidays to our union family!

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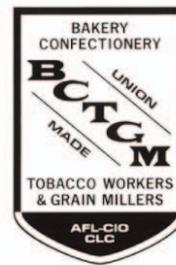
St. Paul Federation of Educators Local 28 is affiliated with Education Minnesota, the American Federation of Teachers, the National Education Association and the AFL-CIO.

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Saint Paul Building & Construction Trades Council



Wishing everyone a safe, happy holiday season

Carpenters Local Union 322

www.local322.net



Holiday greetings to all union families!

Iron Workers Local 512

Unions' apprenticeship training programs adjust to COVID-19 restrictions

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

"That's first and foremost. We're being innovative and creative about how we do things, doing the best we can to teach our members and help our contractors out."

To that end, Building Trades unions have worked with state health regulators and the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry to ensure their curriculums are both safe and on par with the standards of registered apprenticeship.

The result isn't always ideal, but what has been in 2020?

"It may not be wide open like we'd like it to be, but we're at least covering the bare minimum," Operating Engineers Local 49 Director of Training Eric Gulland said. "So when we do get the pandemic under control and open things up, we're ready to go again."

Unique programs, unique solutions

Minnesota has over 180 registered apprenticeship programs, but most of the state's 12,000 apprentices are enrolled in programs sponsored by Building Trades unions and their employers. Unions and contractors tailor their apprenticeship programs to meet the unique demands of their particular crafts.

No two union apprenticeship programs are the same, and no two programs have responded to COVID-19 the same way either. Union apprenticeship directors have had to consider enrollment numbers, available training space, curriculum needs and resources in decisions about how to proceed during the pandemic.

Cement Masons Local 633's total enrollment in the apprenticeship program is around 90. With a 14,000-square-foot training center, the union decided it was safe to resume in-person programming this fall, but with several major changes.

Class sizes do not exceed 10 people. Masks are required, and apprentices and training staff maintain six feet of physical distance at all times. That means apprentices train less in crews, where they would work shoulder to shoulder, and more on individual projects.

"We're also cleaning like we've never cleaned before," Apprenticeship Coordinator Brian Farmer said.

At Local 49's training facility in Hinckley, it's the polar-opposite approach. The union has shifted the entirety of its apprenticeship curriculum online, except in cases where members need a certification to continue working. Even then, the union allows only five people to gather at one time in remote union halls across the region.

Local 49's 400 apprentices, who train to operate

heavy equipment, are sitting through a lot of Zoom meetings, Gulland said. But instructors have found creative ways to avoid "death by power point."

During a recent class, Gulland said, one instructor hosted the meeting from a classroom while another filmed a live walk-around inspection of machinery. Apprentices dropped questions into the chat and got answers on the spot.

"The students definitely want to come up and hands-on run the equipment," Gulland said. "But it seems like it's worked out to keep them engaged and on track with their apprenticeship requirements during this time."

The hybrid approach

Other apprenticeship programs have taken a hybrid approach during the pandemic, combining online courses with limited in-person training.

Sheet Metal Workers Local 10's 450 apprentices resumed in-person classes after Labor Day with daily temperature checks, masks, smaller class sizes and vigorous sanitizing. The union also has introduced night classes, helping stagger the time apprentices are in the facility.

The Laborers, too, have begun offering night classes and reducing class sizes, Mills said. To prevent clustering inside the union's training center, each apprentice and instructor is required to enter through the door closest to their classroom or training bay.

While some apprentices have contracted COVID-19, Local 10 Training Coordinator Carl Zitzer said, they are doing the right thing to prevent it from spreading to fellow union members.

"We haven't had anybody in the building who's sick, fortunately," Zitzer said. "We tell them to stay home, do what you're supposed to do, and when you get back we'll do what we have to do to get your time in."

For union apprentices, training time is critical. State regulations require registered apprentices to complete a set number of training hours and work hours each year.

Because Gov. Tim Walz's emergency order declared the construction industry essential, contractors have continued hiring apprentices throughout the pandemic. But like other schools, training centers halted in-person learning in March, forcing many union apprenticeship programs to make adjustments on the fly to get apprentices the training hours they needed.

"A lot of our apprentices' pay raises are hinging on their related training hours," Local 633's Farmer said.

Shifting to remote

At Local 10, where apprentices lost about eight weeks of scheduled classes in the spring, Zitzer credited the more "computer-savvy" members of

his training staff for working with the Sheet Metal Workers international union to move classes online, focusing on parts of the curriculum that don't require being together on the shop floor.

"These guys jumped right in and developed a bunch of really good stuff," Zitzer said. "Our apprentices really enjoyed it because we really challenged them. They really had to be like a college student – reading stuff, taking tests, just like at the university."

Training staff at the Laborers and Ironworkers Local 512, which likewise have shifted some curriculum online, said they were pleasantly surprised with how well online training worked for some aspects of their curriculums.

Pete Teigland, Local 512's training director, said the online curriculum made the program more accessible for apprentices who don't live near the Ironworkers' training center in St. Paul. It also frees apprentices to accept work on projects farther away from the metro.

"Some of these guys drive 100 miles to get here for class after work," he said.

"We actually took a negative and turned it into a positive," Mills added. "We'll definitely continue with some online options for apprentices moving forward, but what we do best is still contact training. Our craft is big on hands on."

An investment in quality

Most of the adjustments union apprenticeship programs have made during the pandemic have come at a cost. Cleaning supplies, software, training materials and thermometers aren't free. Adding more classes to prevent crowding requires more instructional time.

That unions and their employers are absorbing those costs, apprenticeship coordinators said, is more proof of their commitment to training a world-class construction workforce in Minnesota.

"When we talked about what we were going to do after COVID hit, it was just like on the jobsite," Teigland remembered. "When things are rough, put one foot in front of the other, and we'll get through it."

"I've been around a long time," added Zitzer, a 43-year veteran of the Sheet Metal Workers. "The thing I've come to realize is guys like us aren't going to walk away without completing their task, and that's what we're doing. We're finding a different way to do it when the traditional way doesn't work."

"We're finding a different way to do it when the traditional way doesn't work."

– Carl Zitzer,
Sheet Metal Workers
Local 10
Training Coordinator

HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

A MESSAGE FROM
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Pandemic relief, equity, worker protections top unions' legislative to-do list in 2021

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

CIO's agenda, including legislation to protect workers from retaliation if they speak out about unsafe conditions, as is currently mandated by the Gov. Tim Walz's peacetime emergency order.

Unions also will want to be sure the pandemic isn't used as an excuse to roll back worker protections that already are part of state law, Hysing said.

"We were advocating for paid family medical leave for years. Now with this pandemic it's even more urgent," Hysing added. That leave should include not just sick time, she noted, but also time to care for a family member and cover workers' quarantine time, too.

With the state facing a budget deficit, "we need to make sure any budget fix is fair to working people," Hysing said. "Working people have borne the brunt of the health and economic impacts of this pandemic." If the state needs to raise revenues, she added, wealthy individuals and corporations should pay their fair share.

Help for hospitality workers

COVID-19 shutdowns have affected different sectors of the workforce differently, but one sector that's been particularly hard hit is the hospitality industry. About 80 percent UNITE HERE Local 17's members currently are out of work, reported Wade Luneburg, the union's recording secretary. These workers desperately need to see the state extend unemployment benefits, he said.

What's more, as the one-year mark of COVID-19 restrictions approaches, many workers will lose their recall rights when businesses do return to normal – even workers covered by collective bargaining agreements. "When we start hitting the one-year mark, the recall rights we had [under collective bargaining] start to click off," Luneburg said.

Local 17 plans to push legislation mandating that laid-off or former employees have certain rights to return to their old jobs when employers start hiring again. "It's something right in front of us, and it needs to be addressed," Luneburg said.

Trades watching UI benefits, labor standards

Construction workers also need the state to extend unemployment benefits. Since March some 87,000 Minnesota construction workers have applied for unemployment benefits, reported Jessica Looman, executive director of the Minnesota Building and Construction Trades Council.

Uncertainty surrounding the pandemic has meant "a lot of projects were postponed or put off or didn't start," Looman said. "My goal is to get people to the construction season so we don't lose people, and they can get back to work."

For Operating Engineers Local 49, "the first priority will be defending the gains we've made in transportation infrastructure funding in the last few years," Business Manager Jason George said. Currently, 50% of state sales tax on auto parts is dedicated to highway funding.

"We want to make sure it stays," George said. "That's hundreds of millions of dollars."

Local 49's second priority: "opposing any clean energy proposal that doesn't have strong teeth that ensures skilled, union construction tradespeople are building it," George said.

While nuclear power plants and coal power plants offer good-paying, union jobs, that usually isn't the case in the wind- and solar-energy sectors, said Adam Duininck, director of government affairs for the North Central States Regional Council of Carpenters. "We want to ensure those are good jobs in those industries," he said.

The Carpenters also will be watching the Legislature's approach to affordable housing, another

industry where prevailing-wage, union jobs are less prevalent – and where wage theft and misclassification of workers have been a problem, Duininck said.

Public employees plan equity push

COVID-19 issues are a priority for the SEIU Minnesota State Council, said its executive director, Brian Elliott. "Our members are almost exclusively essential workers," he said. "It's not like (they) can work from home." Elliott said essential workers need safety standards and adequate sick time, noting that some SEIU members are "on their third or fourth quarantine ... but are not getting paid."

The new year also will bring contract negotiations for the state's 20,000-plus home care workers.

For state and local public employees, priorities remain protecting collective bargaining, preventing

attacks on defined-benefit pensions and pushing for new and just state revenue, AFSCME Council 5 Executive Director Julie Bleyhl said.

During the pandemic, she added, "it's important we fund the services the public depends on... It's a health crisis. It's an economic crisis. It's also issues of racial and social justice."

Denise Specht, president of Education Minnesota, the state's educators union, agreed that equity and justice must be on the table this year. "We're really focusing hard on fully funding racially just schools," she said.

Education Minnesota's political priorities this year also include improving conditions for the state's education support professionals. "They're doing a lot in the pandemic," Specht noted, and "these are the lowest-paid positions in our school districts."



As union leaders look on, Gov. Walz signs a \$1.88 billion package of infrastructure investments into law during a ceremony held the Ironworkers Local 512 apprenticeship training center in St. Paul. Union Advocate photos

Walz signs record bonding bill on union training floor

In a ceremony held on the floor of Ironworkers Local 512's apprenticeship training center Oct. 21, Gov. Tim Walz signed into law a \$1.88 billion package of infrastructure investments that will create thousands of jobs for union tradespeople across Minnesota.

The largest bonding bill in state history will fund local projects in both the metro and greater Minnesota, including transportation infrastructure, affordable housing and water-treatment and higher-education facilities.

Walz likened the projects to the property improvements homeowners might make, but on a much larger scale. "It's the most important investment you make," he said. "You don't let it run down."

The governor also thanked the Minnesota Building and Construction Trades Council and its member unions for convincing enough legislators to support such a robust bonding package.

"They did the hard work of getting this thing across the finish line," Walz said. "And now they'll

do the actual work" of building and repairing the state's buildings, roads, bridges, water systems and more.

– Michael Moore, Union Advocate editor



The governor takes in a welding demonstration after signing the bonding bill.

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Local veterans, workers call out union busting at VA

By Michael Moore
 Union Advocate editor

Local veterans and union members who staff the Minneapolis VA Hospital have been publicly calling out the Trump administration in recent months for understaffing in VA facilities and a string of attacks on VA workers' rights.

Members of the American Federation of Government Employees, which represents about 260,000 VA workers, have rallied and demonstrated relentlessly at the busy intersection of Hiawatha Avenue and Highway 62, near the hospital. Their events are drawing support from activists in the Minnesota chapter of Veterans for Peace.

Both veterans and workers say they are worried privatization is the ultimate goal Trump and VA Secretary Robert Wilkie have in mind.

"It's just another effort to destabilize the VA because, ultimately, they want to privatize the VA," AFGE District 8 Vice President Gregg James said. "There are trillions of dollars available if millions of veterans have to go downtown to get their care."

On the campaign trail, President-elect Joe Biden promised a course correction at the VA. He committed to begin filling the estimated 50,000 vacant positions at the agency and to restoring workers' union protections.

But much of the damage done by Trump can't be undone on inauguration day, workers say.

By executive order and federal rulemaking, Wilkie and the president have chipped away at workers' bargaining power. The measures restrict workers' access to union representation and limit their eligibility for union membership. A new proposal, James said, would bar unions from collecting attorneys' fees from the government as part of a judgment for unpaid wages.

At the same time, contract negotiations between the agency and the AFGE have dragged on for what feels like "forever" to Christine Schoenbechler, a food service worker at Minneapolis VA.

"They won't come to the table," the vice president of AFGE Local 1969 said. "Wilkie is not making management negotiate with the union. They've just walked away."



Veterans and VA Hospital workers are holding regular demonstrations near the intersection of Hiawatha Avenue and State Highway 62. Union Advocate photo

The agency's contract proposals would make it easier for managers to fire VA workers and strip workers from having a say in shift changes, pay scales and more. Union members say the changes would make it easier to silence workers who blow the whistle on abuse, discrimination or unsafe conditions – of particular concern during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Our benefits and protections, everything is at stake," Schoenbechler said. "It's unreal. It's unbelievable. It's like something I've never seen."

Rather than engaging in a give and take at the bargaining table or with a federal mediator, James said, VA negotiators are pushing their demands to an impasse panel, stacked with presidential appointees.

"Normally, the impasse panel will only take a case after the federal mediator has made sure both parties have done their work," James said. "It's union busting, right out in the open."

James said the AFGE urges supporters to contact their members of Congress and ask them to call on President Trump and Secretary Wilkie to get serious about contract talks at the VA.

"Because we're on the verge of losing it," he said.

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The officers and staff of the Saint Paul Regional Labor Federation, the Saint Paul Labor Studies & Resource Center, and The Union Advocate newspaper send their solidarity and season's greetings to all union families!

www.stpaulunions.org

Free food giveaway at Labor Center helps feed hundreds



The St. Paul Regional Labor Federation's non-profit Labor Studies and Resource Center gave away over 1,330 packages of fresh food and milk to families in need during a drive-up event at the Labor Center Nov. 27. Some 50 union volunteers helped unload and distribute the packages, which arrived on a semi truck through the USDA's Farmers to Families food program. "This is just one more example of the good things that happen when unions and community organizations partner together," Regional Labor Federation President Kera Peterson said.

Union Advocate photo

Season's Greetings, Union Families!

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



www.local9.com

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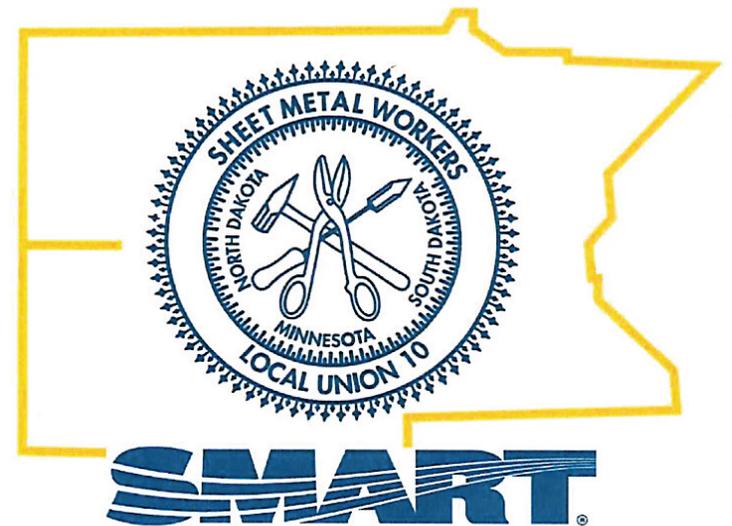
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Local 49*



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After publicly announcing their organizing drive Oct. 29, members of the Augsburg Staff Union delivered a letter to University President Paul Pribbenow calling on him to recognize their union. The union later reached an agreement with administrators on a fair, timely election process. Union Advocate photo

Members of Augsburg University staff voting on union with OPEIU Local 12

After an organizing drive with Local 12 of the Office and Professional Employees International Union, professional and clerical workers at Augsburg University were voting in a union election in December.

The bargaining unit would bring together about 170 Augsburg staff members, “ranging from Admissions to IT,” Local 12 said in a press release.

Union supporters said they believe the goals and priorities guiding their organizing process are in step with the university’s values.

“Obviously, we’re all really passionate about serving the students that we work with and the greater Augsburg community,” Assistant Director for Transfer Admissions Kate Asfeld said. “One of the things that drove me to work at Augsburg was how it’s been a leader in diversity, equity and inclusion.

“I think this (organizing effort) is in line with that vision and mission of Augsburg.”

Inclusion should mean all stakeholders have a seat at the table in decisions affecting the Augsburg community. But that’s not how things currently work – and it shows, financial aid counselor Uriah Ward said.

“We’ve seen cuts in pay. We’ve seen low pay. We’ve seen consistently decreasing benefits, like health insurance and retirement. And there’s nothing we can do about it,” Ward said. “With a union we have the power to come together



er and actually advocate for ourselves.”

Additionally, union members hope collective bargaining will address racial and gender pay gaps, parental leave, advancement opportunities and tuition credits.

The union drive is over a year in the works, but Augsburg staff members said their campaign gained new urgency with the COVID-19 pandemic, which has colleges and universities bracing for budget shortfalls and higher-ed workers taking on new risks to serve their students.

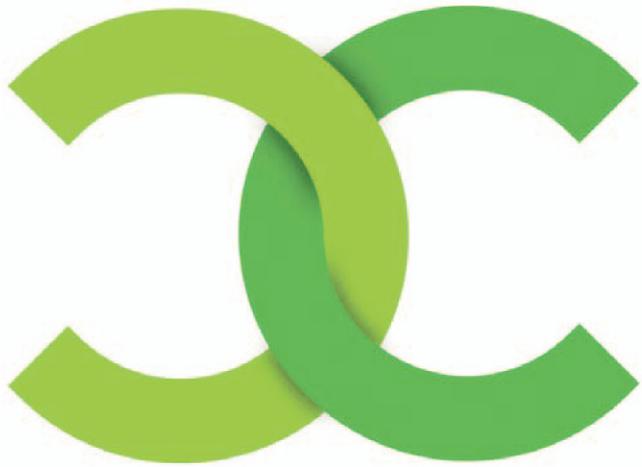
“At the end of the day, our goal is to empower and protect our staff members, so we all have the ability to serve our students well,” Asfeld said.

Augsburg staff members and university administrators agreed to bypass the National Labor Relations Board process and hold a speedy, fair union election. Votes were scheduled to be tallied Jan. 7.

– Michael Moore, UA editor

HOLIDAY GREETINGS

May the New Year be happy and healthy for everyone



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Guest Commentary

East Side Freedom Library ready to help as our communities rebuild

By Peter Rachleff and Kristi Wright

It feels like we have held our breath for a month: the campaign, get out the vote, watching the tallies, the resurgence of the pandemic, Trump's accusations and challenges, and then the certifications. As soon as we let our breath out, though, we are confronted by another set of challenges. How do we rebuild our government, our economy, our labor movement?

It's enough to make some of us want to pull the covers over our heads again. But these challenges are also an opportunity, not to return to "normal" but to shape a path to a better future. This will take not only guts, but also critical thinking and participation in difficult conversations. The East Side Freedom Library, online or in person, is a place where these difficult conversations can happen.

A "return to normal" would be cold comfort to the tens of millions who never recovered from the losses of the Great Recession; who have long suffered without universal health care; whose children struggle in a dysfunctional education system; who face systemic racism, sexism, and other forms of discrimination and bigotry; and whose communities have been ravaged by unchecked climate change, unsustainable energy practices and corporate wrongdoing. For too many of us, "normal" entails historic levels of inequality and disenfranchisement.

At the East Side Freedom Library, we believe that studying our past can inform struggles for justice in the present and the creation of a better future. In challenging times, Minnesota's workers innovated, initiated and inspired great organizations and movements.

In the World War I era, by organizing and striking, immigrant iron miners shifted the balance of power in company towns across the Mesabi Range, while the descendants of Irish, German and Swedish immigrants fought for their needs through a new political formation, the Non-Partisan League. In the depths of the Great Depression, exploited truck drivers and warehouse workers united with unemployed men and women under the aegis of Teamsters Local 574 to defeat the long-powerful Citizens Alliance.

In the early 1970s, public employees enlisted the support of the labor movement, on the one hand, and the Democratic Farmer Labor Party, on the other, to gain the right to union representation and collective bargaining.

As the American political economy turned to the dog-eat-dog practices of neoliberalism, the struggles of Willmar bank workers, Hormel pack-



Located at 1105 Greenbrier St., the ESFL houses 23,000 books and hosts a wide range of public programs, from author talks to film screenings and beyond.

"At the East Side Freedom Library, we believe that studying our past can inform struggles for justice in the present and the creation of a better future."

inghouse workers, Ford auto workers, Northwest Airlines mechanics, state employees, immigrant workers and fast food workers drew expressions and acts of solidarity from workers in other industries and sectors.

It is too simple to characterize any of these struggles as "wins" or "losses." But there is much to be learned from these and other stories.

As we engage these stories at the East Side Freedom Library – in our Labor History Reading Group, in our Labor History Film Series, in discussions with authors and activists, in mentoring middle and high school students conducting National History Day research, in our presentations to local unions and in articles like the one you are reading – we seek to promote a conversation between the past and the present.

These are not exercises in nostalgia or hero worship. Far from it. We promote difficult conversations that probe not only what was done, but also what was not done – and what might have been done. These conversations provide mirrors in which we can examine ourselves and our efforts.

One lesson rings loud and clear: that the labor movement thrives when we can build bridges between our organizations and campaigns and the broader community. When we initiated the ESFL in June 2014, Bobby Kasper, then president of the St. Paul Regional Labor Federation, saw that we could be "a labor hall for the community."



Students working on National History Day projects can access mentoring and resources at the East Side Freedom Library in St. Paul. submitted photos

We have worked to live up to his perception. We have co-sponsored an annual Union Job and Resource Fair. We've helped educate our immigrant neighbors about the labor movement and its role in promoting the principle that all workers should be treated respectfully, compensated fairly and guaranteed economic security in their old age. And we've helped educate rank-and-file union members about the significant roles played by immigrant workers in the past, present and future of the labor movement, and about the ways that racism and sexism weakened the labor movement.

At the East Side Freedom Library we do not pretend to have all the answers. But we are providing the space (mostly online these days), the structure, the resources and the facilitation that can support our union sisters, brothers and kin seeking to pose the right questions and build the right answers. There is enormous knowledge in the 23,000 books on our shelves, and there is new knowledge created every day by the participants in our programs.

As we seek to rebuild in 2021 and beyond, we invite you to join us, your fellow union members and your fellow community members at the East Side Freedom Library. We know that "back to normal" is not enough. Through promoting conversations between the past and the present, through building bridges between the labor movement and the community, and through creating new knowledge, together we will chart our course to a better future.

– Peter Rachleff is co-executive director of the East Side Freedom Library. Kristi Wright works on labor outreach. Learn more about the nonprofit, independent library, view a calendar of events and sign up for a twice-monthly newsletter at eastsidefreedomlibrary.org.

Happy Holidays

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A message from the men and women of the
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Minutes of the Saint Paul Regional Labor Federation

NOVEMBER 11, 2020

The Saint Paul Regional Labor Federation met in regular session remotely due to COVID 19 on the above date and was called to order with the Pledge of Allegiance by President Peterson at 6 p.m. Board members in attendance were Beedle B., Beissel, Dreyer, Edwards, Faber, Gibbons, Gorman, Guertin, Luneburg, Madden, Maki-Green, McNamara, Michelson, Mullin, Peterson, Roth, Ryan, Sansom, Seath, Slattery, St. Aoro, Terry and Vandassor. Excused were Engeldorf, Meyer, Schmidt, Varco. Absent were Beedle G., Froemke, Hoppe, Markham-Kocurek, McCarthy and Weed.

GUESTS

• Representative Betty McCollum thanked everyone at the delegate meeting for the great election successes. Colin Peterson will be sorely missed. She is currently heading to Washington DC to work on COVID funding and Biden Administration.

MINUTES

• **M/S/C TO APPROVE MINUTES OF OCTOBER 14, 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 NOVEMBER 11, 2020

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

Items to come before this committee included:

• President Peterson reported on election results. Sixty endorsed candidates in the SPRLF jurisdiction won their elections, including several union members. Statewide, union members completed more than 3,300 union volunteer and release staff shifts, and in the East Metro union volunteers and release staff had more than 2,550 hours of conversations with union members about our labor endorsed candidates. Georgia will have two Senate runoff elections. 2021 elections will include Saint Paul Mayor and the Saint Paul School Board.

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

EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES NOVEMBER 11, 2020

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

A moment of silence was called for our union brother retiree Charles "Charlie" Rike who died from COVID-19.

Items to come before this board included:

• **PRESIDENT'S REPORT.** President Peterson reported on the following:
 – She recognized Veterans Day.
 – The St. Paul Labor Standards Advisory Committee, which President Peterson is on, had its first meeting.

– Our annual Labor-Red Cross Blood Drive will be held on Tuesday, Dec. 1, 2020, from noon to 6:00 p.m. Please see Erica if you would like to donate.

– The St. Paul Labor Studies and Resource Center is collecting money for their annual Jean Jones Coats Initiative. If you would like to donate, please send a check made payable and mail to: LSRC, Attention Laura, 353 West 7th St., Suite 201, Saint Paul, MN 55102.

– The annual holiday party has been cancelled, and we are looking forward to 2021.

– The Saint Paul Festival and Heritage Foundation has cancelled the Winter Carnival King Boreas Grande Day Parade.

• **ORGANIZING UPDATES/CAMPAIGNS:** Construction and General Laborers, IATSE, the Minnesota Nurses Association, SEIU Local 284 and United Steelworkers gave an update on their organizing activities.

• **REQUESTS:**

– **M/S/C FOR THE SAINT PAUL REGIONAL LABOR FEDERATION TO MAKE A \$250 DONATION TO THE JEAN JONES COATS INITIATIVE.**

• Thank-you notes received from St. Paul Labor Studies and Resource Center for the RLF's \$500 contribution to the Tenth Annual Labor Bowl, LIUNA Minnesota and North Dakota and Minnesota LECET for the RLF's \$500 contribution to their 2020 LIUNA Virtual Family Fun-Raiser, Ronald McDonald House Charities for the RLF's support through the annual LIUNA Virtual Family Fun-Raiser, and IUPAT District Council 82 for the RLF's \$500 contribution to their annual PATCH golf tournament.

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

REPORT OF THE TREASURER

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

PRESIDENTS REPORT

President Peterson reported on:

- We had 60 endorsed candidates that won their elections.

- Attending her first meeting of the City of Saint Paul Labor Standards Advisory Committee.

- There are still some openings for our annual Labor-Red Cross Blood Drive being held on Tuesday, December 1, 2020, from noon to 6:00 p.m. Please see Erica if you would like to donate.

- The St. Paul Labor Studies and Resource Center is collecting money for the Jean Jones Coats Initiative. If you would like to donate, please send a check made payable and mail to: LSRC, Attention Laura, 353 West 7th St., Suite 201, Saint Paul, MN 55102.

- The annual holiday party has been cancelled and the Saint Paul Festival and Heritage Foundation has cancelled the Winter Carnival King Boreas Grande Day Parade.

REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES

- Theresa St. Aoro reported on behalf of the Ramsey County Labor Assembly. We did not meet in October. Our next meeting will be on Nov. 23 at 6 p.m. via zoom.

- Brian Beedle reported on behalf of the Washington County Labor Assembly. We did not meet in October.

Thanks for making spirits bright

The St. Paul Regional Labor Federation's annual Labor of Love – Sponsor a Family drive collected over \$10,200 in donations to the RLF's nonprofit Labor Studies and Resource Center this year.

The funds were used to purchase gift cards from union grocers. LSRC staff distributed the cards to Catholic Charities, Sponsor a Family MN, Jewish Community Center and union members who have accessed support from the LSRC's Emergency Fund.

Thank you to the unions, members and community partners who contributed to this holiday tradition in support of our neighbors in need!

Our next meeting will be Nov. 25 at 6 p.m. via zoom.

- Michael Madden reported on behalf of the Chisago County Labor Assembly. We are already looking for new candidates. Our next meeting will be the fourth Thursday of the month at 4:30 p.m. via zoom.

- Connie Beissel reported on behalf of the Dakota County Labor Assembly. We have not met since the last RLF meeting but did screenings at the October meeting. Our next meeting will be the Nov. 12 at 7 p.m. via zoom.

STAFF/LABOR LIAISON REPORTS

- Erica Dalager Reed, AFL-CIO Community Services liaison, announced that the St. Paul Labor Studies and Resource Center will be co-sponsoring their annual Labor-Red Cross Blood Drive with the Saint Paul Regional Labor Federation, Greater Twin Cities United Way and the American Red Cross on

Tuesday, Dec. 1, 2020, from noon to 6:00 p.m. at the Labor Center. The Red Cross has put in place a Practices for COVID Protocol and will be testing all blood for COVID antibodies. One donation of blood can help four people. She also thanked all the volunteers that helped with the USDA food give away. We had 60 volunteers that helped give away 1,333 boxes of food and milk. On Nov. 3, an additional 117 boxes of food were given to UNITE-HERE for their union members who have COVID-19.

- Political organizers Jasmine Kitto and Colleen Nocerini thanked everyone who phone banked remotely or in-person at the Labor Center.

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

Submitted by,
CONNIE BEISSEL
 Acting Secretary-Treasurer



Life-saving support in challenging times

The need for blood remains great during the COVID-19 pandemic, but arranging donation drives is much more challenging, with many schools, churches and community centers limiting in-person contact. Union members helped meet the need for blood Dec. 1 at a drive hosted by the St. Paul Regional Labor Federation, in partnership with the American Red Cross, Greater Twin Cities United Way and the St. Paul Labor Studies and Resource Center. The St. Paul Labor Center's meeting hall allowed enough space for social distancing and other health protocols, and all 22 registered donors were able to give blood, including four first-time donors: Barb Herrington-Hall (top-right), St. Paul Federation of Educators retiree; Mark Krey (bottom-left), SEIU Local 284; and Nicholas Mitchell, CWA Local 7201, who donated with his wife, Amber Mitchell. Each donation has the potential to save three lives, according to the Red Cross.

Union Advocate photos

St. Paul ironworker is among first Tradeswomen Heroes Award honorees nationwide

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)



Jenna Wittner counts the new Public Service Building in Minneapolis as one of her favorite job sites. “I can’t wait to walk by and point that building out, and tell my daughters that I built that,” she said. “Mommy built this with her team.”

submitted photos



Wittner (R) and her wife, Samantha, are expecting twin daughters this winter. Their family lives in St. Paul’s West Side neighborhood.

Discover more online

- Learn more about the Tradeswomen Heroes awards: nabtu.org/twbn
- Explore pathways into the union trades via pre-apprenticeship and other programs: constructioncareers.org

**STAY HEALTHY
KEEP WORKING**

BUILDING TRADES & COVID-19: STOP THE SPREAD
The way we make sure that Building Trades members continue to work during the pandemic is to stay healthy and keep each other safe. You can help Stop the Spread of COVID-19 in Minnesota.
Wear a Mask. Socially Distance. Get Tested. Stay Home. Stay Safe.

For more information visit:
www.MnTrades.org