

# The St. Paul Union Advocate

127th Year, No. 1, Issue 5468

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

June-July 2023

## In This Issue

- 3** State invests in lead-pipe replacement
- 4** Education bill includes UI for hourly workers
- 5** REI workers form union
- 6** Starbucks union strikes again in St. Paul
- 8** SPFE member is state's Teacher of Year
- 10** Labor leaders appointed to U's Board of Regents
- 15** Union job fair rescheduled to June 8
- 16** Unions, Walz pay tribute to fallen workers



Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz signed the refinery safety bill into law May 2 in St. Paul.

Union Advocate photo

## In landslide election, U of M grad workers vote to unionize

A new union of over 4,000 graduate student workers is poised to begin bargaining a first contract with the University of Minnesota after a landslide election victory.

U of M grad workers voted 2,487 to 70 in favor of unionizing in an election conducted April 25-27 by the state's Bureau of Mediation Services.

The election followed an organizing campaign that quickly gained steam this winter on campuses in the Twin Cities and Duluth, with union supporters collecting signatures from two-thirds of eligible workers in four weeks.

In a statement issued by the UMN Graduate Labor Union (GLU-UE), Conservation Sciences grad worker David Wolfson said the results "demonstrate the widespread support for collective bargaining that gives us a seat at the table in determining whether we can make a living wage and be fairly compensated for the work we do every day to make the University system function."

In addition to fair pay, the union has said it looks forward to bargaining for better benefits and working conditions, new grievance procedures, and increased supports for international students and the community.

## At the Capitol

## Walz signs refinery safety bill at St. Paul Pipefitters' training center

By Michael Moore  
*Union Advocate editor*

Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz signed one of labor's top policy priorities into law May 2 at the St. Paul Pipefitters' training center, putting in place new training requirements for tradespeople working at oil refineries in the state.

Surrounded by union members, Walz said the refinery safety measure will help prevent catastrophic accidents like the Husky refinery explosion five years ago in Superior,

Wis., and protect communities surrounding Minnesota's two refineries in St. Paul Park and Rosemount.

"We will not cut corners when it comes to workplace safety in Minnesota," Walz said on the floor of Local 455's apprenticeship training center, located in St. Paul's North End neighborhood. "We are adding safeguards and improving training standards, so that workers can return home safe."

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 13)



[www.stpaulunions.org](http://www.stpaulunions.org)  
Connecting union members in Ramsey, Washington, Dakota and Chisago counties.



Local members of the Postal Workers union held an event last month in Eagan to support a nationwide campaign for better staffing and service across the USPS.

Union Advocate photo

## Union calls on USPS to address short staffing, high turnover

By Michael Moore  
*Union Advocate editor*

Two local chapters of the American Postal Workers Union rallied together last month outside the Eagan Post Office, helping launch a nationwide campaign to address staffing shortfalls that, union members say, are driving down morale, creating unsafe working conditions and

threatening the Postal Service's reputation.

Union members want the agency to hire more workers and take steps to improve retention of new recruits. That means curtailing abusive treatment from management and finding ways to make workloads more manageable, St. Paul Area APWU President Dave Cook said.

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 12)



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# Letters

• Send letters to: 353 W. 7th St., Suite 201, St. Paul, MN 55102  
 • Email them to: [mmoore@stpaulunions.org](mailto:mmoore@stpaulunions.org)

## The Union Advocate

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Gov. Tim Walz visited the site of ongoing lead-pipe replacement work in St. Paul, accompanied (L to R) by Rep. Sydney Jordan, St. Paul Regional Water Services Director Patrick Shea and City Council Member Chris Tolbert. Union Advocate photos

## State to invest \$240 million in replacing lead pipes, part of ‘infrastructure renaissance,’ Walz says

**By Michael Moore**  
*Union Advocate editor*

Minnesota will make a \$240 million, jobs-creating investment in mapping and removing lead water pipes across the state, thanks to legislation signed into law May 16 by Gov. Tim Walz.

Currently, about 100,000 water service lines in the state leach lead into the drinking water they carry, according to an estimate from the state Department of Health. Lead exposure can damage vital organs and slow childhood development.

Walz touted the legislation during an April 20 event in St. Paul’s North End neighborhood, held on a residential street where a union crew from St. Paul Regional Water Services was working on the capital city’s ongoing \$14.5 million initiative to remove and replace lead pipes.

The governor said St. Paul’s program, which taps into funding from the 2021 American Rescue Plan Act, was “visionary” in demonstrating what the state might accomplish with a portion of its \$17.5 billion budget surplus.

“No matter where you live, we’re making investments that will improve your quality of life,” he said. “Our proposal will fund local projects to identify and replace lead pipes across the state at no cost to families and homeowners. Minnesotans deserve to know where their water comes from and that it is safe and healthy.”

Several construction unions, including the Laborers (LIUNA), banded together with environmental groups and local governments to lobby in support of the statewide legislation, authored by Rep. Sydney Jordan (D-Minneapolis) and Sen. Jennifer McEwan (D-Duluth).

The measure drew bipartisan support, passing 64-2 in the Senate and unanimously in the House.

While health risks associated with lead pipes have been known for decades, a statewide approach to identifying and replacing them in residences has long eluded Minnesota lawmakers.

The mechanism they traditionally use to fund major infrastructure projects – bonding – was a non-starter, as the state constitution prohibits bonding funds from improving privately owned property. Water service lines extend from the



Lt. Gov. Peggy Flanagan greeted a crew of Laborers working to replace lead pipes in St. Paul.

public right of way to the private residence.

“You can’t replace half a pipe,” Rep. Jordan quipped at the April 20 event.

Joel Smith, president of LIUNA Minnesota and North Dakota, said the coalition of supporting organizations “worked tirelessly for years” to get lead-pipe removal on state lawmakers’ agenda. The historic budget surplus, bolstered by one-time federal relief funding, created a golden opportunity for action.

“LIUNA members will be put to work to combat the serious and statewide health threat posed by lead water lines, and get the lead out,” Smith said. “The tradespeople who do this work are excited to contribute to protecting the water and health of our communities, lakes and rivers.”

In Ramsey County, SPRWS has ramped up hiring to meet the demand for its lead-pipe replacement initiative, partnering with LIUNA Local 363 on a fast-track career training program tailored for entry-level jobseekers.

“For the folks doing this, it’s really great work,” Walz said. “I really believe we are at the beginning of a great renaissance of infrastructure investments in America.”



Saint Paul educators congratulate The Union Advocate on keeping union members informed for 126 years!

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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Congratulations, Saint Paul Union Advocate, on your 126th anniversary!



## Final K-12 bill includes historic funding increase, unemployment for hourly staff

By Michelle Griffith  
 Minnesota Reformer

A panel of Minnesota lawmakers agreed May 15 to a compromise on education funding and policy provisions that includes a \$2.3 billion boost in school spending.

The 331-page agreement will now go to the DFL-controlled House and Senate for an up-or-down vote and then to Gov. Tim Walz, who is likely to sign it.

"We really did take to heart the issues that we heard from our students and our teachers and our administrators," said Sen. Mary Kunesh, DFL-New Brighton, on Monday. "It's never going to be enough to do all of the work that we need to do for our students, but this is the first step."

The extra \$2.3 billion in education spending for the state's 2024-2025 budget — a 10.16% bump from the previous two years — includes an increase for K-12 schools' general education funding formula, which is the primary source of operating revenue for districts.

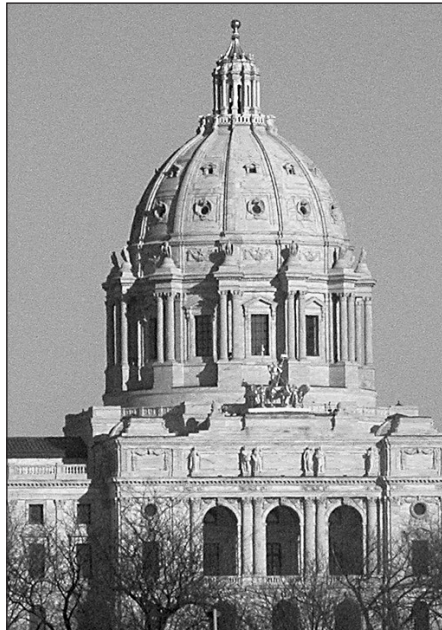
The per-pupil formula distribution is based on district enrollment, as well as the district's student profile. Under the deal agreed to Monday, the formula would increase by 4% in fiscal year 2024 and 2% in fiscal year 2025. Districts would receive \$7,138 per student in fiscal year 2024 — up from the current \$6,683 per student. That's a 6.8% increase.

**"In another victory for the education union, school districts must negotiate with teachers about class size during collective bargaining, according to a provision in different labor legislation also expected to pass."**

In the years following, the formula would be indexed to inflation, with a minimum increase of 2% and a maximum increase of 3%. The cost of the funding formula increase would be \$704 million in 2024-2025, and \$1.3 billion in the following two years.

The agreement also increases special education funding to partially eliminate the so-called special education cross subsidy — a term used around the Capitol referring to school districts paying for special education programs from their general funds because of inadequate state and federal funding.

This often causes districts to ask residents in their local area for property tax levies to help defray the rising cost of special education costs. The agreement would eliminate the cross subsidy by 44% for fiscal years 2024-2026 and 50% for the following years, costing over \$300 million annually.



State lawmakers were in the last week of the legislative session as this edition went to press. Read union reaction to bills passed during the final stretch at [advocate.stpaulunions.org](http://advocate.stpaulunions.org).

In addition, lawmakers came to a compromise over unemployment insurance eligibility expansion, which earlier this session caused school districts to raise concerns about potential unfunded government mandates.

The Senate and House bills originally expanded unemployment insurance eligibility to district hourly workers during the summer months without providing any funding for it. Now, legislators have created an unemployment district aid account for hourly workers, with a one-time \$135 million payment.

In another victory for the education union, school districts must negotiate with teachers about class size during collective bargaining negotiations, according to a provision in different labor legislation also expected to pass.

The education conference committee agreement also includes a number of policy changes. Religious colleges participating in post-secondary enrollment options — when high school students take college courses for credit — can no longer require faith statements from students.

The bill mandates that school employees receive full pay and benefits on remote learning days, and allows teachers to achieve higher licensing status via experience or other nontraditional pathways.

Schools are also required to teach Holocaust and genocide studies in social studies by the 2026-2027 school year. High schools would also need to offer ethnic studies courses by the same year, while elementary and middle schools have an additional year to develop ethnic study classes.

- The Reformer is an independent, nonprofit news organization published at [minnesotareformer.com](http://minnesotareformer.com).

# REI workers in Maple Grove announce union drive

## Union Job and Resource Fair postponed to June 8

The 2023 Union Job and Resource Fair is scheduled from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. June 8 at the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 110 hall, located at 1330 Conway St. in St. Paul.

The job fair was originally scheduled for a different date, but organizers announced last month that they were postponing the event.

Organized annually by the St. Paul Labor Studies and Resource Center and the East Side Freedom Library, the Union Job and Resource Fair 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.

The event is free for jobseekers, with no advance registration required. It will take place both indoors and outdoors, with interview space, resources from nonprofits and application assistance available to jobseekers.

Learn more about the job fair at [eastsidefreedomlibrary.org/events](http://eastsidefreedomlibrary.org/events).

## Labor Center to host June blood drive

Responding to an urgent need for blood, local unions will hold a Red Cross blood drive at the Saint Paul Labor Center from noon to 6 p.m. June 27.

The Regional Labor Federation and its nonprofit, the St. Paul Labor Studies and Resource Center (LSRC), are co-hosting the drive with the American Red Cross and Greater Twin Cities United Way. The Labor Center, located at 353 W. 7th St., offers free off-street parking.

Schedule an appointment to give blood online at [redcrossblood.org](http://redcrossblood.org). Type the donor code SPRLF into the box next to "make an appointment."

Donors may also schedule an appointment by calling Erica Dalager Reed, AFL-CIO Community Services liaison, at 651-222-3787, ext. 120, or emailing [edalager@stpaulunions.org](mailto:edalager@stpaulunions.org).

## March with labor at Twin Cities Pride parade

The Minnesota AFL-CIO will bring union members together to march in the 2023 Twin Cities LGBTQ+ Pride March on June 25.

The parade along Hennepin Avenue, which begins at 11 a.m., typically attracts thousands of spectators. Union members are invited to bring their families, carry their union banners and wear their union colors.

Register for the event to receive lineup information and other reminders at [tinyurl.com/UApride23](http://tinyurl.com/UApride23).

The Minnesota AFL-CIO is the state's largest labor federation, with more than 1,000 affiliate unions representing over 300,000 working people.

A nationwide wave of union activity among REI workers swept into Minnesota last month, as workers at the outdoors retailer's Maple Grove location announced their intent to bargain for better wages and working conditions as members of United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 663.

"My coworkers and I have done this because we all deserve a voice, to be listened to and respected," said Madisen Drinen, a shipping-receiving specialist at the REI in Maple Grove. "We need a living wage, one that increases with inflation."

The new union includes over 40 workers, including sales associates, mechanics and operations specialists.

Union supporters approached their bosses May 10 to show majority support and request voluntary recognition of their bargaining unit. On the same day, they filed a petition with the National

Labor Relations Board requesting a union election, which had not been scheduled at press time.

In a statement announcing the union effort, REI workers said they hoped for a fair and speedy unionizing process, free from retaliation, that would allow them to bargain for wages that match the rising cost of living, consistent and adequate hours, better staffing and a voice in their working conditions.

REI touts itself as a member-driven, outdoors-focused co-op that puts "purpose before profits," according to its website. Anna Jacobsen, a shop mechanic, said a union of REI workers will "help us live our values consistently."

"We need change, and I believe collectively is the way to do it," said Blake Buzzo, a bike and ski mechanic. "Together, we can get corporate to listen."

REI workers across the country are unionizing to hold the company accountable to its stated progressive



values. The Maple Grove location is the ninth in the country where workers have filed for a union election, following efforts in New York, Berkeley, Cleveland, Chicago, Eugene, Boston, Durham and Bellingham, Wash.

UFCW Local 663 represents more than 17,000 workers in Minnesota and Iowa across the food processing, health care and retail sectors.

## Students from St. Paul, White Bear Lake districts among 2023 prize winners for work in labor history

Each year, labor media organizations in Minnesota, including the Saint Paul Union Advocate, sponsor eight cash prizes of \$100 for outstanding work in labor history among entries at the Minnesota State History Day competition.

Prize winners this year, selected during judging in April, included six junior division entries and two from the senior division.

- Eleanor Bowman of Oak Grove Middle School (Bloomington) for her exhibit, "The Keating-Owen Act: Broadening the Frontier in Children's Labor Rights."
- Sylvia Mcroberts of Murray Middle School (St. Paul) for her website, "Pulling Back The Curtain: Eva Valesh And the Impact of Female Undercover Journalism."
- Katherine Lovat of Murray Middle School for her website, "Creating a Frontier: The Matchstick Girls and the



Creation of Labor Rights."

- Elise Miles of Avail Academy (Edina) for her documentary, "Lewis Hine: Abolishing Child Labor through the Frontier of Documentary Photography."
- Eleanor Hern, Juliette Weier-Rauscher and Maeve O'Brien of Sunrise Park Middle School (White Bear Lake) for their exhibit, "Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire."
- Addie Czycalla, Sarah Cronk, Gretchen Heil, Alaina Graham and

Campbell Gores of Twin Oaks Middle School (Prior Lake) for their performance, "What Girls Are Good For: How Nellie Bly Changed the Lives of Women in the Workforce."

• Sonja Holtey of Edina High School for her documentary, "Putting It All On the Line: The Luverne Teachers' Strike of 1975."

• Sam Leslie of Blake School for the research paper "To Be A Luddite: A New Definition of Progress."

Other labor history prize sponsors include the Minneapolis Labor Review, the Duluth Labor World and the University of Minnesota Labor Education Service.

National History Day in Minnesota is a co-curricular program for students in grades 6-12, facilitated annually by union members who work at the Minnesota Historical Society. Learn more about the competition at [mnhs.org/historyday](http://mnhs.org/historyday).



## Let's get together, union members!

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

**Chisago County Assembly**  
June 27 and July 25, 6 p.m.  
To register for the Zoom meeting, email [cnocerini@stpaulunions.org](mailto:cnocerini@stpaulunions.org)

**Ramsey County Assembly**  
June 27 and July 25, 6 p.m.  
Saint Paul Labor Center,  
353 7th Street West

**Dakota County Assembly**  
June 8 and July 13, 7 p.m.  
Dakota County United Educators,  
6950 West 146th St., Apple Valley

**Washington County Assembly**  
June 28 and July 26, 6 p.m.  
Washington County Gov't Center,  
Stillwater.



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# St. Paul baristas strike on one-year anniversary of union vote: 'We're not going away'

By Michael Moore  
*Union Advocate editor*

Workers at Minnesota's first unionized Starbucks store, at Snelling and Stanford avenues in St. Paul, went on strike for a fourth time April 27 - on the one-year anniversary of their historic union election - after management unlawfully removed their union bulletin board.

Workers on the picket line said the bulletin-board stunt is emblematic of Starbucks' do-nothing approach to labor relations since a wave of successful union drives by baristas across the country began 18 months ago.

"Starbucks corporate right now is really trying to take the energy out of the union campaign, I think," barista Kato Nazarian said. "But we're not going away. We're going to be here. We've been here for a year already, and we're going to keep coming out until we get a contract."

Pulling down a union bulletin board isn't just disrespectful - it's illegal, too.

But breaking labor law has become the norm for Starbucks' since the union organizing spree began. The National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), through its



Baristas at the Starbucks on Snelling and Stanford avenues in St. Paul went on strike for the fourth time since winning their union election a year ago. Workers say they have had just one bargaining session with the company, and Starbucks' negotiators walked out within the first five minutes.

*Union Advocate photo*

regional offices, has issued over 80 official complaints against Starbucks, alleging over 1,400 charges of unfair labor practices since late 2021. The charges include illegal surveillance of workers, firing union supporters and failing to bargain in good faith.

Workers at Minnesota's six unionized shops can

attest to Starbucks' failure to bargain.

The company's representatives walked out of separate meetings with bargaining teams from St. Paul and unionized locations in St. Anthony and Minneapolis after just five minutes - and has refused to meet since.

**(CONTINUED ON PAGE 7)**

## Welcoming our new Mortgage Lender, Daniel Lopez!

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(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6)

The same scene has played out in over 100 bargaining sessions nationwide, according to Starbucks Workers United.

“Recently, a (district manager) came in to the store, and she asked if I needed anything from her,” barista Graciela Nira said. “I told her I needed some bargaining dates.”

“It’s been a year and we still haven’t had any bargaining sessions that Starbucks has shown up to,” Nazarian said. “They have refused to release benefits to our store that they’ve released to other stores. They’ve cut down our hours so that we’re extremely short staffed, more so than since I’ve been here. And then they took down our union board.”

The NLRB process is grinding, but Nira, who serves on the union’s national bargaining committee, said she is hopeful it will push Starbucks back to the bargaining table.

Meanwhile, baristas around the country are continuing to organize with Starbucks Workers United, which now represents some 8,000 workers at over 300 U.S. locations.

The national union recently released a list of its contract demands. They include a \$20 starting wage, with cost-of-living adjustments for baristas in high-cost areas.

The union also says it will bargain for grievance procedures, employer-paid health insurance with mental-health coverage, consistent schedules, higher staffing levels and more.

On the picket line in St. Paul, workers said staffing is at the top of their concerns. Their bargaining unit had 20 members when workers petitioned for a union election a year ago. Now it’s down to 12.

“Every day we’re extremely understaffed and over-worked,” Nazarian said. “And we’re not getting the pay



Kato Nazarian (R), a barista at the unionized Starbucks in St. Paul, and Starbucks Workers United organizer Hannah Fogarty chalked the union’s logo onto the sidewalk outside the store. Union Advocate photo

for it. It’s just not sustainable.”

Nazarian and Nira were the two union members who clocked into work at 5 a.m. April 27. Two hours later, as the store was set to open, about 20 co-workers, customers and community supporters showed up in solidarity as they walked off the job.

It was the first strike at the St. Paul location that involved a walkout, and union members pulled it together in about 48 hours, Nazarian said.

“We just want to sit down and bargain,” Nira added.

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**Congratulations,  
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on your 126th year!**



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## Harding math instructor wins state's highest teaching honor

Harding High School math teacher Michael Houston was named the 2023 Minnesota Teacher of the Year at a ceremony May 7 in St. Paul.

Houston is the fifth educator from the St. Paul Public Schools to win the award in the contest's 59-year history. He was a finalist in 2017.

Colleagues praised Houston's dedication to equity and culturally responsive teaching.



Michael Houston

"Michael is passionate about his students and works tirelessly to engage them in the study of mathematics," wrote Kimberley Nichols, a Gordon Parks High School math teacher who previously worked at Harding. "His ability to engage all students, particularly students of color, is exceptional; partly due to his lived experiences as a teacher of color and to his determination to help all students achieve success.

"He meets students where they are, and inspires them to learn deeply."

Raised in a single-parent household by his mother with help from his grandparents, Houston was the first in his family to graduate from college, earning a bachelor's degree from Concordia University, St. Paul, and a master's degree from Hamline University.

He said his teaching philosophy "has always been centered upon creating classroom community."

"In the wake of the pandemic and the ongoing trauma our Harding students have endured, my goal every day is to make sure they have fun in their learning and know they are loved," he added.

In addition to teaching at Harding, Houston also works as adjunct professor at Concordia, teaching math classes to prospective elementary teachers.

Houston's 19-year career at Harding includes 18 years as a football coach - 10 of which he was head coach. At Harding, Houston is the mathematics department chair, a learning team facilitator and union steward.

The Teacher of the Year contest is sponsored by Education Minnesota, the statewide union of 86,000 educators. An independent selection committee - comprised of education, business and government leaders - selects the Teacher of the Year from a pool of nominees who agree to become candidates.

Candidates include pre-kindergarten through 12th-grade teachers, ECFE and ABE teachers from public or private schools.

## New Brookwood Labor college offers arbitration workshop

The final workshop of New Brookwood Labor College's spring term is "Arbitration for Union Activists." The two-day online course will run from noon to 6 p.m. June 11 and from 5:30 to 8:30 June 12.

Participants in the workshop will practice taking an arbitration from start to finish, gaining an increased understanding of each step in the process.

New Brookwood offers a sliding and flexible tuition scale, with support from local unions.

Learn more and register for the workshop online at [newbrookwood.org](http://newbrookwood.org).



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## Turner, Gulley give labor two seats on U of M's Board of Regents

State lawmakers last month appointed two union activists to the University of Minnesota Board of Regents, giving organized labor a voice on the U's governing body for the first time in over a decade.

Minnesota Nurses Association President Mary Turner and Robyn Gulley, a former labor organizer and current training specialist with the Minnesota AFL-CIO, were sworn in as new regents May 12.

"I am honored to have the overwhelming confidence of the Minnesota Legislature to take on this important work for University of Minnesota students, workers and all Minnesotans who benefit from the reach of our incredible public university system," Turner said.

An intensive-care nurse at North Memorial Medical Center, Turner has served as MNA president since 2015, leading the union of 22,000 professionals who work in health care facilities across Minnesota, as well as in Wisconsin, North Dakota and Iowa.

Turner, appointed to a regents seat reserved for Minnesota's 3rd Congressional District, has built a reputation as an outspoken advocate for nurses and patients, earning an appointment to serve as the only frontline healthcare worker on President Joe Biden's COVID-19 Health Equity Task Force in 2021.

"I am excited to get to work with another strong voice for workers, Robyn Gulley, and with all of our fellow Regents to advance an equitable vision for the future of the University of Minnesota," Turner said.

In addition to her work at the Minnesota AFL-CIO, Gulley is the founder and director of the New Brookwood Labor College, a nonprofit,



Mary Turner



Robyn Gulley

non-accredited school dedicated to educating workers in building working class solidarity and power.

Legislators appointed Gulley, who serves on the West St. Paul City Council, to a seat reserved for the 2nd Congressional District.

The last union leader to serve on the Board of Regents was former Minnesota AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Steve Hunter.

Hunter stepped down from the board in 2011. Republican majorities in the Legislature at the time disregarded a tradition that had spanned decades, refusing to appoint a replacement from the labor movement despite the U of M's impact - as an institution and an employer - on the local workforce.

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# STRIKES OF THE WELCOME KIND



Brian Beedle, a regional vice president of the St. Paul Regional Labor Federation, presents trophies to high-game scorers from the second shift at Labor Bowl, Roger Anderson (R) of Machinists Local 459 and Sabrina Doren of AFSCME Local 1842. A retired union carpenter, Beedle crafts unique trophies for the shift winners each year.

Union Advocate photos



High scorers in shift No. 1 were Chris Antoncich of Letter Carriers Branch 28 and Carrie Roth of Laborers Local 563.



High scorers in shift No. 3 were Bob Ryan of Heat and Frost Insulators Local 34 and his daughter, Annamarie.

## Labor Bowl raises over \$32,000 for unions' charitable nonprofit

The Saint Paul Regional Labor Federation and its nonprofit arm, the St. Paul Labor Studies and Resource Center (LSRC), raised over \$32,000 to support the LSRC's work at the 12th Annual Labor Bowl.

Held May 4 at Sun Ray Lanes, the bowling event brought together over 130 bowlers from local unions, partner organizations and sponsors.

The event featured prizes for high- and low-scorers across three shifts, as well as cash raffles and drawings for Minnesota Twins tickets and an autographed bat.

"Thank you to all of the bowlers who joined us at Sun Ray Lanes this year," Regional Labor Federation President Kera Peterson said. "Our thanks also goes out to the generous sponsors and hardworking volunteers who make this event a success."

The St. Paul LSRC is a registered charitable nonprofit organization that assists and advocates for union members and their families each year in Chisago, Dakota, Ramsey and Washington counties.

The LSRC, through its Community Services work, connects union members and their families to several community resources and assistance programs. The LSRC also partners with labor organizations to provide important services such as strike and lay-off preparation, community outreach and coalition building.

"By participating in the Labor Bowl, our bowlers and sponsors have given back to our community and supported an organization that supports the work of organized labor," Peterson said.

Learn more about the LSRC and its work online at [stpaulunions.org/lsrc](http://stpaulunions.org/lsrc).

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## Postal unions launch campaign to address staffing shortage, disrespect from bosses

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

"We get them in the door and they're working six or seven days a week, sometimes 10-, 12- or 14-hour days," Cook said. "And at that point they burn out and decide it's not worth it."

Cook's union represents workers who sort mail and staff the counters of local post offices, as well as those in the regional processing plants like the one nearby in Eagan. The local planned the rally in partnership with APWU Local 7019, which represents employees at one of four Postal Data Centers nationwide, based in Eagan.

Postal union leaders last month issued a call to action, hoping to ramp up public pressure on Postmaster General Louis DeJoy and members of Congress to address the staffing crisis, which has resulted in service delays and long lines at many post offices.

"Service problems are widespread, and no corner of the country has been spared," American Postal Workers Union President Mark Dimondstein.

That is a direct result, union members say, of the agency's inability to retain newly hired workers.

An audit by the USPS Office of Inspector General found that so-called "non-career" postal workers – the agency's term for new hires – had a 58.9% turnover rate in 2022, up from 38.5% in 2019. The top reasons workers cited for quitting were a lack of respect from supervisors and too many hours on the job.

And if it seems like lines at your local post office are getting longer, you're probably right.

The number of retail counter clerks and workers who distribute mail to letter carriers has dropped by over 12% since 2006, from roughly 79,000 to 69,000 nationwide. At the same time, the number of labor-intensive packages delivered by the USPS has skyrocketed,



Dave Cook

and the number of delivery points served by the USPS has increased by 12.8%.

"Constant turnover, constant training, the short staffing has created such a morale problem in the back of your local post offices, your processing facilities that the public doesn't even see," Cook said. "That hurts the service."

But more customers are beginning to take note.

Although an overwhelming majority of Americans still have a favorable opinion of the USPS, the most recent poll released by the Pew Research Center in March 2023 found the agency's favorability rating had slipped to 77%, down from 91% in 2020.

"We are in a snowball effect right now, and it just gets worse by the month," Cook said. "We need to turn that tide."

Union leaders have little faith DeJoy, appointed postmaster general by former President Donald Trump, will act on their allegations of widespread abusive behavior among management in the agency.

"You've got some bad apples in management, and we have some people who walk in every day feeling



Aaron Young

like they're walking on eggshells," Local 7019 President Aaron Young said.

But Young and other labor leaders are holding out hope that Congress will act. They have been pushing federal legislation that would hold the Postal Service to more rigorous service standards, hoping to force the agency to recruit and retain staff necessary to meet them.

"They need to restore the service standards that they had back in 2012," Young said. "Unfortunately, we have a postmaster who came from the private sector. So he's trying to treat it like a business and look only at the bottom line. He's not taking into account the service to people who have depended on it for so many years. It's really disheartening."

Cook said the Eagan rally was "just the start" of a larger, nationwide campaign.

"Postal workers across the country have taken a stand, and we are working with our congressional leaders to hopefully get laws that will create better staffing," he said. "The public wants the post office, and we want to give them a better post office."

## Minnesota's public TV stations to broadcast Farmer Labor documentary this month

A new documentary film on Minnesota's Farmer Labor movement will air on all the state's PBS stations, including TPT Channel 2.2 in the metro area, June 18 and 25.

"The Farmer Labor Movement: A Minnesota Story" explores the most successful third-party in U.S. political history, which grew from a grassroots movement into a political force. The Farmer Labor coalition elected candidates and advanced progressive policies in Minnesota from 1917 until its merger with the Democrats in 1944, forming the Democratic Farmer Labor Party (DFL).

The film presents the voices of Farmer Labor leaders and their descendants, as well as historians and activists. Animated segments bring the personal stories of Farmer-Labor men and women to life, while songs from the period convey the spirit of the movement.

Filmmaker Randy Croce, who planned and co-wrote the film with historians Tom O'Connell and Anna Kurhajec, said the project has sparked lively – and forward-looking – discussions at screenings around the area since its debut last fall.

"We've spent a lot of time talking about the urban-rural divide and the farmer-labor divide, and how can we get back to cooperation between farmers and farmer organizations and unions?" Croce said.

The Farmer Labor movement succeeded in expanding union bargaining rights, saving farms from foreclosure and founding state parks. But many of the its original policy goals are still being debated in the halls of government today.

Farmer Labor tactics could offer lessons for organizers following in their footsteps, Croce said.

"We don't say it in the show, but Farmer-Laborites never had a majority in the State Senate and yet they were able to pass all of these laws and policies with cooperation from a few Republicans and Democrats," Croce said. "They were willing to work together for a better, more equitable and fair society."

"Working across party lines? It sure would be nice to see that again."

"The Farmer Labor Movement" will air June 18 at 7 p.m. and June 25 at 1 a.m., 7 a.m. and 1 p.m. The film and its trailer are also free to stream online at [farmerlaboreducation.com](http://farmerlaboreducation.com).

– Michael Moore, UA editor

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### Women Building Success to present annual awards June 1

The annual Women Building Success awards night, which celebrates women making their careers in the Building Trades unions, will take place June 1, from 4 to 8 p.m. at Kellerman's Event Center, 2222 4th Street in White Bear Lake.

Awards will be presented for Apprentice of the Year, Journeyworker of the Year and Women's Advocate of the Year. The program features a social hour, appetizers and an awards ceremony.

Individuals seeking tickets should reach out to their local union. For more information, visit [womenbuildingsuccess.org](http://womenbuildingsuccess.org).



Pipe Trades Association President David Ybarra touted the safety training that is a critical part of local registered apprenticeship programs, like Steamfitters Pipefitters Local 455 in St. Paul.

Union Advocate photos



Walz signed the refinery safety measure at a union training center. The bill emerged as a top priority for Minnesota's Building and Construction Trades unions after one local refinery replaced local tradespeople with out-of-state contractors.

## New registered apprenticeship standard will apply to oil refineries

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

The new law applies to contractors brought in by refineries to perform construction, demolition, installation, maintenance and repair work, and to handle hazardous material. It phases in a minimum threshold of those tradespeople who must have registered apprenticeship training, beginning with 30% by Jan. 1, 2024, and reaching 60% by Jan. 1, 2026.

Refineries whose contracted workforce fails to meet the minimum threshold could incur fines from the Department of Labor and Industry.

David Ybarra, president of the Minnesota Pipe Trades Association, said it was fitting to hold the bill signing at an apprenticeship training center. Building Trades unions' apprenticeship programs, he said, "represent the gold standard in workforce development," with "best-in-class" safety training specific to each craft.

"This historic bill will help ensure that those working in these inherently dangerous facilities are the best of the best," Ybarra added.

### Trouble with Marathon

Workers at the St. Paul Park oil refinery began sounding the alarm about safety in early 2021, when Marathon locked out members of Teamsters Local 120 for nearly five months after they refused to accept language that would have allowed the refinery to outsource up to 50 jobs.

At the same time, Marathon began severing ties with local contractors that had regularly provided maintenance and other services at the facility. Building Trades unions warned that local laborers, pipefitters and other tradespeople familiar with the refinery had been replaced with subcontractors from across the country.

**"This historic bill will help ensure that those working in these inherently dangerous facilities are the best of the best."**

— David Ybarra,  
Minnesota Pipe Trades Association

Inside the refinery, Teamsters like Dean Benson noticed the difference. During a committee hearing on the bill, he told senators he worked alongside subcontractors who didn't know how to use critical safety equipment, including Minnesota fire hydrants.

"These guys don't know what they don't know, and that's dangerous in a place like the St. Paul Park refinery," Benson said.

Workers' safety concerns gained urgency after a March 20 accident at the Marathon refinery, in which 20,000 gallons of hot asphalt leaked during maintenance repairs, with two workers sustaining severe injuries requiring hospitalization.

### Unions 'drove the conversation'

Sen. Judy Seeberger (D-Afton), whose district includes the Marathon refinery, said the new law "goes to show how boots-on-the-ground folks can affect legislation."

"It ensures that the right person has the right training to do the job," lead House author Rep. Dave Lislegard (D-Aurora) said. "It wasn't union versus non-union, but it was the unions that drove the conversation to get the results."

Seeberger, the lead Senate author, credited her predecessor in office, current Washington County Commissioner Karla Bigham, with laying the political groundwork for the new law.



Judy Seeberger, a first-term state senator whose district includes the St. Paul Park refinery, was a lead author of the bill, carrying forward the work of her predecessor, Karla Bigham, who now serves on the Washington County Board.

But it took a change in Senate leadership to get the bill to Walz's desk.

Two years ago, when Republicans controlled the chamber, Bigham patched together bipartisan support for the measure on the Senate floor, before GOP leaders abruptly withdrew their support as the session drew to a close.

"I'm sorry it took so long for us to get here," Walz told union members during the signing ceremony. "The idea of worker safety becoming a political football is absolutely atrocious."

Kera Peterson, president of the St. Paul Regional Labor Federation, said that the issue was a talking point in unions' member-to-member political campaign in 2022.

"Both of Minnesota's refineries are in the east metro, and we knew this bill was important to workers and our communities," she said. "The signed law is proof that the work union members put into helping elect a labor majority in the Senate had a real impact."

"When I was campaigning for office, I got the message loud and clear that this was something urgently needed to ensure workers in the refinery and the communities around the refinery were as safe as possible," Seeberger added. "While we cannot guarantee the prevention of accidents, we can ensure that we are doing everything we can to make sure the workers at these facilities have the best training available to them."

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# Minutes of the Saint Paul Regional Labor Federation

## MAY 10, 2023

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, Beissel, Edwards, Engeldorf, Gale, Guertin, Hoerth, Madden, Markham-Kocurek, McNamara, Michelson, Peterson, Sansom, Schmidt, Seath, Slattery, Tastad-Damer, VanDassor, Vanderport, Varco and Wynn. Excused were Gibbons, Hill, Hoppe and Ryan. Absent were Luneburg

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

## CREDENTIALS

Credentials were received from LIUNA Local 363. President Peterson administered the Oath of Obligation to those new delegates and alternates in attendance.

## MINUTES

**M/S/C TO APPROVE MINUTES OF APRIL 12, 2023, AS PUBLISHED IN THE UNION ADVOCATE NEWS-PAPER AFTER THE SECRETARY-TREASURER NOTES THERE ARE NO ADDITIONS OR CHANGES CALLED FOR.**

## COMMITTEE ON POLITICAL EDUCATION (COPE) MINUTES MAY 10, 2023

COPE met in regular on the above date and was called to order by President Peterson at 5 p.m. Board members in attendance were Beedle, Beissel, Edwards, Engeldorf, Gale, Guertin, Hoerth, Madden, Markham-Kocurek, McNamara, Michelson, Peterson, Sansom, Schmidt, Seath, Slattery, Tastad-Damer, VanDassor, Vanderport, Varco and Wynn. Excused were Gibbons, Hill, Hoppe, Krey and Ryan. Absent were Lohmann, Luneburg, Mayer and Naseth.

President Peterson gave a legislative update and discussed scheduling candidate screenings for St. Paul School Board and City Council elections.

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

## EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES MAY 10, 2023

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

Items to come before this board included:

- PRESIDENT'S REPORT.

President Peterson gave an update on the Worker's Memorial Day event with the Dakota County Labor Assembly and Building Trades; the results of the Twelfth Annual Labor Bowl; the Seventh Annual Union Job and Resource Fair being changed to Thursday, June 8, 2023 at the IBEW Local 110; Labor-Red Cross Blood Drive date and time to be determined; reaffiliation of Elevator Constructors Local 9; the increase of minimum wage study report that was released and her many visits to multiple unions.

- ORGANIZING: UPDATES/CAMPAIGNS: AFSCME, ATU Local 1005, SEIU Healthcare Minnesota and Iowa, SEIU Local 284, SPFE 28 and UFCW Local 1189 gave updates on their organizing activities.

- THANK YOU NOTE received from Twin Cities Labor Chorus for the RLF's \$120 contribution.

- Action on the following requests:

- M/S/C FOR THE RLF TO SPONSOR A TEAM OF FOUR AT A COST OF \$125 PER GOLFER TO THE ST. PAUL BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION TRADES COUNCIL'S ANNUAL GOLF TOURNAMENT.

- M/S/C FOR THE RLF TO PURCHASE A TABLE OF EIGHT AT A COST OF \$750 TO THE 36TH ANNUAL NELLIE STONE JOHNSON SCHOLARSHIP DINNER.

- M/S/C FOR THE RLF TO MAKE A \$500 CONTRIBUTION TO IUPAT DISTRICT 82 20TH ANNUAL PATCH DAY GOLF FUNDRAISER.

- M/S/C FOR THE RLF TO MAKE A \$500 CONTRIBUTION TO THE JEAN JONES SCHOOL SUPPLY INITIATIVE.

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

## REPORT OF THE TREASURER

Secretary-Treasurer Engeldorf reported on the financial status of the Federation as of April 2023. The report was accepted as read.

## REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES

- Michael Madden reported on behalf of the Chisago County Labor Assembly. An individual who was a previously labor-endorsed board member was appointed to fill a vacancy on the Chisago Lakes School Board. Our next meeting will be on the fourth Tuesday of the month via zoom at 6:00 p.m.

- Connie Beissel reported on behalf of the Dakota County Labor Assembly. Held a Worker's Memorial Day service on Friday, April 28 at Lebanon Cemetery of Apple Valley. We will be planning our school supply fundraiser starting next month. Screening for ISD 196 candidates will start early fall. Our next meeting will be the second Thursday of the month at 7:00 p.m. in person. Contact Colleen Nocerini or Kera Peterson if you would like to be included.

- Brian Beedle reported on behalf of the Washington County Labor Assembly. He discussed the FARE for ALL program in Washington County. We are in the process of recruiting volunteers/recipients. He attended the MN AFL-CIO State Retiree's fundraiser and is planning on attending the Nellie Stone Johnson

Scholarship dinner. Our next meeting will be the fourth Wednesday of the month at 6:00 p.m.

- Martin Hoerth reported on behalf of the Ramsey County Labor Assembly. We will be starting screenings for St. Paul City Council and School Board. Our next meeting will be on the fourth Wednesday of the month via zoom at 6:00 p.m.

## PRESIDENT REPORT

President Peterson reported on the following: the RLF's presence at the Capitol, at union contract negotiations and worksite actions; spending time with AFSCME members at St. Paul and the U of MN, as well as ATU members, Postal Workers, Retirees' at their Fu(n)draiser, SEIU HC MN and IA members and the Starbucks workers; successful Labor Bowl fundraiser; the Federal Reserve release of the increase in minimum wage study report; and the Elevator Constructors Local 9 reaffiliating with the RLF.

## STAFF/LABOR LIAISON REPORTS

Erica Dalager Reed, AFL-CIO Community Services Liaison, reported on the change of date for the Union Job and Resource Fair to Thursday, June 8, 2023, at the IBEW Local 110 hall.

## NEW BUSINESS

Announcement that Connie Beissel has been named Letter Carrier Retiree of the year for 2023.

## GOOD AND WELFARE

- Tony McGarvey, IUPAT District Council 82, won the primary to advance to a special election for Brooklyn Park City Council.
- The recycling workers, members of Teamsters Local 120, are in contract negotiations with Eureka.

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

Submitted by,  
**BERNADINE ENGELDORF**  
Secretary-Treasurer

## Labor assembly honors fallen workers




The Dakota County Labor Assembly (DCLA) held its annual Workers Memorial Day observance April 28 in Apple Valley's Lebanon Cemetery. State lawmakers, local clergy and labor leaders attended the ceremony, which featured a performance by the Twin Cities Labor Chorus. Workers Memorial Day commemorates the passage of the federal Occupational Safety and Health Act in 1970. "We should take this opportunity to reflect on the need to revitalize our commitment to improving health and safety in the workplace, and to change laws to help keep workers safe," DCLA Chair Connie Beissel said. The DCLA dedicated a monument to fallen workers in Lebanon Cemetery several years ago.

submitted photo

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## Official notice regarding SPRLF endorsements

At its monthly delegate meetings June 14 and July 12, 2023, the Saint Paul Regional Labor Federation, AFL-CIO, may consider recommendations for labor endorsement in upcoming municipal and school board elections, as well as endorsement of school funding referenda.

For more information, or to learn more about the endorsement process, call 651-222-3787.

# Building Trades observe Workers Memorial Day with tribute, call to action

By Michael Moore  
Union Advocate editor

Unions in the Twin Cities and across the U.S. held ceremonies April 28, on Workers Memorial Day, to honor those who died in the previous year due to work-related injuries or illnesses, and to rededicate their organizations to the cause of workplace safety.

At the Workers Memorial Garden on the Minnesota Capitol grounds, Gov. Tim Walz and Labor Commissioner Nicole Blissenbach paid their respects to seven union tradespeople who lost their lives in the last year due to construction accidents or illnesses acquired in the field.

“There’s about 5.8 million Minnesotans that aren’t here, and every single one of them knows how important this work is,” Walz said during the rain-soaked ceremony, organized by the Building Trades councils of St. Paul and Minneapolis. “And one of the few things that unify us is that we need to do everything possible to protect workers who are putting themselves out there.”

Family members or fellow union members held a white cross for each fallen worker honored at the ceremony. A bell tolled as Minnesota Building and Construction Trades Council President Dan McConnell read each name, and Secretary-Treasurer Don Mullin draped a black sash over each cross.

“Today we gather to remember seven fallen brothers, and to rededicate ourselves to the core mission of our unions: to advocate for our members’ safety and well-being,” McConnell said. “I’m sure you’ll agree with me that the seven brothers we honor today are too many and our work is far from done.”

The seven union members honored at the ceremony were:

- Terry Westemeier, a member of Operating Engineers Local 49 who died in a worksite accident.
- Roger Peterson, a Heat and Frost Insulators Local 34 retiree who died of asbestosis.
- Robert Alcure, a member of Carpenters Local 322 who died in a worksite fall.
- Peter Davis, a member of Laborers Local 563 who died in a worksite accident.
- Kent Lursen, a member of Sheet Metal Workers Local 10 who died in a worksite accident.
- Brad Wojtysiak, a member of Local 49 who died in a worksite accident.
- Arthur Stephen, a member of Local 563 who died in a motor-vehicle accident on his way to the job site.

“Look to the horizon – north, south, east and west,” St. Paul Building Trades President Dean Gale said during a prayer to open the ceremony. “What is it we see? We see the buildings, the roads, the bridges, the infrastructure built by skilled craftsmen.

“The heart and soul of our brothers and sisters went into these buildings,



Robert Alcure, a member of Carpenters Local 322 who died in a worksite fall in February, was among those honored at the Workers Memorial Day ceremony. Family members who held the cross in his memory included (L to R) son Arlo Alcure, sisters Patricia Deangelis and Julianne DeNicola, partner Kaitlin Hughes and ex-wife Tara Alcure.

Union Advocate photos



Gov. Tim Walz offers condolences to Mike Abel and Kristi Davis, whose husband, Laborers Local 563 member Peter Davis, died in a September 2022 construction accident in St. Paul.

and we must not take that for granted.”

An analysis of workplace safety data from 2021, issued by the AFL-CIO earlier this year, uncovered a troubling rise in worker deaths, particularly among Black and Latino workers. The report, “Death on the Job: The Toll of Neglect,” found that 5,190 U.S. workers were killed on the job that year, and an esti-

estimated 120,000 more died from occupational diseases.

The overall job fatality rate increased to 3.6 per 100,000 workers. It was higher for Black (4.0) and Latino (4.5) workers.

“It is unconscionable that in the wealthiest nation in the world, Black and Latino workers are facing the high-

est on-the-job fatality rates in nearly two decades,” AFL-CIO President Liz Shuler said. “This report is more than a wake-up call, it is a call to action. No one should have to risk their lives for their livelihoods.”

Shuler and other labor leaders called on lawmakers to increase funding for OSHA, noting that the federal agency currently has enough resources to inspect every workplace once every 190 years. Even including state agencies like Minnesota OSHA, there are just 1,871 inspectors – 900 at the federal level and 971 at the state – to safeguard workers at more than 10.8 million workplaces.

Minnesota saw 80 workplace fatalities in 2021, a rate of 2.8 deaths per 100,000 workers. The construction industry saw the highest number of fatalities, with 17.

Blissenbach, whose agency is charged with oversight of workplace health and safety in Minnesota, said every death on the job is tragic, in part, because it was preventable.

“On this Workers Memorial Day, my pledge to you is that the department will continue to work towards a day when we can gather here, reflect on our work and not read the name of a single worker,” she said. “So let’s work together and do all we can do to make sure every worker gets the protections they need and deserve.”