

# The St. Paul Union Advocate

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

February 2024

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

## FORCED TO FIGHT FOR FAIR CONTRACTS



St. Paul educators held a contract rally Jan. 23. It was one of several staged in school districts across the state during this bargaining cycle, despite a historic, \$2.3 billion increase in public education funding over the next two years. Many union leaders say their districts are lowballing educators at the table, and less than half of Education Minnesota's 328 affiliates had settled by Jan. 18 – a pace well behind typical cycles. In the Anoka-Hennepin district, educators nearly went on strike last month before the district upped its offer from 2% raises to 8% over the next two years. "There are no excuses why they can't do the same thing here," St. Paul union president Leah VanDassor said. "They need to know that we're not playing around."



Union Advocate photos

## Walz floats infrastructure jobs bill worth nearly \$1 billion

By Michelle Griffith  
*Minnesota Reformer*

Gov. Tim Walz last month proposed spending nearly a billion dollars to update the state's roads, improve public safety and protect Minnesota's drinking water, among many other projects.

Walz's \$982 million public works proposal comes about eight months after the Minnesota Legislature approved the largest infrastructure package in the state's history. Lawmakers approved a \$2.6 billion infrastructure bill – known around the Capitol as a bonding bill because the state typically relies on borrowed money – after a split Legislature had stalled critical public works spending for two years.

Infrastructure packages are normally passed during even years, which also happen to be election years, when candidates can brag about bringing projects home to their districts. Walz said his nearly \$1 billion proposal – \$819 million in general obligation bonds, the rest in other financing and cash – will move the state into "the golden age of construction and infrastructure in Minnesota."

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 9)

## St. Paul lawmaker vows to act on health care for MSP Airport workers if MAC won't

By Michael Moore  
*Union Advocate editor*

Airport workers are dialing up the pressure on employers at Minneapolis St. Paul International Airport and the airport's governing body to do something to make their health insurance more affordable.

Health benefits have been a sticking point in separate negotiations covering two groups of workers at MSP Airport, about 450 airline catering workers represented by

UNITE HERE Local 17 and over 1,000 wheelchair agents, cabin cleaners, cart drivers and others represented by Service Employees (SEIU) Local 26.

Membership surveys have shown the overwhelming majority of low-wage airport workers do not access their employer-sponsored health insurance, instead relying on government programs for coverage.

Their unions have been fiercely lobbying

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 6)



State Sen. Erin Murphy spoke during a press conference held by unions at MSP Airport in December.  
Union Advocate photo

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 • Email them to: [mmoore@stpaulunions.org](mailto:mmoore@stpaulunions.org)

## The Union Advocate

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# ORGANIZE MORE IN 2024

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**12-29-23**  
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### Labor Voices: Liz Shuler

## The 'Year of Labor' in 2023 was just the beginning

When Alicia Weaver, a guest room attendant at the MGM Grand Detroit, went on strike last year with UNITE HERE, she didn't know how long she would be on the picket line. All she knew was she and her co-workers deserved more: Better wages, after 24 years on the job; decent health care, so she didn't have to choose between a doctor's visit and paying rent; a chance to grow professionally and have a future at the company - something that hit home for Alicia as she looked down the strike line and saw her own son, also an MGM Grand Detroit employee. After 47 days on the picket line in the Detroit winter - in rain and freezing temperatures - Alicia and her co-workers won historic raises, benefits, job security and opportunities to grow their careers.

When people ask me why the labor movement just had its most dynamic and successful year in a generation, I tell them about workers like Alicia - people whose lives changed because they stood together with their co-workers. For all the talk about macro trends and economic factors, the driving force behind the "Year of Labor" was simple: Being in a union makes your life better.

We're in a moment of profound uncertainty and disillusionment across this country. Americans are fed up with politicians, institutions and the status quo. Approval ratings for Congress and most major institutions have plummeted to well below 50%. The labor movement is the one exception. Polling shows 71% of Americans believe in unions - more than two-thirds of people in this country, the highest number in the past 60 years. Unions are where people seem to have increasingly placed their hopes, their dreams and their aspirations for a better future.

It's not hard to see why. Look around at the wins workers have earned, together, and the real change it makes in their lives and their families' futures: UAW, which won 25% pay raises for employees' new contracts with the Big 3 automakers. The Teamsters, who took on UPS and won historic safety protections and wage increases. The Writers Guild of America and SAG-AFTRA, who stood up to the Hollywood studios and won protections against artificial intelligence (AI) that provide security and peace of mind. Some 900,000 union members secured double-digit wage increases this year in their new contracts. That's the power of solidarity.

**"Right now, we need to make sure every road leads to a union."**

- AFL-CIO President Liz Shuler



People also look at the labor movement and see that it increasingly looks like them. We're bringing together people of every background - white, Black, brown, Asian American and Pacific Islander, and Indigenous; young and old; white collar and blue collar - to take on the absurd economic inequality. We are working in common cause, and we are winning.

So, where do we go in 2024? The AFL-CIO (where I serve as president) represents 60 unions and 12.5 million workers across this country, and our goal is simple: To make sure every working person has a good job that pays a living wage. A job where they are treated with dignity and respect. A job where they are free to come together and organize with their co-workers when things aren't right. For decades, whenever workers have tried to improve their lives in this country, they've run into roadblocks. Right now, we need to make sure every road leads to a union.

We're doing that by organizing the new sectors of the economy. All over the South, billions of dollars from President Biden's historic infrastructure packages are being invested in clean energy projects, many driven by companies like Blue Bird, an electric bus manufacturer, whose workers organized with the United Steelworkers (USW) - and we'll do the same thing across the South and the whole country, setting a standard that every job created by these investments is a good, high-wage, union job.

- Liz Shuler is president of the AFL-CIO and the first woman elected to lead America's labor movement. Her column originally appeared online at *The Messenger*, and it is reprinted in *The Advocate* with permission from the AFL-CIO's blog, [aflcio.org](http://aflcio.org).

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

# Doctors at Mercy-Unity win union recognition

After months of appeals, motions and hearings, physicians at Allina Health's Mercy and Unity Hospital campuses in Fridley won recognition of their union last month, when the National Labor Relations Board's regional director issued a ruling that affirms the results of a union election in March 2023.

That groundbreaking election – the first successful union drive among doctors locally – saw Mercy and Unity physicians vote 67 to 38 in favor of bargaining together as members of Doctors Council SEIU, a union with affiliates nationwide. The bargaining unit has since grown to about 140 members.

Rather than recognize the physicians' decision, Allina Health filed an appeal to overturn the election, contending that the duties of some physicians who participated in the vote made them ineligible for the bargaining unit.

In pursuing the appeal, union members said, Allina chose to direct the organization's energy and resources

toward stifling physicians' collective voice, rather than engaging with them on the issues that prompted their organizing drive.

"Mercy Hospital physicians have endured numerous tactics aimed at undermining their unionization efforts, including allegations of intimidation and the invasion of personal communications by Allina Health," Doctors Council SEIU said in a press release announcing recognition of the Mercy-Unity unit. "These actions have raised serious concerns about the respect and fairness of the workplace environment.

"Allina's efforts to delay recognition through appeals of an election won by a large margin in a secret ballot government-supervised election show disregard for the democratic process. These appeals not only hindered the timely acknowledgment of the physicians' democratic choice but also squandered precious dollars on legal fees that could have been better spent on patient care."

Allina agreed to drop its appeal and recognize the Mercy-Unity bargaining unit last month, after the NLRB regional director sided with the union.

The victory means Allina now has two groups of unionized physicians. About 600 primary- and urgent-care clinicians across Allina's network voted to unionize last October.

As the new union shifts its focus to bargaining a first contract with Allina, Dr. Dawn Anderson said she and other physicians at Mercy and Unity look forward to shaping their working conditions and advocating for improved patient care.

"For us, it's not just about our working conditions but about the community we serve and our future physicians," Anderson said. "This victory is a testament to our commitment to ensuring that our voices are heard and respected. It's a step forward in enhancing the quality of care we provide to our patients and in creating a more supportive and equitable environment for current and future doctors."

## Construct Tomorrow plans Minneapolis expo

Construct Tomorrow, a partnership of union contractors and apprenticeship training centers in Minnesota, holds events across the state to introduce Minnesota high schoolers to career opportunities in the construction trades, with an upcoming event at the Earl Brown Heritage Center in Minneapolis on Feb. 14.

Educators and school counselors are encouraged to register groups for the career expo, where local union apprenticeship programs set up interactive, hands-on activities to give participants a taste of work in their specific craft. Visit [constructtomorrow.org](http://constructtomorrow.org) to learn more.

Union apprenticeships offer earn-as-you-learn career opportunities in high-demand fields, blending traditional coursework with paid, on-the-job training. Learn more about apprenticeship programs at [mntrades.org](http://mntrades.org).

## St. Croix Valley retirees to talk politics

The St. Croix Valley Retiree Club, an affiliate of the Minnesota AFL-CIO's State Retiree Council, will hold a meeting Feb. 12 at the Bayport Senior Center, beginning at 10:15 a.m. Retired union members and their families are welcome to attend.

The agenda includes a discussion of the Labor 2024 political program, led by Carol Freeman, the State Retiree Council's election work coordinator. The council's goal between now and Election Day is to educate union retirees on what happened in 2023 at the state and federal levels that benefits workers.

The Senior Center is located at 342 N. Fifth Ave. For more information on the St. Croix Valley Retiree Club, contact Judith Atkins at [blondes1fun@comcast.net](mailto:blondes1fun@comcast.net).

## Get History Day help at Freedom Library

The East Side Freedom Library in St. Paul makes mentoring and resources available to students participating in the 2024 National History Day each Saturday morning, from 10 a.m. to noon.

The independent, nonprofit library has been working with local History Day students for the last nine years. Its team of experienced mentors have many ideas to inspire students tackling this year's theme, "Turning Points in History," from projects on racial justice and labor activism to women's rights, immigrant history, LGBTQ+ movement, environmental activism and more.

Interested students are invited to make an appointment to meet with a mentor by emailing [peter@eastsidefreedomlibrary.org](mailto:peter@eastsidefreedomlibrary.org). The ESFL is located at 1105 Greenbrier St. in St. Paul.

Learn more about the ESFL and its offerings at [eastsidefreedomlibrary.org](http://eastsidefreedomlibrary.org).



National Association of Letter Carriers President Brian Renfroe spoke during the rally for carrier safety in Minneapolis. NALC photo

## Letter Carriers say 'Enough is Enough' to increased assaults

The National Association of Letter Carriers rallied Jan. 7 at the main post office in downtown Minneapolis, sounding the alarm that their members are reporting a troubling increase in assaults and robberies on their routes.

The issue drew increased public attention in November, when two members of NALC Branch 9 were robbed at gun point on consecutive days, first in Edina and then in Brooklyn Center. Neither was physically harmed, but the experiences leave mental and emotional scars, union leaders said.

NALC President Brian Renfroe called on the Postal Service to better protect its workers – and on prosecutors to prosecute the crimes to the full extent of the law. Renfroe said just 14% of attacks against letter carriers since 2020 have been prosecuted.

"It's unacceptable, it's appalling and it's out of control," he said.



# 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

February 27th, 6 p.m.

To register for the Zoom meeting, email [cnocerini@stpaulunions.org](mailto:cnocerini@stpaulunions.org)

### Dakota County Assembly

February 8th, 7 p.m.

Dakota County United Educators, 6950 West 146th St., Apple Valley

### Ramsey County Assembly

February 27th, 6 p.m.

Saint Paul Labor Center, 353 7th Street West

### Washington County Assembly

February 28th, 6 p.m.

Washington County Gov't Center, Stillwater.



[www.stpaulunions.org](http://www.stpaulunions.org)

## Local Planned Parenthood workers ratify first union contract

By Michael Moore

Union Advocate editor

Planned Parenthood North Central States workers in Minnesota and four other states voted to ratify their first union contract last month, capping a tumultuous round of negotiations with the reproductive health organization, where workers voted to unionize in July 2022.

The new contract takes effect retroactively to Jan. 1 and covers about 430 members of PPNCs United, who will see immediate gains in wages and health benefits, according to the union.

The contract establishes a 15-year wage scale and provides raises of 11.75% over three years, including a 4.5% increase in year No. 1. For Planned Parenthood's lowest-paid employees, a new \$19 minimum wage, combined with the first-year wage hike, will mean 17% increase in their pay.

"That's a huge victory," said PPNCs triage nurse Nicole Anschutz, who served on the union's bargaining team. "Some staff who were getting \$17 an hour are seeing that increase to almost \$20 per hour immediately."

Union members also won grievance and arbitration rights and a progressive discipline process that requires just cause for terminations - no small victory for a union whose elected leaders alleged that they were targeted and intimidated by management away from the bargaining table.

Anschutz joined the bargaining team after a wave of resignations and firings, prompted by PPNCs management's move to deliver "final written notices" to all 14 workers elected to represent their union in negotiations. With no grievance or arbitration process in place, union members filed charges of unfair labor practices with the National Labor Relations Board last March - and are still awaiting a decision.

"There were other staff that weren't a part of the bargaining team that were fired during this process for various reasons too, and we couldn't fight that," Anschutz said.

Shay Gingras, a senior research coordinator who served on the union's bargaining team from the start, noted that the process has played out as PPNCs and its workers face new challenges - and



Union negotiators credited an informational picket in November at several locations, including the St. Paul Health Center, with pressuring management to improve its health care offer at the bargaining table.

Union Advocate photo

attacks - in the wake of the Supreme Court's decision to overturn Roe v Wade.

"We've lost too many amazing staff members because of issues we have been facing inside and outside of the organization, so I am happy we won protections and other gains to recognize our important work supporting our patients," Gingras said. "As an original bargaining team member, I'm so proud of our team who have fought so hard for so long to win these gains. This has been a really long and difficult process and our fight will continue, but I'm really proud of what we were able to win in this first contract."

Union leaders and PPNCs reached a tentative agreement on the three-year contract in their 37th bargaining session. Among members who participated in the ratification vote, 84% voted to approve the deal.

Nothing came easily at the bargaining table, committee members said, and union members steadily dialed up their public pressure on the PPNCs leadership to settle a fair contract. Informational picketing in November outside several facilities, including in St. Paul, had an immediate impact, according to Anschutz.

"Prior to the informational picket, the

employer had made it very clear we were going to get nothing on health insurance," she said. "After the informational picket, we started getting things done on health insurance."

James Willging, a senior community organizer at PPNCs, said health insurance will become more affordable - especially for workers with children and families - under the new contract.

"This contract gives frontline staff more stability so we can focus on the critical work we do every day," Willging said. "We hope this will help address our staffing shortage so we can provide the compassionate and kind care our patients deserve."

Although they celebrated their first contract, Anschutz and other union leaders were quick to note that their union's work in support of workers' rights and abortion rights is not done.

"It seemed impossible at times, like it's never going to happen," Anschutz said. "I didn't expect to cry as much as I did in the whole process. But it's worth it to have the protections we have now and this foundation that we can build upon in the future."

PPNCs United is an affiliate of SEIU Healthcare Minnesota and Iowa.

## Nurses named most trusted profession for 22nd straight time

After Gallup released the results last month of a nationwide poll that determined nurses to be the most honest and ethical profession for the 22nd consecutive year, union nurses in Minnesota took the opportunity to urge lawmakers to place that same trust in their warnings about corporate greed and patient care in the state's hospitals.

"Nurses greatly value the trust and understanding we share with our patients as we both face the consequences of executives' corporate greed in our hospitals," said Chris Rubesch, a registered nurse and newly elected president of the Minnesota Nurses Association. "Nurses urge lawmakers to place that same trust in nurses and make the changes patients and nurses need to address corporate greed and protect care and working conditions at the bedside."

In the Gallup poll, conducted in December 2023, 78% of U.S. adults said nurses have "high" or "very high" honesty and ethical standards.

The Gallup report notes that "[the] image of many professions - particularly those in the medical field -- sharply improved in 2020 amid the COVID-19 pandemic. However, that effect was short-lived... a select few - led by nurses for the 22nd consecutive year - maintain overall positive ratings." The Gallup poll also found that while most professions "show at least slightly lower ratings in the past year," labor union leaders were an exception to this trend.

At the Capitol and at the bargaining table, MNA members have been sounding the alarm about staffing and care issues related to high attrition rates among hospital nurses. MNA pins the blame squarely on corporate greed among Minnesota hospital executives.

Last year nurses championed the bipartisan Keeping Nurses at the Bedside Act, a comprehensive approach to nurse staffing and retention. But the bill died at the 11th hour after the Mayo Clinic's last-ditch threats to scale back planned development on its Rochester campus.

## Over 100 Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid workers voting in union election with AFSCME Council 5

About 110 staff members at Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid are participating in a union election this month after an overwhelming majority of workers signed a petition to join together and bargain collectively as members of the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) Council 5.

Based in Minneapolis, MMLA is the state's largest nonprofit law firm, and its employees are seeking to form a "wall-to-wall" union of workers from across the state, "reaching every office, unit,

and job category within our organization," according to an announcement by Council 5.

"Workers at Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid fight to ensure that our clients - Minnesotans with disabilities, low-income Minnesotans - have access to dignity and justice in the civil legal system," the statement continued. "It is long past time that the workers of Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid are afforded the same basic protections."

MMLA denied staff members' request for voluntary union recognition after they

filed their petition with the National Labor Relations Board in late December.

Management has since challenged the eligibility of certain professional employees - including assistant supervising attorneys and managing attorneys - to participate in the bargaining unit with members of other job classifications, like paralegals, legal assistants, advocates and support staff.

The NLRB will issue a ruling on who is eligible for the bargaining unit, if necessary, after counting votes in the mail-in election Feb. 21.

MMLA recently hired a new executive director, who is scheduled to begin work Feb. 26.

MMLA diversity outreach advocate Demitrea Kelley said she is supporting the union "because I believe in the power of collective bargaining to secure fair wages, enhance working conditions and ensure equity in the workplace."

"A union gives us a stronger voice to advocate for a more inclusive and respectful environment that values the diverse contributions of every employee," she added.

# Teamster flight attendants to Sun Country: 'Time for us to get paid'

By Michael Moore  
Union Advocate editor

Nearly five years into their campaign for a new union contract, flight attendants at Minnesota-based Sun Country Airlines are still fighting for their fair share of the company's growing profits.

Members of Teamsters Local 120, which represents over 600 flight attendants at Sun Country, held informational picketing Jan. 10 outside Terminal 2 at Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport, showing support for their bargaining team just weeks after its first round of mediation with the airline.

The two sides, who began their most recent round of contract talks in 2019, filed jointly for assistance from a federal mediator after flight attendants voted overwhelmingly to reject a "best and final" offer from Sun Country last May, with 96% of participating union members voting "no."

Union negotiator and veteran flight attendant Tanya Devito said her union introduced "realistic" proposals during the first mediated session that would establish pay and work rules on par with flight attendants at Frontier, Allegiant and other airlines comparable to Sun Country.

"They can do with it what they want, but this group is not going to accept anything less than that," Devito said. "We would rather have shot for the moon, but we didn't. We put in realistic expectations that we need in order to get a (tentative agreement) voted in."

## Compensation is key

Specifically, Sun Country flight attendants are looking to advance through their wage scale faster in a new contract.

Devito, who has 32 years of experience with the airline, is still two years shy of Sun Country's top wage rate. Meanwhile, flight attendants at Allegiant Air reach top scale in 12 years. At Spirit Airlines it takes 13.

"We're losing good people," said Elaine Rishovd, a flight attendant and chief steward for Local 120. "Many junior flight attendants, they maybe last a year or two before they're gone. They can't live on the salary they pay here. They could be three or four years into the scale here, and within a year or two they're going to be beyond that someplace else."

## Unpaid until the door closes

Additionally, Local 120 members want contract language that will lower the cap on "duty hours" they can be required to work during a shift. Currently, Sun Country can schedule flight attendants to travel up to 22 hours on a shift, but that doesn't mean they're earning wages the entire time.

"We check in one hour before flight to do our pre-checks while passengers get on, and we're not getting paid," Rishovd said. "Maybe there's a weather or a mechanical delay. We do not get paid until that door closes."



Flight attendants picketed outside Minneapolis-St. Paul Airport, showing support for their bargaining team as it continued mediated talks with Sun Country Airlines.

"On the other end, when the door opens, we don't get paid anymore. There are so many hours when we are on duty but we're not getting paid."

Sometimes Sun Country flight attendants will work four flights in shift that lasts 14 duty hours - and collect just six hours' worth of wages, said 27-year-veteran flight attendant LaNeia Huberty.

"Those days are really hard, really rough," Huberty said. "And technically, we're there for safety. You don't want your flight crew exhausted. We need to be sharp."

## Steady growth, stalled wages

The so-called "hometown airline" can afford to do better by its flight attendants, too, Huberty and other members of the bargaining team said.

Sun Country has grown steadily since emerging from the pandemic travel disruption and reported record profits in 2023 - thanks, in part, to sacrifices made by its flight attendants, who estimate that they saved the company \$4 million by taking voluntary, unpaid leaves after the 2020 outbreak.

"We've always put ourselves last, always thought about the company and if it's doing good or bad," Huberty said. "We want Sun Country to be here and grow, but we want to be compensated. It's time for us to get paid."

Local 120 and Sun Country were scheduled to resume mediation this month, with additional dates in April, May and June.



Sun Country's flight attendants are seeking compensation in line with industry peers like Frontier, Spirit and Allegiant.

## Tradeswomen photo contest accepting entries

Tradeswomen have until Feb. 16 at 4 p.m. to submit their entries to Women Building Success' 2024 Photo Contest, which will give away over \$1,500 in prizes to winning photographers at an event March 6 at the Ironworkers Hall in St. Paul.

The contest is open to all union tradeswomen, who are eligible to compete in three categories: Me at Work, Job Sites, and Tools/Craftsmanship.

Three finalists in each category will be selected before the March 6 event, where attendees will vote on the winners. There will be food and other festivities at the event, which will run from 4 to 6:30 p.m. Send entries to [events@womenbuildingsuccess.org](mailto:events@womenbuildingsuccess.org).

Women Building Success is a non-profit devoted to recognizing, celebrating and promoting the success of women in union construction trades.

# Senate leader Murphy pledges support for health care mandate at MSP Airport

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

the Metropolitan Airports Commission (MAC) in recent years to pass a minimum standard for affordable health insurance that all MSP-based employers would be required to offer.

In a press conference the week before Christmas, union members announced they had gained a powerful ally in the campaign, Assistant Senate Majority Leader Erin Murphy (D-St. Paul). If airport leaders and employers fail to act, Murphy said, she will introduce a bill mandating that MSP employers offer affordable health coverage.

"We don't have the benefit of travel without the people who staff our airports," Murphy said. "These are physical jobs, where they can be injured in the workplace. They are working in close proximity to other people where they could easily catch something. They need meaningful health care coverage to protect themselves and to protect their families."

Determining health benefits "is rightfully done at the bargaining table," Murphy added. But if she and other lawmakers don't see workers and management reach a negotiated solution, they will look for a legislative fix.

Sheigh Freeberg, secretary-treasurer of UNITE HERE Local 17, welcomed Murphy's support.

"We've pushed employers for affordable health care, and they've said no," Freeberg said. "We've pushed the air-



Sheigh Freeberg, secretary-treasurer of UNITE HERE Local 17, said most of the union's members who work in airline catering cannot afford to access employer-provided health insurance. Union Advocate photo

port council ... for affordable health care, and they've said no. We are continuing those fights, but we are excited to have state Sen. Erin Murphy ... to fix this problem at the state level if those who have the direct power will not."

MSP Airport workers have succeeded in lobbying the MAC for higher

standards in recent years, including a minimum wage above \$15 per hour and a mandate requiring employers to offer paid sick days. But union leaders say workers' lack of access to health coverage remains a stain on MSP Airport's reputation.

In a recent survey of nearly 300 air-

port workers from 17 different employers, just 15.2% of workers who reported having health insurance said they access the benefit from their employer.

"The workers who make this an award-winning airport continue to show up day after day, and they will step up and make sure that the (passenger) experience is great, that the spaces are clean and that the food is delivered on time," Freeberg said. "It is time for those in power to do the same and step up to make sure that these workers have affordable health care. We are not going to stop fighting until they do."

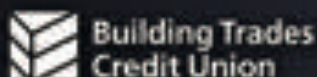
SEIU Local 26, whose members are employed by MSP subcontractors, remained in contract negotiations as this edition of The Union Advocate went to press. Their contracts were scheduled to expire Jan. 31.

About 450 catering workers based at MSP Airport are covered by nationwide talks between UNITE HERE and SkyChefs that have dragged on for over two years. The talks fall under the jurisdiction of the Railway Labor Act, which severely limits union members' ability to exert pressure on their employers through a strike.

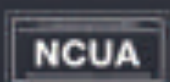
"Federal law has failed these workers," Freeberg said. "We're looking for the MAC to step up and set a minimum standard of health care that is affordable."

Wishing a Happy New Year to all of the dedicated members of BTCU. May 2024 bring you continued success, safety and prosperity in your endeavors.

Here's to another year of building excellence together.



• H A P P Y • N E W • Y E A R •





Babino Diaz (L), a member of the Twin Cities worker center CTUL, spoke about the importance of having access to earned sick and safe time – and why CTUL was among the leading advocates of expanding the benefit statewide.

Union Advocate photos

## Advocates encourage Minnesota workers to make sure they see full benefit of state’s new sick time law

Minnesota’s new earned sick and safe time mandate took effect Jan. 1, and state lawmakers and regulators are encouraging workers to check with their employers to make sure they are earning the full benefit provided by the new law.

That means banking a minimum of one hour of earned sick and safe time for every 30 hours worked. Accrual must begin immediately upon employment, and workers may earn up to a 48 hours in a year, at minimum.

The new law applies broadly, covering full-time, part-time and temporary employees, although federal workers, independent contractors and some construction workers covered by collective bargaining agreements are exempt from the law.

“We know that everyone deserves paid time away to heal, to grow and to live,” Lt. Gov. Peggy Flanagan said during a press event at a bakery in Minneapolis, where she and other officials sought to raise awareness of the new mandate. “And when you come back your job should still be there.”

Employers must allow workers to access their earned sick and safe time to recover from illness or injury, access preventative care or care for family members. Workers also may access earned benefits to seek assistance for domestic violence, sexual assault or stalking.

State Sen. Sandy Pappas (D-St.



Sen. Sandy Pappas of St. Paul was lead author of the ESST bill.

Paul), lead author of the new law, recalled fighting to include earned sick and safe time in the Women’s Economic Security Act of 2014.

“I couldn’t get it over the goal line at that time, but I was really pleased with my city of St. Paul ... that we were the guinea pigs to show that it could work and be successful,” Pappas said. “Now, earned sick and safe time will raise the bar for all Minnesota workers.”

St. Paul was one of four Minnesota cities that put sick-time ordinances on their books before state lawmakers expanded the benefit during the 2023 legislative session. Fourteen other states have passed similar laws too, Department of Labor and Industry Commissioner Nicole Blissenbach said.

“This law is providing an impor-

tant workplace benefit that allows workers – regardless of their income, regardless of their background – the right to take time off to prioritize their health and the health of their families,” she said. “We know that it works.”

Some employers in cities like St. Paul and Minneapolis have cited the benefits of expanding earned sick and safe time benefits. Daniel Swenson-Klatt adopted the policy at Butter Bakery Café seven years ago, as city council members in Minneapolis were debating an ordinance. He called it “an investment that paid off.”

“In the end it provided my staff with safety and security. It reduced turnover,” he said. “There was an associated cost of hiring and turnover that just wasn’t there anymore. Over the years, it has added a little to my payroll costs, but it has brought back rewards far greater.”

Officials also emphasized that earned sick and safe time is not the same as paid family and medical leave, another workplace benefit state lawmakers voted into law last legislative session. The medical leave bill, which provides partial wage replacement for extended absences like the birth of a child, will go into effect in 2026.

Find more information about workers’ rights under the new ordinance online at [www.dli.mn.gov/sick-leave](http://www.dli.mn.gov/sick-leave).

– Michael Moore, UA editor

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# Labor Department seeks \$2.4 million from two local subcontractors

By Michael Moore  
Union Advocate editor

After a 15-month investigation that spanned 19 construction sites, the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry announced Dec. 19 that it will seek to recover \$1.2 million in unpaid wages and the same amount in liquidated damages from two subcontractors that allegedly schemed together to cheat 25 workers out of the pay they were owed.

The allegations include practices that Building Trades unions have long warned are too common on non-union construction sites, like paying workers off the books, failing to pay overtime and taking unauthorized deductions from workers' pay.

Local representatives of the Carpenters union, in fact, have maintained that they met with the developers behind at least one of the sites, the Wilf family's Viking Lakes apartment project in Eagan, to warn against working with the subcontractors targeted by the investigation – to no avail.

Those subcontractors, Property Maintenance and Construction Inc. (PMC) and Advantage Construction Inc., have said they will contest the agency's allegations in court. An initial hearing is scheduled this month.

After investigation results were made public, the North Central States Regional Council of Carpenters (NCSRCC) released a statement saying that its representatives "worked closely" with the DLI and the 25 victims of the alleged wage theft scheme.

"Workers were willfully unpaid by

**Local representatives of the Carpenters union have maintained that they met with the developers behind at least one of the sites, the Wilf family's Viking Lakes apartment project in Eagan, to warn against working with the subcontractors targeted by the investigation – to no avail.**

PMC's owner and actively discouraged from reporting violations and cooperating with the DLI investigation," the NCSRCC statement said. "Now the employer is challenging DLI's findings, which will be resolved at a hearing before an administrative law judge.

"The result of this hearing will be a significant step toward protecting employees and holding contractors accountable for their business practices. NCSRCC will continue to work with the DLI and other industry partners to find justice for workers who have fallen victim to wage theft practices, as well as partner with contractors to continue fair and lawful decision-making."

Attorneys for Advantage also responded to the complaint, saying the subcontractor "did not employ any of the parties listed on the statement of back wages."

The statement continued: "Even if Advantage were the employer of the individuals identified in the statement of back wages (and Advantage surely was

not) the Department's findings of back wages are not supported by actual records and therefore the penalty is arbitrary and capricious."

But DLI investigators determined that PMC and Advantage were "joint employers" of the alleged victims at Viking Lakes and 18 other construction sites – including the Beyond Apartments in Woodbury, Liffey on Snelling in St. Paul, Roseville Terrace Garages and The Winslow of West St. Paul – between March 4, 2019, and June 5, 2022.

Advantage would frequently subcontract roofing and siding work to PMC, investigators found. While Advantage may not have employed those laborers "on paper," the agency alleged in a legal notice filed in December that "in practice" Advantage trained the workers and furnished their uniforms, tools, supplies and safety equipment.

"Advantage supervised their work," the notice reads. "Some employees were also told, and reasonably understood, that they worked for ... Advantage."

The notice outlines several forms of wage theft that PMC and Advantage workers allegedly faced on the job:

- Overtime pay was not consistent, despite workdays that typically stretched 10 hours, sometimes longer, over the course of a six-day workweek.

- Workers sometimes received a "daily rate" instead of hourly wages, which is illegal, but sometimes workers were further shorted for days worked during the pay period.

- Payments in cash, off the books. PMC sometimes deducted 7% from an employee's cash payment. "Employees

were told the deductions were for taxes," the notice says. "The deduction was sometimes noted on a post-it note in the envelope containing their wages."

DLI also maintains that the violations were willful, tacking on a \$25,000 civil penalty to the fines.

The agency alleges that PMC's owner displayed knowledge of overtime laws while flouting them. Additionally, the owner discouraged workers from reporting violations, participating in DLI's investigation or even speaking with representatives of the Carpenters' union.

"After participating in the Department's investigation ... some affected employees feared for their safety," according to the DLI notice.

In October 2022, the state Attorney General's office sued PMC and its owner for allegedly hindering and delaying DLI's investigation, for failing to make, keep and preserve records, and for refusing to make records available to the agency.

The parties settled that lawsuit in September 2023, clearing the way for DLI's investigation to conclude.

Labor Commissioner Nicole Blissenbach said the investigation shows her agency will be relentless in pursuing wage theft and other labor abuses, no matter how long it takes.

"Wage theft hurts workers and their families, and hurts responsible employers that abide by the law," she said. "It is unacceptable for employers to cheat employees out of the full wages they work so hard to earn. Likewise, it is unfair for contractors to have an edge when bidding against law-abiding companies by stealing wages from workers."

## Menards violated nursing employee's rights, investigators find

An investigation by the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry found a local Menards store docked a nursing mother's wages for taking breaks to express milk, and the store retaliated against her after she filed a complaint.

In response, the retail chain agreed to a statewide audit of its stores to ensure managers comply with Minnesota law that directs employers to provide lactating workers with reasonable paid break time to express milk. Menards also will pay back-wages and damages to impacted employees.

"Workers should not have to choose between expressing milk for their child and getting paid or keeping their job," DLI Commissioner Nicole Blissenbach said. "DLI supports new parents who choose to return to the workforce and understands the importance and impact of enforcing the Minnesota law protecting workers' rights to express milk at work without having their compensation reduced."

The violations came to light after the DLI announced it had entered into a consent order with Menards last

month.

During an audit of Menards' Fridley location that stretched from Dec. 1, 2022, through May 21, 2023, investigators found that management had illegally deducted time from the nursing mother's payroll on 103 separate occasions. When the employee sought to file a complaint, she was suspended for three days without pay.

Those are violations of Minnesota's Women's Economic Security Act (WESA), passed in 2014. In addition to paying back the employee for her lost time, Menards must also pay \$15,000 in administrative penalties, with \$7,500 of the penalties stayed pending compliance with the agreement.

WESA is a comprehensive worker protection law designed to protect and promote opportunities for women in the workplace. DLI's most recent report on WESA compliance found several other employers had violated the law, including:

- A child care center employer that didn't allow a worker break times to express milk due to her child's age;
- A nursing home employer that took

a worker off a work schedule after the worker requested a pregnancy accommodation; and

- An insurance company employer that denied a worker pregnancy leave because she had only been employed there for seven months at the time she requested leave.

WESA inquiries to DLI have been increasing, according to the agency, with its number of intakes related to parenting leave and nursing employees' rights nearly doubling in the past year, from 180 to 327.

WESA was expanded this year to include additional workplace protections for new and expectant parents, including requirements that all nursing and lactating workers receive break times to express milk without losing compensation regardless of their child's age, regardless of whether the breaks unduly disrupt the employer's operations, and in lactation spaces that are clean, private and secure.

### Learn more about WESA

Find a complete list of recent changes to WESA and additional information at [dli.mn.gov/newparents](http://dli.mn.gov/newparents).

## Staff win union at local human rights watchdog

Workers at The Advocates for Human Rights presented management with a union petition signed by 84% of eligible employees in December, and within 24 hours, they had won voluntary recognition from the Minneapolis-based nonprofit organization.

The new bargaining unit, AHR United, brings together 25 workers and is affiliated with Local 12 of the Office and Professional Employees International Union (OPEIU).

AHR is dedicated to implementing international human rights standards to promote civil society and reinforce the rule of law, and its staff members engage volunteers in research, education, and advocacy to build broad constituencies in the U.S. and select global communities.

"OPEIU Local 12 members at AHR look forward to continuing in the spirit of cooperation and mutual respect as they head into contract negotiations early this year," Local 12 said in a statement announcing the victory.



# Governor proposes infrastructure package worth nearly \$1 billion

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

Walz highlighted the plan's focus on keeping intact Minnesota's vast public assets. "Another key part of this plan is going to be preserving what we already have. The infrastructure in the state from corner to corner is our greatest asset," Walz said. "It also is irresponsible to not make sure you're keeping up the maintenance on those."

Nearly half of Walz's proposed funding is allocated toward maintenance on existing infrastructure.

Walz's plan also includes some new construction, like new public safety buildings and water infrastructure projects. For example, Walz proposed \$48 million for a new Bureau of Criminal Apprehension regional office and laboratory in Mankato, his hometown. He's also proposing \$22 million for a new headquarters building for the State Patrol.

Last year's package included \$1.5 billion in borrowing through bonds, requiring a legislative supermajority, while about \$1.1 billion was funded through cash.

Republicans leveraged their needed votes to stall the bonding bill and advocate for more nursing home funding. Republicans and the DFL-majority agreed in the final days of the session to an extra \$300 million for nursing homes.

Given the size of the infrastructure bill last year, Republicans will likely drive a hard bargain again once the session begins on Feb. 12, especially with 134 House seats up for election in November.

State Sen. Karin Housley, R-Stillwater, said in a statement that she is still gathering information about Walz's plan. She offered an opening salvo in what will likely be a months-long negotiation, however: "I am concerned there isn't more money in this proposal for local needs across the state. Wastewater treatment and crumbling roads might not be glamorous, but they are the basic necessities that every community needs to thrive."

With the governor's relatively restrained plan - he proposed a \$3.3 billion package last year - Walz may be attempting to ease political pressure on DFL lawmakers. Republicans are hitting Democrats hard over the state borrowing \$454 million to upgrade the State Office Building, which houses the secretary of state and the offices of the 134 House members.

Minnesota Management and Budget Commissioner Erin Campbell wrote in a letter to lawmakers that the state currently has over \$7.6 billion in requests, which include \$4.7 billion in state agency requests and \$2.9 billion from local governments.

Labor leaders praised Walz's bonding proposal. Kris Fredson, director of public affairs for LIUNA Minnesota and North Dakota, said "every year" is the right year to invest in the state's infrastructure, 2024 included.

"Minnesotans are counting on bipartisan support to improve public safety and health with modernized transportation, water, and housing infrastructure," Fredson said. "These critical investments will put thousands of workers, including LIUNA members, to work in good-paying construction jobs rebuilding our state's assets."

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Children, parents and educators from across the metro area browsed children's books available for free during the St. Paul Federation of Educators' "Reading Opens the World" event at Neighborhood House on Dec. 16.

Union Advocate photos

## St. Paul educators give away 40,000 books for free

The St. Paul Federation of Educators gave away 40,000 books to children, families and teachers Dec. 16 as part of their international union's "Reading Opens the World" initiative, which aims to give out 10 million free books.

"As others ban books, we're giving them out," American Federation of Teachers President Randi Weingarten said during a brief program during the book giveaway. "As others try to stop kids from reading, we want to nurture minds and open the world to our kids and our families."

Educators staged the event at Neighborhood House on St. Paul's West Side, with volunteers unpacking boxes of books and arranging them by reading level. Organizers selected titles "that are diverse, that are interesting, that have lived experiences (relevant) to our kids and our families and our communities," Weingarten said.

AFT launched "Reading Opens the World" in December 2021 as part of the union's "Real Solutions" campaign to strengthen public schools and address learning loss, loneliness and literacy. So far, the international union has distributed 2 million books as part of the initiative.

In St. Paul, families could take home up to 30 books, and educators could take up to 50 free books for their classroom libraries.

Education Minnesota Vice



Labor and community leaders joined a press event at the St. Paul book giveaway. Speakers (L to R) included St. Paul Regional Labor Federation President Kera Peterson, Education Minnesota Secretary-Treasurer Rodney Rowe and Vice President Monica Byron, AFT President Randi Weingarten, SPFE President Leah VanDassor and St. Paul Deputy Mayor Jaime Tincher.

President Monica Byron credited SPFE with "sparking so much joy in our community" with the book giveaway.

"To the educators that I see being able to grab books to share with their students across their classrooms, have fun and take those moments to see the joy," Byron said. "And to the students, I hope you read these books over and over and over again because

that's where the magic happens - in the words, in the pages and in your minds."

Co-sponsors of the book giveaway included the Saint Paul Regional Labor Federation, Teamsters Local 120, Saint Paul Parks and Recreation, Neighborhood House, Education Minnesota and the West Side Community Organization.

- Michael Moore, UA editor



# Minutes of the Saint Paul Regional Labor Federation

## DECEMBER 13, 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, Gibbons, Guertin, Hoerth, Hoppe, Madden, Markham-Kocurek, McNamara, Michelson, Mullin, Peterson, Ryan, Sansom, Schmidt, Seath, Slattery, Tastad-Damer, VanDassor, Vanderport and Wynn. Excused were Hill, Luneburg and Varco.

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 Bernadine Engeldorf, Secretary-Treasurer and Perry Schmidt, Vice President.

## CREDENTIALS

Credentials were received from ATU Local 1005 and the Minnesota Nurses Association. President Peterson administered the Oath of Obligation to those new delegates and alternates in attendance.

## MINUTES

**M/S/C TO APPROVE MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 8, 2023, AS PUBLISHED IN THE UNION ADVOCATE NEWSPAPER AFTER THE SECRETARY-TREASURER NOTES THERE ARE NO ADDITIONS OR CHANGES CALLED FOR.**

## COMMITTEE ON POLITICAL EDUCATION (COPE) MINUTES DECEMBER 13, 2023

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

Items to come before this board included:

- President Peterson reported about 2024 elections.
- THANK YOU NOTE received from Melinda Dols, South Washington County School Board, for the RLF's \$200 contribution.

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

## EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES

### DECEMBER 13, 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**
  - Jamie McNamara, trustee, on behalf of the RLF's trustees made a motion to continue the same contract established for the President of the Saint Paul Regional Labor Federation with a 4% salary increase each year for the length of the four-year contract.

### M/S/C TO APPROVE THE TRUSTEES RECOMMENDATION

- President Peterson reported on the annual Labor-Red Cross Blood Drive, participation in the Winter Carnival Grand Day Parade, and thanked Miriam Wynn for her service on the Board.

- President Peterson presented a list of candidates who have expressed an interest in running for positions on the Executive Board:

#### EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT:

Perry Schmidt, NALC Branch 28

#### SECRETARY-TREASURER:

Bernadine Engeldorf,

Minnesota Nurses Association

#### SERGEANT-AT-ARMS:

Jennifer Guertin,

AFSCME Council 5 Local 2508

#### TRUSTEES:

Tom Edwards, APWU - St. Paul;

Paul Slattery, Teamsters Local 120

#### AT-LARGE MEMBERS (12 open seats):

Wendell Bell, IATSE Local 13;

Dave Butts, ATU Local 1005;

Dave Cook, APWU - St. Paul;

Wade Luneburg,

UNITE HERE Local 17;

Nile Mills, OPEIU Local 12;

Don Mullin, St. Paul Building &

Construction Trades Council;

Jeremy Olson,

Bricklayers & Allied Craftworkers 1;

Carrie Roth, LIUNA Local 563;

Mary Sansom, IAM Lodge 1833;

Tim Sturdivant,

Cement Masons Local 633;

Diana Tastad-Damer,

UFCW Local 1189;

Rick Varco, SEIU Healthcare MN & IA

#### M/S/C TO APPROVE THE ABOVE CANDIDATES TO RUN FOR THE EXECUTIVE BOARD.

- President Peterson notified the Executive Board that the four Assemblies to the RLF had their elections for Chairpersons and the following union members were selected:

Chisago County Labor Assembly Chairperson Michael Madden, IAMAW Lodge 112

Dakota County Labor Assembly Chairperson Connie Beissel, NALC Branch 9

Ramsey County Labor Assembly Chairperson Martin Hoerth, AFSCME Council 5 - Local 844

Washington County Labor Assembly Chairperson Brian Beedle, Carpenters Local 322

#### M/S/C TO APPROVE THE ABOVE TO BE APPOINTED TO THE BOARD.

- **M/S/C UNANIMOUSLY TO NAME SHARYLE KNUTSON AND ROBERT "BOBBY" KASPER TO BE DESIGNATED AS PRESIDENT EMERITUS.**

- ORGANIZING: UPDATES/CAMPAIGNS: AFSCME, Education Minnesota and IATSE Local 13, gave

## Retirees urge federation to recognize 'president emeriti'



The Saint Paul Regional Labor Federation Retirees hosted former SPRLF President Bobby Kasper (back row, third from left), who entered retirement himself in January 2020, as a special guest during a meeting last fall. At the meeting, members of the organization voted to request that the SPRLF confer the title of "President Emeritus" on Kasper and his predecessor, the late Shar Knutson. Members of the federation's executive board voted unanimously in favor of the proposal on Dec. 13. The SPRLF Retirees organization, which is open to all retired members of affiliate unions, holds its meetings at noon on the third Wednesday of each month at the Saint Paul Labor Center, 353 West 7th St. For more information about participating, call the SPRLF at 651-222-3787.

Union Advocate photo

an update on their organizing activities.

SEIU Local 284 Executive Director is requesting approval of financial assistance from LSRC's Emergency Assistance Fund to a 32-year union member in good standing from West Saint Paul that was recently targeted by their employer and terminated.

#### M/S/C FOR LSRC'S EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE FUND TO PROVIDE \$300 FOR THE SEIU LOCAL 284 MEMBER.

• THANK YOU NOTES received from CTUL for the RLF's \$500 contribution; St. Paul Labor Studies and Resource Center for the RLF's \$400 contribution for the Labor of Love - Sponsor A Family and \$500 toward the Jean Jones Coats Initiative; and SPFE Local 28 for the RLF's \$500 contribution toward their community book give away.

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

#### REPORT OF THE TREASURER

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

#### M/S/C TO DEFER THE REMAINING MEETING BUSINESS UNTIL NEXT MONTH TO ALLOW FOR THE BOARD NOMINATIONS TO PROCEED.

## NEW BUSINESS

• President Peterson stepped down from chair of the meeting and Executive Vice President Perry Schmidt took over as chair. Schmidt opened the floor for nomination of President. Don Mullin nominated Kera Peterson, IAM Local 737, for the position of RLF President. There were no other nominations. Schmidt closed the nominations for President and Sister Peterson was voted in by the delegation as RLF President.

#### M/S/C TO UNANIMOUSLY ELECT KERA PETERSON AS PRESIDENT OF THE SAINT PAUL REGIONAL LABOR FEDERATION.

• Schmidt opened the floor for nominations of the following Executive Board positions:

#### SECRETARY-TREASURER:

Bernadine Engeldorf,

Minnesota Nurses Association

#### SERGEANT-AT-ARMS:

Jennifer Guertin,

AFSCME Council 5 Local 2508

#### TRUSTEES:

Tom Edwards, APWU - St. Paul;

Paul Slattery, Teamsters Local 120

Nominations were opened and accepted from the delegation resulting in two candidates for the position of **EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT:**

Perry Schmidt, NALC Branch 28;

Erica Dalager Reed, OPEIU Local 277

Nominations were opened and accepted from the delegation resulting in 13 candidates for the position of: **AT-LARGE MEMBERS (12 open**

#### seats):

Wendell Bell, IATSE Local 13;

Dave Butts, ATU Local 1005;

Dave Cook, APWU - St. Paul;

Wade Luneburg,

UNITE HERE Local 17;

Nile Mills, OPEIU Local 12;

Don Mullin, St. Paul Building &

Construction Trades Council;

Colleen Nocerini, SEIU Local 284;

Jeremy Olson,

Bricklayers & Allied Craftworkers 1;

Carrie Roth, LIUNA Local 563;

Mary Sansom, IAM Lodge 1833;

Tim Sturdivant,

Cement Masons Local 633;

Diana Tastad-Damer,

UFCW Local 1189;

Rick Varco, SEIU Healthcare MN & IA

Members accepted their nominations for the positions and nominations were closed for these positions.

#### M/S/C TO UNANIMOUSLY ELECT THE NOMINATED CANDIDATES BY VOICE ACCLAMATION FOR THE POSITIONS OF SECRETARY-TREASURER, SERGEANT-AT-ARMS AND TRUSTEE POSITIONS.

• The Election for Executive Vice President and At-Large Members will take place at the January 2024 RLF meeting.

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

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

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 11)

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10)

**SAINT PAUL REGIONAL LABOR FEDERATION MINUTES JANUARY 10, 2024**

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, Gibbons, Guertin, Hoerth, Hoppe, Luneburg, Madden, Markham-Kocurek, McNamara, Michelson, Mullin, Peterson, Ryan, Sansom, Schmidt, Seath, Slattery, Tastad-Damer, VanDassor, Vanderport and Varco. Excused was Hill.

President Peterson read the Code of Conduct, stated at the beginning of each meeting. (See December 2023 meeting minutes.) The meeting designees are Bunny Engeldorf, Secretary-Treasurer, and Perry Schmidt, Vice President.

**CREDENTIALS**

Credentials were received from Cement Masons Local 633, Heat and Frost Insulators Local 34, IAM Local 112, IAM Local 459, Iron Workers Local 512, IUPAT Local 880, MN Newspaper Guild, SEIU Local 284, SMART TD 10, Teamsters Local 120 and United Steelworkers Local 2002. President Peterson administered the Oath of Obligation to those new delegates and alternates in attendance.

**COMMITTEE ON POLITICAL EDUCATION (COPE) MINUTES JANUARY 10, 2024**

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

President Peterson reported on the following:

- Attending the inauguration of the Saint Paul City Council.
- New Saint Paul School board sworn in.
- We are expecting names to come forward of candidates running for various offices or not running for re-election. The political staff is working on the candidate tracker.
- The Minnesota AFL-CIO will be having a Labor Table meeting tomorrow.

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

**EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES JANUARY 10, 2024**

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

Items to come before this board included:

- ELECTIONS COMMITTEE:
  - Point of Privilege to Bob Ryan, Chair of the Elections Committee: Erica Dalager Reed withdrew from the election for Executive Vice President. The Election Committee recommends a weighted roll call vote for the At-Large Board positions.

**- M/S/C TO RECOMMEND ENDORSEMENT OF PERRY SCHMIDT, NALC BRANCH 28 AS EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT OF THE SAINT PAUL REGIONAL LABOR**

**FEDERATION.**

**- M/S/C TO RECOMMEND A WEIGHTED ROLL CALL VOTE FOR THE ELECTION OF THE AT-LARGE BOARD POSITIONS.**

- PRESIDENT'S REPORT.

President Peterson reported on:

- The Winter Carnival Grande Day Parade.

- CD that is maturing and will be rolling over on January 15, 2024.

- The Thirteenth Annual Labor Bowl event to be held Thursday, May 2, 2024, at Sun Ray Lanes.

- Discussion on the UNITE HERE Local 17 Hospitality Benefit Fund.

- The Minnesota AFL-CIO Racial Diversity Committee. The Saint Paul RLF is partnering and presenting a discussion.

- ORGANIZING: UPDATES/CAMPAIGNS: AFSCME, Machinists (IAM), Laborer's Local 363, Letter Carriers (NALC) Branch 9, SEIU Healthcare Minnesota & Iowa, St. Paul Federation of Educators, and the Teamsters Local 120 gave updates on their organizing activities.

- THANK YOU NOTES: Received from Catholic Charities of Minneapolis and Saint Paul for the Cub Food Gift Cards, Minneapolis Building and Construction Trades for the RLF's \$200 contribution to their annual Golf Tournament, and the Twin Cities Labor

Chorus for the RLF's \$150 donation.

**• M/S/C TO TRANSFER THE UNITE HERE LOCAL 17 HOSPITALITY BENEFIT FUND.**

**• M/S/C FOR THE RLF TO PURCHASE TWO TICKETS FOR THE SAINT PAUL BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION TRADES COUNCIL'S GOLD PLATE DINNER AT A COST OF \$150 PER TICKET.**

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

**REPORT OF THE TREASURER**

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

**REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES**

- Michael Madden reported on behalf of the Chisago County Labor Assembly. We have been active since 2008 and it has been an interesting challenge to identify union households. All of us can be a part of the solution by volunteering. 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. Last month we finished delivering schoolbooks. We will be working on Worker's Memorial Day

and raising funds for our annual School Supplies. 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. We are looking for individuals to screen, and continue to support the community via Valley Outreach Fare for All, our \$500 Washington County Scholarship and the 2024 Political Campaign. 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 met in November and are working on getting newly elected St. Paul officials together to have conversations. Our next meeting will be on the fourth Wednesday of the month via zoom at 6:00 p.m.

**PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

President Peterson spoke about the January 30 Building Safe Communities Resolution discussion to be held at the St. Paul Labor Center. She also announced that the United Auto Workers is hosting a Workers' Party on January 13 from 2:00 - 4:30 p.m. at the Minneapolis Regional Labor Federation. The SPRLF and St.

Paul Labor Studies and Resource Center will also be hosting a warmup party after we march in the Winter Carnival Grande Day Parade on Saturday, January 27, 2024.

**STAFF/LABOR LIAISON REPORTS**

- Political Organizer Colleen Nocerini reported on tracking when the 2024 election candidates file for screening purposes.

- Thirteenth Annual Labor Bowl will be held on Thursday, May 2, 2024, at Sun Ray Lanes. Shift times are 2:00, 4:00 and 6:00 p.m. The Silent Auction that was held in conjunction with the Saint Paul Regional Labor Federation's Holiday Party for LSRC's Emergency Assistance Fund was a success.

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

Election of the Saint Paul Regional Labor Federation Executive Vice President position and 12 at-large board member positions. It was announced that Erica Dalager Reed withdrew from the election.

As delegates entered the hall everyone was asked to sign in electronically and via paper. Ballots were created by an independent party from the electronic and paper sign in. Bob Ryan, Election Committee Chairperson, provided election instructions. He informed the delegation that the Saint Paul Regional Labor Federation Board made a motion to unanimously support Perry Schmidt, NALC Branch 28, as the Executive Vice President of the Saint Paul Regional Labor Federation.

**M/S/C TO UNANIMOUSLY ELECT PERRY SCHMIDT, NALC BRANCH 28 AS THE EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT OF THE SAINT PAUL REGIONAL LABOR FEDERATION.**

**M/S/C TO CONDUCT A WEIGHTED ROLL CALL VOTE FOR THE ELECTION OF THE 12 AT-LARGE BOARD POSITIONS.**

The following candidates appeared on the ballot:

- Wendell Bell, IATSE Local 13
- Dave Butts, ATU Local 1005
- Dave Cook, APWU - St. Paul
- Wade Luneburg, UNITE HERE Local 17
- Nile Mills, OPEIU Local 12
- Don Mullin, St. Paul Building and Construction Trades Council
- Colleen Nocerini, SEIU Local 284
- Jeremy Olson, Bricklayers & Allied Craftworkers 1
- Carrie Roth, LIUNA Local 563
- Mary Sansom, IAM Lodge 1833
- Tim Sturdivant, Cement Masons Local 633
- Diana Tastad-Damer, UFCW Local 1189
- Rick Varco, SEIU Healthcare Minnesota & Iowa

The meeting stood in recess while awaiting the election results.

President Peterson reconvened the meeting and Bob Ryan, Election Committee Chairperson, announced the results of the election. The new Saint Paul Regional Labor Federation At-Large board members are Wendell Bell, Dave Butts, Dave Cook, Wade Luneburg, Nile Mills, Don Mullin, Jeremy Olson, Carrie Roth, Mary Sansom, Tim Sturdivant, Diana Tastad-Damer, and Rick Varco.

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

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

*SPRLF's fundraising drives provide help for the holidays*



The Saint Paul Regional Labor Federation's annual holiday fundraising initiatives provide help for local families each winter, and 2023 was no exception. The SPRLF and its nonprofit arm, the St. Paul Labor Studies and Resource Center (LSRC), raised nearly \$3,000 for the Jean Jones Coats Initiative, with proceeds going toward the purchase of winter clothing for students in the St. Paul Public Schools' Project REACH program, serving homeless children and youth in the district. In addition, St. Paul Steamfitters Pipefitters Local 455 hosted a collection site for winter clothing in its union hall. Pictured above are SPRLF President Kera Peterson, AFL-CIO Community Services liaison Erica Dalager Reed and Local 455 Financial Secretary-Treasurer Scott Seath delivering the winter clothing to the Project REACH offices. In addition to the Jean Jones Initiative, the SPRLF's 2023 Labor of Love - Sponsor a Family fundraising drive collected \$10,700 in donations. Organizers used the proceeds to purchase gift cards from union grocers, which they donated to local families participating in assistance programs run by Catholic Charities; Neighbors, Inc.; Jewish Community Center and the LSRC's Emergency Fund. Finally, a silent auction and raffle at the SPRLF's holiday party Dec. 13 raised about \$7,000 for the Emergency Fund, which provides direct assistance to union members in crisis or facing hardships. SPRLF officers and staff thank all of the unions and individual donors who made these 2023 holiday initiatives a success!

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