

# The St. Paul Union Advocate

127th Year, No. 8, Issue 5475

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

March 2024

## In This Issue

- 2** Senator reflects on power of organized labor
- 3** Metro Transit workers win 13% raises
- 4** Airline workers rally together at MSP
- 5** Nursing home workers plan one-day strike
- 6** Macalester student workers seek union
- 7** Carpenters cry foul after banjo maker bolts
- 8** Nurses set out to 'heal greed' in health care
- 10** Loons' camera crew scores union contract

*"Nobody wants to go on strike, but it's time for us to stop being disrespected."*

- Rene Myers, intervention specialist at Hazel Park Preparatory Academy



Over 2,000 members of the Saint Paul Federation of Educators turned out to vote on strike authorization Feb. 15 at the Carpenters hall.

Union Advocate photo



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

## ST. PAUL EDUCATORS AUTHORIZE STRIKE

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

Over two-thirds of the Saint Paul Federation of Educators' members filed into the Carpenters union hall Feb. 15 to take a strike vote, and an over-

whelming 92% voted "yes."

Union leaders said they hope the resounding support educators showed for their bargaining team will push the St. Paul Public Schools to improve its financial proposals in mediation sessions scheduled Feb.

23 and March 1. Otherwise, the union's 3,689 members - teachers, education assistants and school professionals - could go on strike this month.

"When the district sits and refuses to talk to our bargaining

team about the things that we need, they are not just refusing that small group of people," SPFE Treasurer Robyn Asher, a teacher on special assignment, said.

"There are thousands of us, and

**(CONTINUED ON PAGE 5)**

### At the Capitol

## Minnesota unions look to protect, build on legislative gains made last year

Minnesota's unions approached the 2024 state legislative session last month looking to expand on - and defend - the historic package of labor standards and public investments passed by DFL lawmakers last year.

Legislators returned to St. Paul on Feb. 12. Before their deadline to adjourn May 20, they are sure to hear from union members pressing for action on a range of issues, including infrastructure investments, pen-

sion adjustments, protections for health care and railroad workers and more.

Of course, union members and their allies won't be the only voices lawmakers hear from at the Capitol this spring. On Day 1 of the new session, the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce hosted a reception with legislators at River Centre in downtown St. Paul. The event's theme was "Restore the Balance."

**(CONTINUED ON PAGE 9)**



SEIU Local 284 Director Kelly Gibbons spoke during a rally outside a Chamber lobbying event in St. Paul. Union Advocate photo

## Go Figure

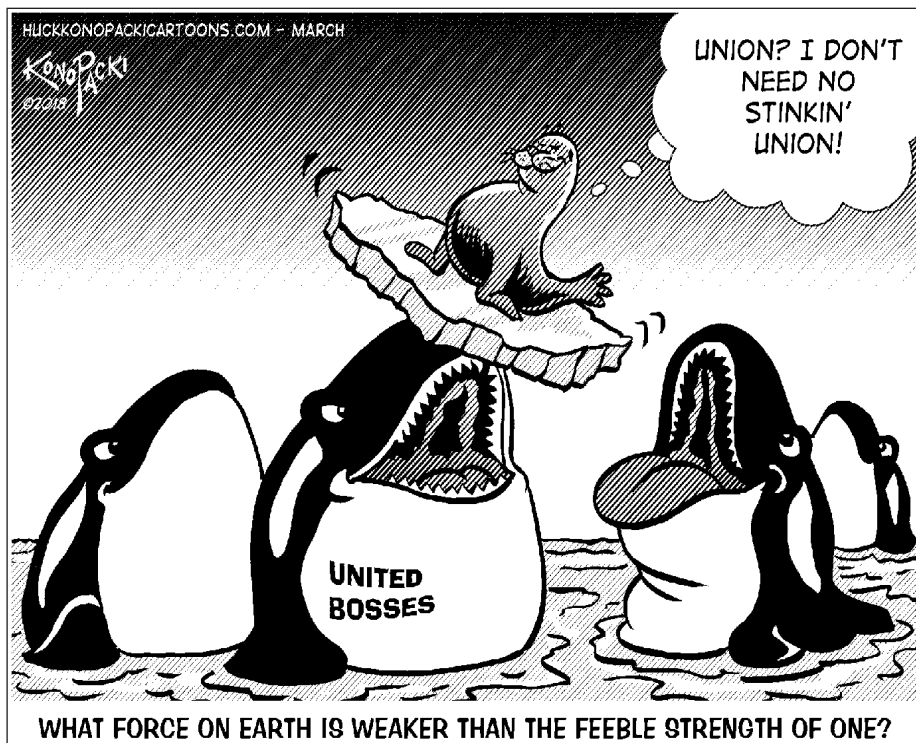
**280%** Increase last year in “major strike activity” among U.S. workers

**458,900**

Total U.S. workers involved last year in “major work stoppages,” which by definition of the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) must include 1,000 workers and take place on a weekday

**470**

Work stoppages of all sizes counted by the Cornell University ILR Labor Action Tracker in 2023, including 49 in the Twin Cities area



### Partner Voices: Tina Smith

## Senator reflects on the power of organized labor

Last year, scenes of striking workers and picket lines dominated the news. Workers from all corners of the American economy – from writers and auto workers, to teachers and health care professionals – came together to fight for their fair share. The labor movement had a big moment in 2023. I hope we can say the same in 2024.

In the fall, I went to Hudson, Wisconsin to stand in solidarity with the striking members of Local 722 of the United Auto Workers. About half those workers in Hudson are Minnesotans.

On that rainy day, amidst a small tent with snacks and drinks, I talked with one longtime worker who told me he was worried. His wife stays home with the kids so he’s the sole breadwinner, and it’s tough for the family to go without an income. The union helps, of course, but he was worried that the Big 3 CEOs were going to hunker down and wait them out. Then he told me, “It’s scary. But sometimes you just have to stand up for what you know is right.”

It’s not right that big companies are making billions in profit while the people whose labor is producing that profit can’t even afford the products they make.

Unions helped build a strong middle class in this country. Through collective power and advocacy, unions helped make sure workers had a fair wage that could support their families, send their kids to school, and afford homes, cars, and other hallmarks of the middle class.

But a few decades ago, employers launched a coordinated effort to undermine workers and unions. With the help of Republican politicians and their corporate lobbyists, they shepherded through powerful legislation like right-to-work laws, which made it harder for workers to organize.

There’s good news though. Thanks in part to the Biden Administration – the most pro-union administration we’ve ever had – the tide is shifting.

We’ve seen victories for workers in all sorts of industries. In Minnesota, over 15,000 nurses carried out the largest nursing strike in U.S. history. Through their union, the Minnesota Nurses Association, they won the largest pay raise in over two decades. The SAG-AFTRA strike, which drew picket lines from New York to Los Angeles, resulted in their largest wage gains in 100 years. UPS workers won higher wages and new protections against working in dangerous conditions thanks



to their union negotiations – and for the first time, they’ll be getting air conditioning in their notoriously hot trucks.

These wins aren’t just nice for the hundreds of thousands of workers at these companies. They help grow the middle class and boost the entire economy. And importantly, these union wins are shifting the balance of power in our economy.

For too long, CEOs and their Republican allies in power have been selling failed trickle-down policies that line the pockets of the rich and strip power and wealth from working people. Now, thanks to President Biden’s policies and a surge in union wins, we’re beginning to see a shift towards a more sustainable and powerful form of economic growth – growth that starts from the middle-out.

Unions remind us that work has dignity, that workers must be respected and protected, that everyone has the right to a fair wage, a secure retirement, and the chance not just to work, but also to enjoy the pleasures and joys of life.

That is what organizing is all about. Listening, working, building power, and then using our power to deliver results and improve people’s lives.

This is why the labor movement in America should give us all hope and inspiration – for a stronger democracy, and a country that works for everyone.

– Tina Smith has represented Minnesota in the U.S. Senate since 2018.

## 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

Official publication of the Saint Paul Regional Labor Federation, AFL-CIO. 353 W. 7th St. #201, St. Paul, MN 55102. Phone 651-222-3787 x112; fax 651-293-1989; e-mail: [mmoore@stpaulunions.org](mailto:mmoore@stpaulunions.org)

Editor: Michael Moore

### SAINT PAUL REGIONAL LABOR FEDERATION

Phone: 651-222-3787 Fax: 651-293-1989 Website: [www.stpaulunions.org](http://www.stpaulunions.org)

Kera Peterson, President  
Perry Schmidt, Executive Vice President  
Bernadine Engeldorf, Secretary-Treasurer  
Jennifer Guertin, Sergeant-At-Arms

### Regional Vice Presidents:

Michael Madden, Chisago County  
Connie Beissel, Dakota County  
Martin Hoerth, Ramsey County  
Brian Beedle, Washington County

Trustees: Tom Edwards, Jamie McNamara, Paul Slattery

### Executive Board Members At Large:

Wendell Bell, Dave Butts, Dave Cook, Wade Lunenburg, Nile Mills, Don Mullin, Jeremy Olson, Carrie Roth, Mary Sansom, Tim Sturdivant, Diana Tastad-Damer, Rick Varco

### Minnesota AFL-CIO General Board Geographical Representatives:

Dean Gale, Kelly Gibbons, Jennifer Guertin, Art Hill, Mike Hoppe, Suzanne Markham-Kocurek, Jennifer Michelson, Bob Ryan, Scott Seath, Leah VanDassor, Stacey Vanderport

### Committee on Political Education:

Travis Lohmann, Bob Mayer, Rod Naseth

Office staff: Colleen Nocerini

### AFL-CIO COMMUNITY SERVICES

Phone: 651-222-3787 Fax: 651-293-1989 Website: [www.stpaulunions.org/lsrc](http://www.stpaulunions.org/lsrc)

Erica Dalager Reed, Liaison



This issue went to press Feb. 23  
It was scheduled to go in the mail Feb. 29  
Next news deadline: March 20

The Union Advocate will publish 10 issues in 2024. Press runs are scheduled Feb. 22, March 21, April 18, May 23, July 18, Aug. 15, Sept. 19, Oct. 17 and Dec. 5.

Advertising deadlines precede our press dates by three days. To advertise, contact the Advocate office for display options and rate information, or download an ad flier online at [advocate.stpaulunions.org/advertise](http://advocate.stpaulunions.org/advertise).

Subscriptions are \$15 for calendar year 2024. Mail payment to Union Advocate, 353 W. 7th St., Suite 201, St. Paul, MN 55102.

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

Periodicals postage paid at St. Paul, MN.



Member International Labor Communications Association.

## Uber, Lyft drivers to join author talk at East Side Freedom Library

Members of the Minnesota Uber and Lyft Drivers Association, the organization behind the push to raise standards for workers in the so-called “ride sharing” industry, will join a book event and discussion at the East Side Freedom Library in St. Paul on March 28.

Local organizers will offer perspective on the featured book, “Disrupting D.C.: The Rise of Uber and the Fall of the City” co-authored by Kafui Attoh, who will also join the event.

Attoh’s book focuses on an early push to regulate Uber in the nation’s capital and the clashes that ensued, drawing on interviews with gig workers, policymakers, Uber lobbyists and community organizers. The story offers a blueprint for how Uber conquered cities around the world.

Attoh, who graduated from Macalester College in St. Paul, is professor of urban and labor studies at the City University of New York.

The book event will run from 7 to 8:30 p.m. at the ESFL, located at 1105 Greenbrier St., St. Paul. Learn more about the non-profit, independent library at [eastsidefreedomlibrary.org](http://eastsidefreedomlibrary.org).

## Mill City Museum offers workers’ history tours

Mill City Museum in Minneapolis plans to offer workers’ history tours of the facility this spring, exploring the story of work and labor in Minneapolis from the 19th century to the present.

Led by a Mill City Museum guide, the tour will highlight the ways workers and activists sought to improve conditions in the city and how anti-worker forces fought back, including the 1903 and 1917 flour milling strikes, the Teamsters strikes of 1934, the rise of the anti-union Citizens Alliance and the career of Black union activist Nellie Stone Johnson.

The 90-minute tours will run from 10 to 11:30 a.m. Saturday, March 30, and Sunday, April 21. The tour costs \$16 for all ages. For more information or to reserve tickets, visit [mnhs.org/events/1379](http://mnhs.org/events/1379).

## Help pick a winner in trades photo contest

The winners of the 2024 Women Building Success photo contest will be announced – and chosen – at a celebratory event March 6 from 4 to 6:30 p.m. at the Ironworkers Local 512 union hall, 851 Pierce Butler Rte., St. Paul.

Event-goers will vote for the contest winners from among three finalists in three photo categories: “Me at Work,” “Job Sites,” and “Tools/Craftsmanship.”

All the finalist photos also will be part of a display at the State Capitol rotunda from 8 a.m. to noon the same day.

# ATU members avoid strike, ratify contract that will ‘raise the bar’ at Metro Transit

After authorizing their union leaders to call a strike last fall, Metro Transit workers voted last month to ratify a new, three-year contract with the agency that will increase wages by 13%.

Mechanics are in for an even bigger wage hike, and a new shift differential will boost pay by up to 7% for workers who stay on the clock overnight – measures that union members and agency leaders hope will help Metro Transit attract and retain workers.

“We made our operators’ wages and, importantly, our mechanics’ wages more competitive,” Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local 1005 President David Stiggers said. “Metro Transit is trying to move their operations up to pre-COVID service levels, and to do that we need mechanics who are able to service these buses on a regular basis. Metro Transit had to raise the bar.”

Local 1005 represents about 2,000 Metro Transit workers, including custodians, office clerks, rail operators and others. Among members who participated in the contract vote, 82% supported ratification, according to the union.

The Met Council, which operates Metro Transit, must also vote to approve the agreement before it takes effect, retroactive to Aug. 1, 2023.

That’s when Local 1005’s previous contract with the agency expired. Negotiations between the two sides routinely stretch past contract expiration

dates, but union members, by voting overwhelmingly to approve a strike in September, put management on notice that this round of talks would not be business as usual.

Between the strike vote and the final round of mediation Feb. 5, Metro Transit nearly doubled its proposed wage increases, from 3% in the first year and 2% in each of the following two years to 5.5% in the first year, 4.5% in the second and 3% in the third. The agency also agreed to bring mechanics’ wages closer to the industry standard.

### Between the strike vote and the final round of mediation Feb. 5, Metro Transit nearly doubled its proposed wage increases.

“They moved a substantial amount,” Stiggers said of management’s proposals. “They moved far more than even what we maybe anticipated, looking at the contracts in the past. But I think they realized very quickly that what we were asking for was not pie in the sky, but actual pieces they needed to make the service run appropriately.”

Local 1005 also won expanded bereavement leave and language allowing part-time workers to get to the 30-

hour threshold for employer-sponsored benefits without working a split shift.

Stiggers served as Local 1005’s vice president when contract negotiations began last spring. He was elected president in January after Ryan Timlin stepped down from the post.

“If you really want your employees and your agency to prosper, there has to be a mutual understanding between union and management, and we’re starting to develop a much better relationship in which our needs are being heard – and in this particular contract being met,” he said.

Local 1005 is among a group of public- and private-sector unions with contracts expiring this spring that have been meeting, planning and working in partnership to support each other in their contract campaigns – and potentially on the picket lines. While there won’t be a strike at Metro Transit, the union remains committed to showing its solidarity with the labor community.

“What we’re looking forward to now is helping our other union brothers and sisters in different unions secure great contracts as well, like the St. Paul teachers who just voted to authorize a strike and the janitors with SEIU,” Stiggers said. “We’re gearing up to support them.”

“They too should be compensated appropriately. We all just want what we deserve.”

– Michael Moore, UA editor

## Union members encouraged to vote in presidential primary March 5

While early primary states got their moment in the limelight, Minnesota voters will get their chance to weigh-in on the presidential race on “Super Tuesday” – Tuesday, March 5 – when Minnesota and 15 other states hold their presidential primaries.

Early voting in Minnesota began in January and continues through March 4. Any eligible voter can vote early at an early voting center.

For voting information, including where to vote, how to vote early and

what’s on the ballot, visit the Minnesota Secretary of State’s website, [mnvotes.org](http://mnvotes.org).

In the presidential primary, voters may only cast a ballot in one party’s contest.

The race for U.S. President is shaping up to be a rematch between President Joe Biden and former President Donald Trump, but both the DFL ballot and the Republican ballot will include other candidates in addition to the front runners.

Biden won the AFL-CIO endorsement in June 2023 – the earliest endorsement for president ever voted by the

AFL-CIO.

“There’s absolutely no question that Joe Biden is the most pro-union president in our lifetimes,” AFL-CIO president Liz Shuler said. “We’ve never seen a president more forcefully advocate for workers’ fundamental right to join a union.”

Biden has a growing list of other union endorsements, including AFSCME, AFT, Bricklayers, CWA, IATSE, IBEW, Iron Workers, LIUNA, the Nurses, SEIU, UNITE HERE the Auto Workers.

– Minneapolis Labor Review



## 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

March 26th, 6 p.m.

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

### Dakota County Assembly

March 14th, 7 p.m.

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

### Ramsey County Assembly

March 26th, 6 p.m.

Saint Paul Labor Center, 353 7th Street West

### Washington County Assembly

March 27th, 6 p.m.

Washington County Gov’t Center, Stillwater.



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

# 'WE'RE ALL LOOKING FOR OUR MONEY'

*Flight attendants from multiple carriers rally together at MSP Airport on worldwide day of action*

**By Michael Moore**  
Union Advocate editor

An estimated 100,000 U.S.-based flight attendants are working under expired union contracts, and their collective frustration boiled over last month at Minneapolis-St. Paul and dozens of other airports worldwide.

American Airlines, Southwest, United and Sun Country flight attendants - all working under expired contracts - marched outside Terminal 1 during the Flight Attendant Day of Action rally at MSP Airport on Feb. 13. Employees of Delta Air Lines and its regional carrier Endeavor Air joined the rally too.

"The industry is hurting right now as far as flight attendants go and their wages," American Airlines flight attendant Todd Smiertelmy said. "We're all looking for our money. Give it to us."

U.S. carriers have largely returned to profitability since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the airline industry anticipates serving a record number of travelers in 2024.

Flight attendants have seen the increased interest in travel firsthand, United flight attendant Brittany Kaiser said, but they also have seen "more issues that are arising constantly in flight or, mostly, during boarding, which is the time when we're not getting paid."

United expects its flight attendants at the gate well before a scheduled departure to prepare the cabin for flight. But like most other airlines, the carrier does not consider flight attendants to be on the clock until the cabin door closes.

"We're helping get people to their seats, get the bags up and make sure the bags are correct; we're prepping for the flight, counting meals, double checking to make sure we have all our supplies, setting up for the flight," Kaiser said. "We're not paid for any of it, but we're required to do it."

Getting paid for boarding the airplane is among the Association of Flight Attendants-CWA's top priorities in bargaining a new contract covering 25,000 United flight attendants like Kaiser, who is based in Houston, but the process has been slow moving. Their last contract expired in 2021.

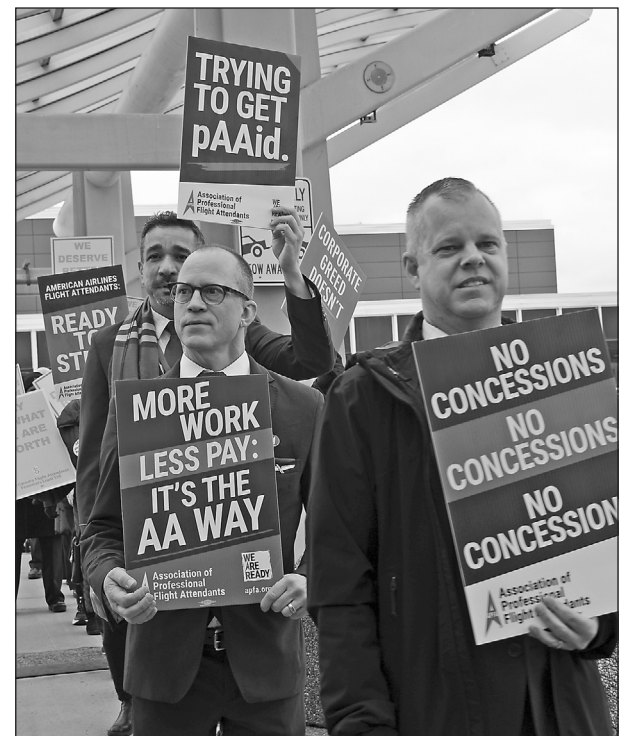
## Expired contracts mean stagnant wages

It's been five years without a contract - or wage scale increase - for Smiertelmy and other members of the Association of Professional Flight Attendants, the union at American Airlines. And flight attendants at MSP-based Sun Country, members of Teamsters Local 120, saw their last union contract expire in 2014.

"It really hurts morale, I can tell you that," Smiertelmy said, adding that talks with American have long since reached a "stalemate."

The two sides are in federal mediation, but the union has a pending request before the National Mediation Board - its second in the last two years - to be released into a 30-day "cooling off period," after which they could legally go on strike under the Railway Labor Act. Smiertelmy, who lives in Minneapolis but is based out of Chicago's O'Hare Airport, was among several flight attendants carrying "Ready to Strike" signs at the MSP rally.

"We don't want to strike," Smiertelmy said. "We want the company to sit down and have serious talks



Members of the Teamsters, AFA-CWA, Machinists and other unions representing flight attendants held informational picketing together at MSP International Airport last month.

with us and just share a piece of the pie."

Local 120 and Sun Country entered mediation in December and have a second session scheduled next week. In bargaining last year, the airline's "final offer" was rejected by 96% of union members who participated in the vote.

## Solidarity across airlines

Even flight attendants with a current union contract said their airlines aren't doing enough to make the job sustainable, particularly for new hires. Endeavor's Trina Johnson, a local executive council president of AFA-CWA, said her union is trying to bargain a letter of agreement with the Delta subsidiary that would improve working conditions for its 1,400 flight atten-

dants.

"Regional flight attendants live at poverty level," Johnson said. "Most of them have a very difficult time in the first five years that they fly trying to pay rent and buy food and even commute to their bases."

Their unions may bring different issues and priorities to the bargaining table, Sun Country's Tanya Devito said, but flight attendants share a common demand for more respect for the work that they do.

"It is invigorating to have all of these flight attendants coming together, but it's also very sad because it says that (airlines) are not taking us seriously, that everybody is waiting for a contract," she said. "It says they don't value us."

# Nursing home workers plan to strike as new industry standards board ramps up work

By Michael Moore  
Union Advocate editor

Workers at nursing homes across the Twin Cities voted last month to stage a one-day strike March 6 over unfair labor practices, escalating their fight for pay and benefit increases that they say are needed to address staffing shortfalls in their industry.

Two local unions, SEIU Healthcare Minnesota and Iowa and United Food and Commercial Workers Local 663, had announced workers at 10 nursing homes would join the strike when this edition of The Union Advocate went to press. Leaders said strike-authorization votes at other facilities were still in the works.

At a press conference Feb. 20 outside Saint Therese in New Hope, nursing assistant Monyou Taye said she voted to strike because “workers and our residents deserve better.”

“We don’t have enough staff and equipment to keep up with the work,” Taye said. “Over the years we have had to do more and more ... because not enough people want to do this important work under the current wages and benefits.

“It makes us feel burned out and stressed. It makes us feel angry.”

In her 15th year working at Saint Therese, Taye still earns less than \$20 per hour, and a survey of 1,300 Minnesota nursing home workers conducted by SEIU last fall suggests she’s not alone. Half reported making less than \$20 per hour, 80% said they make less than \$25 per hour and nine out of 10 said they struggle to afford basic needs.

A strike is sure to draw the attention of Minnesota’s new Nursing Home Workforce Standards Board, which began meeting last fall and is tasked with setting minimum employment standards in the industry.

The board, established by state lawmakers last year, is ramping up its work, and dozens of union members turned out for its first in-person meeting Feb. 21 in Brooklyn Park.

SEIU Healthcare members voted last year to push for a \$25 wage floor in the industry, plus affordable health and

retirement benefits.

“We know that these changes are possible, and we know that without them we are going to continue the staffing crisis that plagues the nursing home industry,” Jamie Gulley, the union’s president, said outside Saint Therese. “Workers are fed up, and that’s why we’re standing up and saying enough is enough. We are ready to strike.”

At press time, two nursing homes in the east metro, Cerenity in St. Paul and the Estates of Roseville, were among the locations where workers planned to

strike March 6.

Teresa Brees, a Roseville worker with 25 years of experience in the industry, tore a tendon in her bicep after working 23 straight days last year. She and other long-term care workers “are at our breaking points,” she said, due to short staffing, and it won’t get better without better pay and benefits.

“How many more good people will we lose because of the low pay, lack of benefits and ongoing disrespect?” she said.

## Union of 8,000 area janitors, security guards sets March 2 strike deadline

Meeting at Edison High School Feb. 3, members of Service Employees (SEIU) Local 26 who work as commercial janitors, retail janitors and security officers voted unanimously to authorize their bargaining committees to call a strike if fair contracts with employers can’t be reached by a March 2 deadline.

A strike could put as many as 8,000 workers on picket lines in downtown Minneapolis, downtown St. Paul and other metro locations.

“Too many of us don’t make enough money to take care of our families,” Kadra Ali, a janitor who serves on the Local 26 executive board, said. “Since our last contract, everything has gone up: the price of gas, the price of groceries, the price of rent. But our employers won’t agree to fair wage increases to keep up with inflation.

“We worked during the pandemic, and we helped make sure these buildings got clean and that our state was able to keep running. We gave so much to our jobs and now we are just asking for a fair deal. I’m voting ‘yes’ to strike because I know that we need to show our companies that we are serious about winning fair contracts.”

SEIU Local 26 members work for various subcontractors as commercial janitors, retail janitors, security officers and more throughout the Twin Cities. They clean and protect buildings that house some of the richest corporations in the world.

Over months of bargaining, union members – mostly immigrants and people of color – have pushed for higher wages, retirement security and more respect on the job, noting that they are the workers who kept their cities safe

and running during the pandemic.

Before the vote, SEIU Local 26 Secretary-Treasurer Brahim Kone laid out the stakes of the contract fight.

“It’s time that our employers show us the respect this industry deserves,” he said. “It’s time for them to pay a livable wage that deals with inflation. It’s time for them to provide a pension benefit, so we can retire in dignity. It’s time for them to provide proper training so that our members can come to work safely and return to their loved ones. It’s time for them to end the unfair labor practices we are facing.”

Minnesota Attorney General Keith Ellison also spoke to workers before the vote. “How you vote is your choice, but I want you to know you have my support and the community’s support in your fight to win what your families deserve,” he said.

# SPFE members ready to strike after overwhelming show of support for bargaining team

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

this (vote) is a show of support.

“We’re showing that we’re ready, and we’re hoping that they take us seriously.”

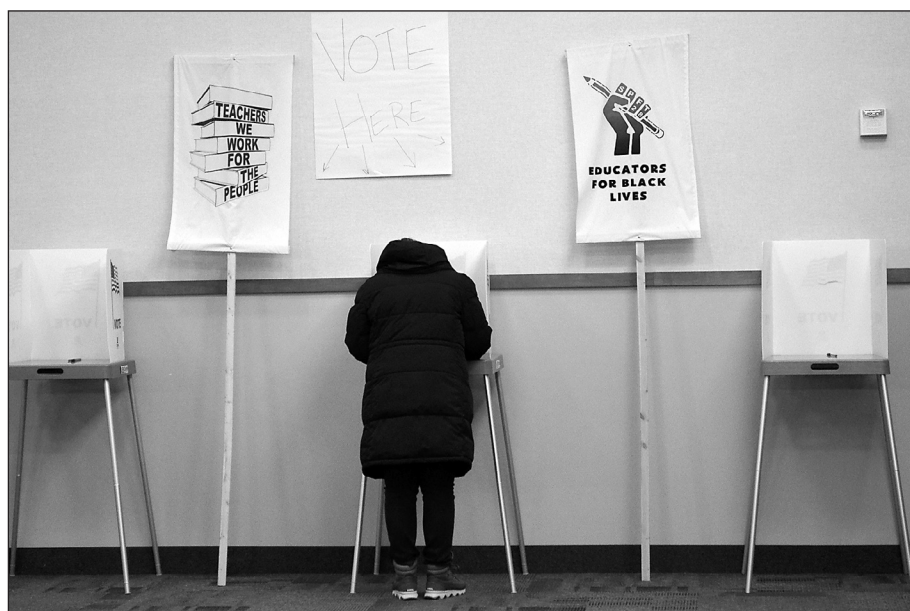
That means offering educators more than the most recent wage proposal, which would raise most union members’ pay by 3.75% over the two-year contract. Educators also want some relief in their health insurance costs.

“We just had insurance increases, and our paychecks have all gone down,” Rene Myers, an intervention specialist at Hazel Park Preparatory Academy, said. “The district wants to add to the cost.”

SPFE members said they expect the district to do better after state lawmakers passed a record \$2.3 billion increase in funding for public schools last May – and after the district raised administrators’ pay by 6% last August.

“It’s about priorities,” Asher said. “With what our members are seeing the Legislature give to education this time and for what we know that we need to retain educators, [the district’s offer] is not good enough.”

SPFE members went on strike for a week in 2020, and they came within



Educators cast their ballots at the Carpenters hall in St. Paul, voting to authorize SPFE leaders to call a strike. Union Advocate photo

minutes of a strike deadline in 2022 before reaching a deal with the district. Those talks resulted in historic contract language that commits the district to investing in the services that educators say their students need, like class-size

limits, school nurses and mental-health supports.

This time around, union negotiators are looking to preserve and expand on those gains, while also gaining ground in compensation, arguing it is critical to the

district’s ability to recruit and retain staff during a statewide teacher shortage. Myers said 75% of her colleagues at Hazel Park have told her “they’re leaving or they’re thinking about leaving.”

In a statement released after the votes were tallied, SPFE President Leah VanDassor said educators don’t want to strike, but have shown they are committed to doing what’s necessary “to give our students the schools they deserve and keep our educators in the profession for years to come.”

“Over the past decade, our union has come together with our community to win improvements to our schools like class size limits and student mental health supports,” she added. “Now is the time to build on that progress while also helping our educators afford their lives and stay in this district.”

SPFE must give the district notice at least 10 days before beginning a potential strike.

“Nobody wants to go on strike,” Myers said. “This is not what we set out to do. It’s an inconvenience and a pay loss for a lot of us.

But it’s time for us to stop being disrespected.”

## Children's Theatre recognizes front-of-house workers' union

Local 13 of the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees (IATSE) announced last month that 29 public-facing workers at the Children's Theatre Company in Minneapolis had joined their union after management agreed to voluntarily recognize the bargaining unit. The new union members include ticketing staff and other "front-of-house" workers.

"This organizing campaign would not have gone as smoothly if it was not for the complete solidarity of this unit," IATSE representative Amanda Sager said. "They were on top of everything from the start. I am personally very proud of them."

Children's Theater is nation's largest and most acclaimed theatre for young people and serves a multigenerational audience of 250,000 people annually.

IATSE Local 13 has long represented stagehands at CTC, among several other venues throughout the metro area. But the new organizing effort extends the local's membership to public-facing theater workers for the first time.

"I think because of this big win, other front-of-house and public-facing workers will feel a little more confident in organizing their workplaces," organizing committee member Kellie Larson said. "It has really been a great honor to represent these folks."

The theater's decision to recognize front-of-house workers' union voluntarily "aligns with a broader trend in the U.S. live events industry," according to IATSE.

The union said employers are increasingly recognizing that a unionized workforce brings consistent staffing levels, enhanced skills, greater safety protections and comprehensive training opportunities. And for live event workers, union membership means better wages, access to health care, mental health resources and opportunities for professional growth.

## Organizing Report

### Workers win union elections at three Twin Cities employers

Recycling, security and health care workers in the Twin Cities voted to form unions last month in separate elections overseen by the National Labor Relations Board, as workers continued to show interest in joining together to bargain for better wages, benefits and working conditions.

- Health unit coordinators at **M Health Fairview Riverside Hospital** voted to join SEIU Healthcare Minnesota and Iowa on Feb. 13, with 77% of participating workers voting yes.

The new bargaining unit of 32 employees joins over 1,500 area health care workers who have joined the SEIU local since 2021. Two other groups of workers – at Children's Hospital in Minneapolis and Unity Hospital in Fridley – have also filed for elections with the union.

- In an election held Feb. 16, Twin Cities-based security technicians with **ADT** voted 14-4 in favor of forming a union with Communications Workers of America Local 7250. The bargaining unit brings together 22 tech engineers, classic technicians and service technicians.

- Workers at **Ridwell**, a recycling startup with a

branch based in St. Paul, voted unanimously to unionize Jan. 30. The company's seven drivers and warehouse workers in Minnesota will join Teamsters Local 120.

Jamie Hoekstera, a Ridwell driver, said workers hope to bargain a first contract that addresses their concerns over wages, benefits and working conditions.

"My coworkers and I voted to become Teamsters so that we can gain a voice in our workplace," Hoekstera said. "I am excited to work under a strong union contract that will give me a say in the decisions that affect my career and future."

The St. Paul unit is the third group of Ridwell workers in the U.S. to join the Teamsters.

Ridwell's services include reusing and disposing of hard-to-recycle items like batteries, lightbulbs and plastic film. Since its founding in 2018, Ridwell has expanded from Washington state to California, Colorado, Minnesota, Oregon and Texas.

"We look forward to helping this new group of Teamster workers negotiate a strong contract that reflects the critical work they provide to their communities," Local 120 President Tom Erickson said.

### Macalester student workers take their union organizing drive public

After 14 months of internal organizing, student workers at Macalester College last month went public with their campaign to form a union on the St. Paul campus.

"There are pretty big problems with student employment that are not going to be addressed unless we have the legally protected means to do so that you only really get with a union," sophomore Henna Schechter, a member of the organizing committee, said.

Among the issues student workers hope to address

are pay, sick time and getting enough hours to maximize their financial-aid package. Workers also said relationships too often become blurred in academic work settings, and they want union protections to ensure respectful lines of communication with their supervisors.

Roughly half of Macalester's student population have jobs on campus, and the potential bargaining unit could include as many as 1,100 workers.

Learn more about the organizing drive at [muwu.org](http://muwu.org).

## Unlock Your Home's Potential with a Home Equity Loan from Building Trades Credit Union!

Is your dream kitchen renovation, backyard oasis, or home office makeover on hold due to financial constraints? Let us help you unlock the full potential of your home! Contact us now to explore how a home equity loan can turn your dreams into reality.

To apply online go to [www.buildingtradesCU.com](http://www.buildingtradesCU.com) or call us at 763-315-3888

Terms and conditions apply. Subject to credit approval. Rates and loan products are subject to change without notice. Home equity loans are available on primary residences and second homes. Property insurance is required. Flood insurance may be required. Consult your tax advisor regarding the deductibility of interest. Other restrictions may apply. BTCU NMLS#407267





Nechville Musical Products workers and their supporters picketed Feb. 15, a day after their boss changed the locks at the Bloomington shop. Union Advocate photo

## Bloomington workers say banjo maker wants to bust their union by moving to Oregon

By Michael Moore  
Union Advocate editor

Craftsmen who make banjos for Nechville Musical Products in Bloomington put up a picket line Feb. 15, one day after their boss asked them to load a U-Haul with tools and materials that he plans to relocate to Oregon, leaving local employees out of work.

The move came less than a month after Nechville's six workers – five full-time and one part-time – announced they had formed a union with the North Central States Regional Council of Carpenters.

Union members called the relocation plan retaliatory, saying ownership gave them no indication that it intended to move until Jan. 16, when they requested recognition of their union. In fact, they say owner Tom Nechville engaged with them in a robust annual planning session just one week earlier.

"The meeting before we told him about the union was a meeting about the goals for 2024 and how to organize ordering so that the finances would be in line," John Potts, who has worked for Nechville the last five years, said. "Our goal for the year was going to be 180 banjos."

Potts showed up to the Bloomington facility Feb. 14 and turned over his keys to Nechville, who had already changed the locks. He and other workers were left wondering if they had been locked out of their jobs or laid off permanently.

"It's not necessarily a lockout, but it is a situation I'm working on right now," Nechville said when reached by phone at the Bloomington shop. He refused further comment and then ended the call.

Union members picketed Nechville Musical Products, located at 9700 Humboldt Ave. S., the morning of Feb. 15. About a dozen community and labor supporters joined them on the line.

The Carpenters union filed charges of unfair labor practices against Nechville shortly after filing for a union election. More are likely coming. Threats to close a facility or lay off workers if they form a union are considered forms of retaliation under federal labor law.

What's more, the Carpenters contend that Nechville voluntarily recognized the union and has

been illegally refusing to bargain since announcing plans to relocate. Workers said the owner granted recognition in messages about the timing of the Bloomington facility's closure, which he abruptly moved up from the initial date of Feb. 29.

"It's all gone so chaotic," Nechville worker Gareth Bly, who crafts banjo fretwork and neck shaping, said. "It's difficult for any of us to parse what (Nechville's) motivation is. Why does he think that we're doing this, and what's so bad about it?"

Bly and Potts said workers' main goal in forming their union was making their careers more sustainable. Potts described most workers' job descriptions as "nebulous," and he attributed recent turnover in the shop to "some sort of falling out with Tom over control issues."

Additionally, Nechville workers do not receive paid time off, paid holidays or health benefits. They only began earning paid sick time after Bloomington passed a municipal ordinance establishing the labor standard.

Bly said he first considered the idea of forming a union before his first Thanksgiving on staff, when he realized celebrating the holiday would take money off his paycheck. Nechville, according to Bly, later clawed back sick time that he and other workers had been told they'd earned before Bloomington's ordinance took effect.

"That's when we started saying this can't stand," he said.

Any hopes that Nechville would approach the union in a collaborative spirit – or share their enthusiasm for putting a union label on the brand's banjos – have evaporated over the last month, leaving workers both disillusioned and worried about their economic security.

Potts, the kind of worker who Bly described as someone who "put himself out there for every single dirty job that had to get done," said he "oscillates between being extremely sad and extremely angry."

"I love my job," Potts said. "I've had a great time in the past with Tom, hanging out at bluegrass festivals, taking various trips with him. Ultimately, I want Tom to be doing well. So it's really sad to see him kind of dismiss our value and assume that we're trying to hurt him."



## EXCEEDING EXPECTATIONS for over 40 years.

We take the time to understand your goals, build a lasting relationship, and help you capitalize on all of your financial opportunities. When you have the right team behind you, you can dream big-or-little-or wherever you want your financial freedom to take you.



312 Central Avenue SE • Minneapolis 612-379-3222  
www.ubtmn.com • Member FDIC  
A Tradition Since 1976



We're looking for new friends.

Get labor news, action alerts and volunteer opportunities when you like the Saint Paul Regional Labor Federation on Facebook.

[facebook.com/SaintPaulRLF](https://facebook.com/SaintPaulRLF)



Posting? So are we.

Follow The Union Advocate's feed on X for breaking labor news.

Connect with us at:

[twitter.com/unionadvocate](https://twitter.com/unionadvocate)

# Led by nurses, coalition of MN unions to push 'Healing Greed Agenda' in 2024

By Michael Moore  
Union Advocate editor

Less than a year after hospital lobbyists stymied efforts to establish minimum staffing levels in Minnesota hospitals, nurses headed back to the Capitol last month with an agenda focused on safety, nurse retention and increased accountability for health systems and their highly paid executives.

The Minnesota Nurses Association calls it the "Healing Greed Agenda," and the union has readied a broadly supported campaign to advance it during the 2024 legislative session.

"Hospital executives think they run the show," MNA President Chris Rubesch, a nurse at Essentia-Duluth, said during a Capitol press conference Feb. 5. "They have the money to pay more than sixty lobbyists to ensure the system stays exactly like it is. But we are here today to speak with one voice and demand change. Minnesota can do better, and we must do better!"

Leaders of several other labor organizations, including the Minnesota AFL-CIO and AFSCME Council 5, joined the press conference, pledging to work in coalition to support the campaign. And MNA leaders listed several DFL lawmakers who are working with the coalition to usher the proposed policy measures through the Legislature.

Those measures include:

- Increased protections for nurses who raise concerns about patient safety and inadequate staffing in their hospitals, and greater legal accountability for hospital executives when their staffing decisions lead to adverse events. MNA pointed to several examples of hospitals allegedly retaliating against nurses for calling out unsafe staffing in their units.

- An enhanced student-loan forgiveness program, with more funding and expanded eligibility, designed to recruit



MNA President Chris Rubesch spoke during the Capitol press conference Feb. 5. Nurses were joined by representatives of several other union groups, including AFSCME, MAPE and the Minnesota AFL-CIO. Union Advocate photo

and retain hospital nurses, as well as new protections against violence in hospitals – another factor driving nurses away from the bedside. Nurses' proposed violence prevention measures include trauma-informed care and de-escalation strategies.

- Increased regulation of nonprofit hospitals' finances and operations, including a cap on executive pay and new requirements that hospitals give public notice of planned service cuts and consolidations. Nurses also want to see increased scrutiny of hospitals' debt-collection tactics and how the non-profit institutions are meeting requirements that, in lieu of paying taxes, they invest in charity care and public health.

### Trust nurses, lawmaker says

Nationwide polling results, released

by Gallup in January, showed that nurses are the most trusted profession among Americans, with 77% of respondents agreeing that they are "honest and ethical." It was the 22nd consecutive year in which nurses had the highest rating of any profession.

At the press conference, Sandra Feist (D-New Brighton) said lawmakers should have the same trust in nurses' assessment of how corporate greed is impacting patient care in Minnesota hospitals.

"As lawmakers, we need to trust nurses when they tell us that they face retaliation for speaking up in defense of safe patient care," Feist said. "We need to trust nurses when they tell us that violence is rising in their hospitals for patients and workers due to slashed staff

levels and resources. And we need to trust nurses when they tell us that there is a crisis in our hospitals."

### Staffing measure on hold

But the "Healing Greed Agenda" is also notable for what isn't included: the hospital staffing mandates that nurses hoped would become law a year ago.

The "Keeping Nurses at the Bedside Act" advanced through several legislative committees in 2023. The measure would have required hospitals to create labor-management committees to determine appropriate staffing in their wards, but support among lawmakers dwindled after Mayo Clinic threatened to withhold investments in its Rochester campus if the measure passed.

"Hospital CEOs have created a crisis in our hospitals that is driving nurses from the bedside and putting safe patient care at risk," Shiori Konda-Muhammad, a vice president of MNA, said. "Now, they're doing everything in their power to keep nurses from speaking up and taking action to demand better for patients and workers."

Feist and many other DFL lawmakers continue to support the "Keeping Nurses at the Bedside Act," but she said advocates decided to prioritize the anti-retaliation measure during this shortened legislative session because "it is pure policy," while the staffing law would be more appropriately considered during a budget session.

Konda-Muhammad, meanwhile, said MNA members will continue to advocate for minimum staffing requirements in their bargaining units – and they shouldn't fear retaliation from management when they do it.

"We nurses will continue to fight for patients," she said. "Now, we need lawmakers to have our backs and stand up to corporate bullies in our health care system so we can carry on that fight."

## AMA study finds lower care quality in for-profit hospitals

By Mark Gruenberg  
PAI Union News Service

The 589 doctors at Minnesota's Allina Health systems were onto something when they voted in late 2022 to unionize with the Service Employees.

When hospital chains privatize in pursuit of profits, the quality of patient care goes down – way down – compared to a control group of other hospitals, a study released in January found. Outcomes after discharge are worse.

There are 27.3% more patient falls in the for-profit hospitals. "Central line-associated bloodstream infections" are 37.7% higher, a summary of the study said. And that's even though the patients in the for-profit hospitals were younger than those in the larger control group.

The numbers get even worse when patients are taken in for surgery at the

for-profit hospitals. "Surgical site infections doubled from 10.8 to 21.6 per 10,000 hospitalizations at private equity hospitals, despite an 8.1% reduction in surgical volume," the study said.

The study was published in the December issue of the Journal of the American Medical Association.

National Nurses United and its affiliates, like the Minnesota Nurses Association, have been sounding the alarm for years that profit-driven methods are creeping into supposedly not-for-profit hospitals.

Ascension Health Care System hospitals in Wichita, Kansas and Austin, Texas, for example, forced hundreds of nurses to strike in December over cuts in patient care – in what is supposedly a non-profit Catholic-run health care system.

"Ascension has failed to invest its resources – including the tens of millions of dollars it does not pay in federal taxes, due to its nonprofit status – back into its communities and workforce," NNU said then.

When Allina doctors unionized, they complained that health insurers – and their own hospital bosses, in pursuit of profits – loaded them down with paperwork, and insurers often rejected their care requests.

"Allina clinicians complain of unrealistic productivity demands and increasing bureaucratic tasks that force them to churn through patients with few support staff," the Minnesota Reformer reported in 2022. "One recent study found family medicine physicians spend more than half their time on paperwork – six hours out of their average 11-hour day."

## Laborers in Minneapolis' Public Works Department vote to authorize strike

Members of Laborers (LIUNA) Local 363 who work for the City of Minneapolis could go on strike this month, after 98.6% of participating members voted to authorize union leadership to call a strike Feb. 21.

Union members are seeking higher wages to keep pace with inflation, as well as more robust health and safety protections on the job.

Additionally, members of Local 363 are among nearly 15,000 union workers who have authorized strikes this spring after working together to align their contract expiration dates. The unions are working in coalition, along with community allies and non-union workers, to push for action on four shared demands: dignified work, stable housing, a livable planet and good schools.



# United's in-house production workers score union contract just before MLS opener

Approximately 34 in-house audio and video workers at Allianz Field, the home stadium for Major League Soccer's Minnesota United FC, ratified their first contract Feb. 13, bringing an end to eight months of contentious negotiations for the newly unionized crew.

The workers voted to join the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees (IATSE) Local 745 by an overwhelming margin in September 2022, and they began the process of bargaining their first contract shortly thereafter.

By October 2023, however, workers' frustration with a lack of movement by management at the bargaining table trig-

gered a one-day strike, which resulted in a near-total blackout of broadcast coverage for MNUFC's last home game of 2023.

The successful resolution of the contract campaign, IATSE said, is a win for workers and fans, as well as a "paradigm shift in the landscape of conditions for in-house stadium crews."

The new agreement contains significantly improved wages and terms, with workers seeing a 29% increase on average over the next three years, boosting average pay from about \$220 per game to \$284 starting in 2026. Prior to their decision to unionize, the crew had only ever received one wage increase since the team joined

MLS in 2017.

Additionally, the collective bargaining agreement guarantees a minimum of 5.5 hours pay per game, a first for in-house technicians in Minnesota, according to IATSE Local 745 Business Representative Charlie Cushing.

"Three months ago, I didn't know if we were ever going to get an agreement," Cushing said. "I'm excited. Our goal from the beginning was to improve working conditions and wages and we have certainly achieved that, albeit after a long fight. This sets the standard for what other in-house contracts will look like across the country."

Josiah Wollan, a camera and replay operator at Allianz Field, said the contract campaign succeeded because of the solidarity IATSE members received from fans and the labor community.

"We would like to thank the supporter clubs, the officers, staff, and fellow affiliates of the St. Paul Regional Labor Federation and the numerous elected officials that support organized labor Gov. Tim Walz, St. Paul Mayor Melvin Carter, Congress-woman Betty McCollum, and many more for their tireless solidarity," Wollan said. "This victory would not have been possible without their support."

# Unions pledge to stay vigilant at Capitol: 'What we've got can go away in a vote's notice'

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

To union members like Jake Anderson, a special education teacher in the St. Paul Public Schools, that sounded like going backwards - "and we are not going backwards," he said at a rally outside the event.

"We won a lot of things last time around," Anderson, a member of the St. Paul Federation of Educators, said. "Our kids get free school lunch. We get unemployment for our paraeducators. But it's not enough, it's just the beginning."

Kelly Gibbons, executive director of Service Employees (SEIU) Local 284, said 18,000 education support professionals accessed unemployment insurance last summer, after legislation passed to make hourly school employees eligible for the benefit. She said union members have told her that "unemployment insurance has changed their lives."

"They're going to talk about going back to the system that was rigged against us, the workers," Gibbons said of the Chamber. "They want it to go back in their favor, and we're here to say absolutely not."

The state's largest labor federation, the Minnesota AFL-CIO, last month identified its top priorities for the session, and defending the gains made in 2023 is at the top of the list.

Minnesota AFL-CIO President Bernie Burnham said the federation developed its priorities through conversations with affiliate unions and labor leaders.

"First and foremost, we've got to protect the things we've got," Burnham said. "We're going to be working to make sure that paid family and medical leave and union rights - all of that and more - stay in place. What we've got can go away in a vote's notice."

Burnham said it's an indication of just how much work lawmakers did on labor issues last year that there are few holdovers from 2023 on the federation's list of legislative priorities.

Along with paid family leave and unemployment for school employees, union-backed measures to expand earned sick and safe time benefits, ban captive audience meetings, raise safety



Minnesota AFL-CIO President Bernie Burnham said unions would defend gains made for working people during the 2023 legislative session, including paid family and medical leave. Union Advocate photo

standards in refineries and give public-sector unions more bargaining rights all became law, not to mention historic one-time investments in public schools and infrastructure jobs.

Still, there are policy measures the state AFL-CIO will work to advance in 2024, including a crackdown on employers who misclassify their workers as independent contractors. Unions have long said the practice is alarmingly common in the nonunion construction industry, but it also applies to the gig economy, advocates say.

Unions want to see legislators put teeth into the state's existing misclassification laws this session. When workers are misclassified, Burnham said, "they lose out on minimum wage, they lose

out on benefits like workers' comp and overtime pay."

The federation also plans to lobby for extending unemployment insurance to workers who are on strike. Such a law would level the playing field in collective bargaining, Burnham said, noting that employers can replace striking workers, cut off their health care and stall negotiations.

"There is so much action right now among people who are fighting to do better on the job," she said. "If they have to go on strike, how are they going to make ends meet?"

"If we are going to continue in Minnesota with all the good things we got last year, why wouldn't we go that next step further?"

## Minnesota AFL-CIO Legislative Priorities

- Protect 2023's historic progress
- Crack down on worker misclassification
- Allow striking workers to access unemployment insurance
- Support affiliated unions and community allies in moving their legislative priorities

Read more about labor's agenda and sign up to receive news and action alerts from the Minnesota AFL-CIO online at [mnafclcio.org](http://mnafclcio.org).

**David Riehle: 1946-2024****As a scholar, rail unionist unearthed St. Paul's untold stories**

David Riehle, a railroad worker, labor leader and local labor historian whose work *The Saint Paul Union Advocate* frequently published, died Jan. 21 from complications resulting from a recent stroke. He was 77.

Riehle's family, friends and comrades remembered him as a life-long socialist, passionate railroader and prolific writer and historian whose scholarship shed light on the stories of workers, immigrants and others too often left out of the history books.

"Dave not only unearthed compelling but forgotten chapters in local labor history ... but he connected these past experiences to the ongoing struggles of workers and unions in the present," Peter Rachleff, a retired Macalester College history professor, wrote in a eulogy for Riehle, delivered during a memorial service at the East Side Freedom Library last month.

Riehle, who lived in St. Paul most of his life, took a job as a brakeman on the Chicago and Northwestern railroad in 1980, joining United Transportation Union

(UTU) Local 650. He later worked as an engineer. A dedicated unionist, Riehle handled grievances, strike preparations and internal organizing as Local 650's unit chair.

Riehle also served as a delegate and board member of the St. Paul Trades and Labor Assembly, now the Regional Labor Federation, where he pushed the local labor movement to celebrate, preserve and raise awareness of its heritage.

He helped found a Labor Speakers Club at the Labor Centre and led walking tours of sites important to St. Paul's labor history. Riehle also chaired the Remember 1934 Committee, which succeeded in establishing a plaque commemorating the pivotal Teamsters strikes in Minneapolis.

All the while, Riehle continued writing, researching and teaching the "untold stories" of Minnesota history. His oral history interviews with labor activists are part of the Minnesota Historical Society's archives, and his fiery essays and articles were published in "Ramsey County History" magazine, in

addition to labor and progressive publications.

In December 1992, as the Minnesota Historical Society spent millions to restore the Summit Avenue mansion once owned by railroad financier James J. Hill, Riehle wondered who would preserve the homes of workers whose labor created Hill's fortune.

"It is quite striking that while millions have been spent to painstakingly restore Hill's huge house, there has been no similar effort to acquire and restore a typical home of a railroad worker of Hill's era, something that obviously could be done at far less cost," Riehle wrote in *The Union Advocate* in an article that listed several addresses for consideration.

"Dave is gone, but his presence and influence lives on," Rachleff said. "He would want us to continue to study and teach labor history as a path to a better future."

**Events & Opportunities****U of M offers labor education community classes**

The University of Minnesota's Labor Education Service (LES) offers community classes for union members, leaders and activists looking for easy-to-access, one-day opportunities to grow their organizing skills.

Two online classes are on the schedule this spring: "Graphic Design for Organizers" on March 13 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., and "Labor Writing Workshop" on March 26 from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.

The graphic design course will teach the basic principles of using the online software Canva, including best practices to make designs accessible, engaging and appropriate for union organizing. The course is best for beginners.

The writing workshop will explore literature by and about working people, with space for attendees to write about their own experiences and share their own work.

Registration is available online at [bit.ly/Spring2024CommunityClasses](https://bit.ly/Spring2024CommunityClasses).

**MN AFL-CIO to sponsor Organizing Institute in May**

The state's largest labor federation, the Minnesota AFL-CIO, will host a three-day boot camp for organizers May 1-3 in St. Paul. The Organizing Institute offers union activists an opportunity to learn skills from other organizers that will help grow the labor movement.

Participants in the Organizing Institute must be sponsored by local unions, but some scholarships are available. The cost is \$175 and covers the training, meals and snacks.

For information on applying to the Organizing Institute or for financial aid, contact Robyn Gulley, the federation's training director, at [rgulley@mnaflcio.org](mailto:rgulley@mnaflcio.org).

**Labor Bowl registration open**

Registration is open for Labor Bowl, the annual bowling fundraiser to benefit the St. Paul Labor Studies and Resource Center (LSRC) planned May 2 at Sun Ray Lanes in St. Paul. Teams can sign up to bowl at 2 p.m., 4 p.m. or 6 p.m.

Now in its 13th year, Labor Bowl raises funds for the Saint Paul Regional Labor Federation's nonprofit organization, the LSRC, which assists and advocates for union members and their families in the east metro area.

Find registration information at [stpaulunions.org](https://stpaulunions.org), or call 651-222-3787, extension 117. Deadline to register is April 19.

**Retirees Council plans Fun(d)raiser on April 27**

The Minnesota AFL-CIO State Retiree Council invites people of all ages to save the date for its 19th Annual Fun(d)raiser on April 27. The event will feature free food, music and fellowship, as well as drawings, raffles and a silent auction to support the council's political efforts.

The party will run from 3 to 7 p.m. at the Sheet Metal Workers Local 10 Hall, 1681 Cope Ave., Maplewood. Admission is free, but tickets for the popular cash-prize drawing are on sale now from council board members.

The Retiree Council's mission is to inform members and to organize actions to assure a secure and dignified retirement for all. It is the umbrella organization of union retiree clubs and local unions with retirees statewide.

**Carrying on a 'Grande' tradition**

Local union members and their families marched together along West 7th Street Jan. 27 in the St. Paul Winter Carnival's Grande Day Parade. The marching unit, sponsored annually by the St. Paul Regional Labor Federation and its nonprofit arm, the St. Paul Labor Studies and Resource Center, celebrates the longstanding partnership between organized labor and Greater Twin Cities United Way in service to the community. Afterward, union members joined a warm-up party at the Labor Center sponsored by Blue Cross Blue Shield Minnesota.

Union Advocate photos





# Minutes of the Saint Paul Regional Labor Federation

## FEBRUARY 14, 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 Beissel, Bell, Cook, Edwards, Engeldorf, Gale, Gibbons, Guertin, Hill, Hoerth, Luneburg, Madden, McNamara, Michelson, Mills, Olson, Peterson, Sansom, Schmidt, Seath, Slattery, Sturdivant, Tastad-Damer, Vanderport and Varco. Excused were Butts, Hoppe, Markham-Kocurek, Mullin, Roth, Ryan and VanDassor. Absent was Beedle.

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 SEIU Healthcare Minnesota & Iowa. President Peterson administered the Oath of Obligation to those new delegates and alternates in attendance.

## GUESTS

Bernie Burnham, Minnesota AFL-CIO President administered the Officer Oath of Obligation to the newly elected Saint Paul Regional Labor Federation board members. Burnham also spoke to the delegation regarding the Minnesota AFL-CIO's Modernizing the Movement work, being driven by our affiliates. "We need to know what you think," she said. "How can we do better while continuing to look at what we are currently doing and going forward?"

## MINUTES

**M/S/C TO APPROVE MINUTES OF DECEMBER 13, 2023, AND JANUARY 10, 2024, 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 FEBRUARY 14, 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 Beissel, Bell, Cook, Edwards, Engeldorf, Gale, Gibbons, Guertin, Hill, Hoerth, Luneburg, Madden, McNamara, Michelson, Mills, Olson, Peterson, Sansom, Schmidt, Seath, Slattery, Sturdivant, Tastad-Damer, Vanderport and Varco. Excused were Butts, Hoppe, Markham-Kocurek, Mayer, Mullin, Roth, Ryan and VanDassor. Absent were Beedle,

and

## Officers, executive board members sworn in at February delegate meeting



At the Feb. 14 delegate meeting, Minnesota AFL-CIO President Bernie Burnham, the state's highest ranking labor leader, administered the oath of office to the Saint Paul Regional Labor Federation's recently elected board members and officers. Union Advocate photo

Lohmann, and Naseth.

Items to come before this committee included:

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

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

- President Peterson reported on the Legislative Session starting on Monday. She said the federation has started hearing from legislative candidates and county-level candidates. March 5 is the Presidential Primary, and the AFL-CIO has endorsed candidate Joe Biden.

**M/S/C TO PURCHASE A TABLE OF TEN AT THE MINNESOTA DFL HUMPHREY-MONDALE DINNER AT A COST OF \$1,500.**

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

## EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES FEBRUARY 14, 2024

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 thanked all union members and volunteers that participated in the Winter Carnival Grande Day Parade and warm up party. She announced the Thirteenth Annual Labor Bowl event will be held Thursday, May 2, 2024, at Sun Ray Lanes; funds are used for Labor

Studies and Resource Center's operating expenses. She discussed the SPRLF 2024 Budget, with discussion on purchasing new computers for

phone bank room. She announced that the Union Job and Resource Fair is potentially scheduled for Thursday, May 16, 2024.

**M/S/C TO APPROVE THE 2024 SAINT PAUL REGIONAL LABOR FEDERATION OPERATING BUDGET AS PRESENTED.**

**M/S/C TO APPROVE \$10,000 TO PURCHASE NEW COMPUTERS FOR THE PHONE BANK ROOM.**

- ORGANIZING: UPDATES/CAMPAIGNS: the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists, Machinists (IAMAW) Local 1833, IATSE Local 13, Minnesota Nurses Association, OPEIU Local 12, SEIU Local 284, SEIU Healthcare MN & IA, SPFE Local 28, Teamsters Local 120 and UNITE HERE Local 17 gave updates on their organizing activities.

- The following requests:

**M/S/C FOR THE RLF TO MAKE A \$800 CONTRIBUTION TO LSRC'S THIRTEENTH ANNUAL LABOR BOWL.**

- THANK YOU NOTES received from Saint Paul Title 1 Project Reach for the 2023 Jean Jones Coats Initiative donations of winter gear.

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 January 2024. The report was accepted as read.

## REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES

- Michael Madden reported on behalf of the Chisago County Labor Assembly. He said participants are working on increasing ability to vote.

The next meeting will be on the fourth Tuesday via zoom at 6:00 p.m.

- Connie Beissel reported on behalf of the Dakota County Labor Assembly, which is currently working on a Worker's Memorial Day ceremony in Lebanon Cemetery April 28, 2024, at 1:00 p.m. The next meeting will be the second Thursday of the month at 7:00 p.m.

- Kera Peterson reported on behalf of the Washington County Labor Assembly. The Assembly is discussing a spring event. Its 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. Its next meeting will be on the fourth Tuesday of the month via zoom at 6:00 p.m.

## PRESIDENT REPORT

President Peterson spoke about keeping up with new member organizing and contract campaigns. There are several unions that have upcoming strike votes and we will be asking for Solidarity if members go on strike. The federation held congressional screenings for Congressional Districts 2 and 4. The Minnesota Presidential Primary will be March 5, and the AFL-CIO's endorsed candidate is Joe Biden, please get out and vote. Peterson thanked everyone who came out and marched with the organization in the St. Paul Winter Carnival Grande Day Parade.

## STAFF/LABOR LIAISON REPORTS

- Michael Moore, Union Advocate editor, announced the newspaper won two awards in the International Labor Communications Association's 2023 labor media contest, and that those awards are due to affiliate unions'

support for local labor journalism.

- The Union Job and Resource Fair will be held on Thursday, May 16, 2024, at the IBEW Local 110 Union Hall.

## NEW BUSINESS

- President Peterson called for a floor vote on the COPE recommendation to recommend that the MN AFL-CIO grant Labor Endorsements of Angie Craig in CD2 and Betty McCollum in CD4.

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

## GOOD AND WELFARE

- Mary Sansom, Machinists Local 1833, invited everyone to the 19th Annual Retiree Fundraiser on April 27, 2024, at the Sheet Metal Workers Local 10 hall in Maplewood.

- Art Hill, IUPAT Painters Local 61, announced CBTU Chapter recognized for Minnesota Diversity Equality and Inclusion on fourth Wednesday of the month at the Minneapolis Labor Temple. Organizers are also trying to get a chapter of the Labor Council for Latin America Advancement established.

- Sue Snyder, SPFE Local 28, thanked everyone for showing up to support the SPFE rally last month.

- Kimberly Maurer, Twin Cities Postal Data Center Local 7019, invited people to the St. Paul American Postal Service Support Services on March 2, 2024, at 9:00 a.m.

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

Submitted by,

**BERNADINE ENGELDORF**

Secretary-Treasurer

# Flaming guitar solos deserve supremely hot dividend rates!

**5.25% APY\*** on a 15-Month Share Certificate

**YOU'RE A ROCK STAR. TREAT YOURSELF LIKE ONE.**

Rock the house by opening a special St. Paul Federal certificate today!



CONNECT WITH US!



Visit us today at  
[www.stpaulfcu.org](http://www.stpaulfcu.org)

**St. Paul Federal**  
CREDIT UNION

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

 800-782-5767

 1330 Conway Street, Suite 200, St. Paul, MN 55106

\*Annual Percentage Yield (APY) Assumes principal and interest remain on deposit for the term of the certificate. APY is effective as of October 13, 2023. Minimum deposit for this certificate special is \$1,000.00. Penalties will be imposed for early withdrawals. An early withdrawal may deduct from the principal balance. Offer good on new personal share certificates only. Not valid on IRA certificates. Not valid with any other promotional offers. Certificate will automatically renew at maturity at current market rates unless you inform us of your intent to move the funds at the time of maturity. APY is a limited time offer, and subject to change at any time. Limit one offer per member and per household. The penalty we may impose will equal 180 days dividends on the amount withdrawn. All dividends accrued, but not yet credited, will be paid to the share certificate at the time of withdrawal. All rates are deemed reliable, but not guaranteed. Please call the credit union with any questions you may have regarding rates. Rates can change at any time. All rates are based on term.

FEDERALLY INSURED BY THE NCUA

