

The St. Paul Union Advocate

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

April 2024

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Connecting union members in Ramsey, Washington, Dakota and Chisago counties.

Union members push bill to give striking workers UI benefits

By Michael Moore
Union Advocate editor

After a wave of collective action saw American workers improve their pay and working conditions by going on strike, Minnesota lawmakers are weighing a change to the state's unemployment insurance system that would lighten the economic hardship union members here face during a labor dispute.

Legislation introduced last month by DFLers in the House and Senate would make some workers in Minnesota eligible for unemployment benefits when they are on strike.

Advocates, including several union members who testified in support of the bill last month, said giving workers more leverage at the bargaining table is good for working families, local communities and the economy as a whole.

The cost to the state's unemployment insurance fund, meanwhile, would be "negligible," according to Jake Schwitzer, director of the North Star Policy Action, a research group that issued a report on the idea earlier this year.

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Labor at the Capitol



Members of Education Minnesota packed the Capitol rotunda during a rally to fix their pension plan.

Union Advocate photo

RESTORE THE PROMISE

Education MN calls on state lawmakers to pass pension reform

By Michael Moore
Union Advocate editor

Hundreds of educators from across Minnesota packed the Capitol rotunda Feb. 29 to demand that lawmakers fix inequities in the state-run pension plan covering most public school employees.

Several DFL legislators joined the rally and pledged to advance legislation that would invest some of the state's pro-

jected \$3.7 billion surplus into educators' pension fund to reduce financial penalties some longtime educators face when looking to retire before age 66.

"Penalties are for hockey, not for pensions," Sen. Heather Gustafson (D-Vadnais Heights) said, shouting out a hand-made sign that one educator brought to the Thursday-afternoon event.

Rep. Kaohly Her (D-St. Paul),

Inside

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chair of the Legislative Committee on Pensions and

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Organizing Report

Video game workers in Minnesota make history with industry's largest successful union campaign

By Michael Moore
Union Advocate editor

Over 300 video game workers in Eden Prairie have joined together with colleagues in Texas and California to form the industry's largest union, looking to protect their work-life balance in a trade notorious for its "crunch culture."

The Communications Workers of America (CWA) announced March 8 that

about 600 workers at Activision Central Quality Assurance, a division of the Activision Blizzard gaming company, had won voluntary union recognition from Microsoft, the firm's parent company.

With 334 workers, the Eden Prairie site is Activision Central Quality Assurance's largest location, and employees there had been trying to organize with CWA for about four years.

Two recent developments – a return-to-office order last November and a round of layoffs in January – kicked the union drive into high gear, organizing committee member Allen Junge said.

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 9)



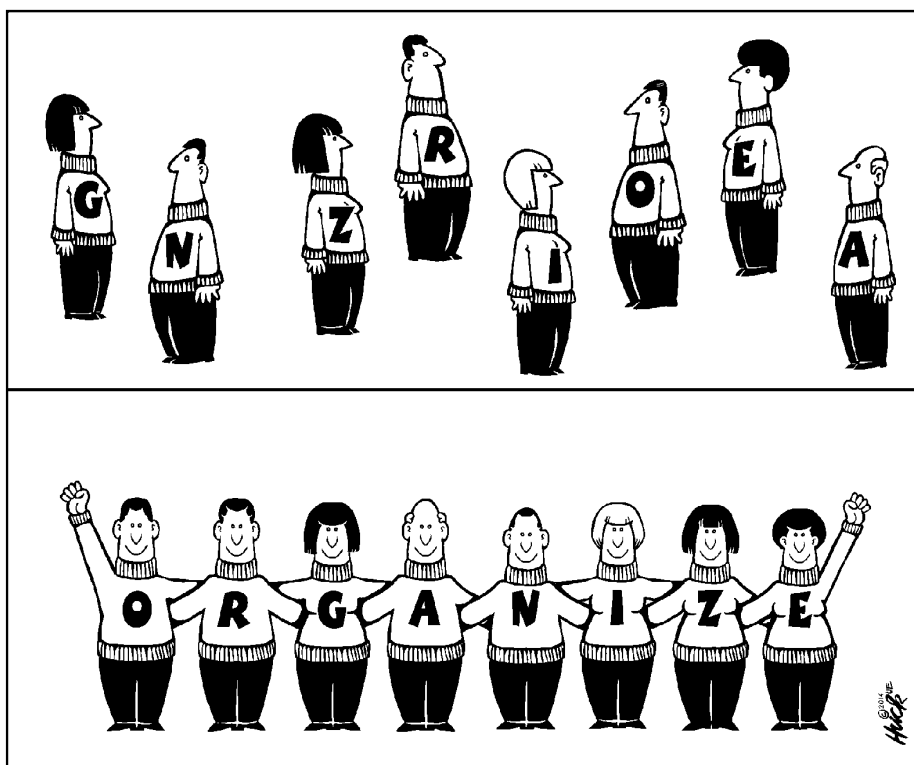
Go Figure

99% Percentage of union contracts ratified in 2023 that included a first-year wage increase

7.3% Average first-year pay increase in 2023 union contracts, including bonuses and lump-sum payments

99,116 Workers who formed unions in 2023 through the National Labor Relations Board election process. It's the highest number since 2020 and the fourth straight year that the number has increased.

Source: Bloomberg Law



Labor Voices: Jamie Gulley and Rena Wong

Why 1,000 nursing home workers went on strike

Minnesota nursing home workers have been in the news a lot lately because of the one-day unfair labor practice strike March 5. The strike brought together 1,000 workers at 12 nursing homes.

As the elected leaders of the two unions representing these strikers, we are proud to see them standing up for themselves, their families and their residents. Our members are demanding a \$25 minimum wage, improved staffing, affordable health insurance, a retirement plan for our families and the ability to form unions without retaliation. It's time for nursing home employers to step up.

Since our strike announcement, CEOs and lobbyists representing the nursing home industry have issued many public statements about how much they value the staff who work every day caring for the residents. But they always conclude their statements by passing the buck to Gov. Tim Walz and the Legislature, demanding even more money from taxpayers. While additional state money would be welcome, we want to call out our employers for dodging their own responsibility for the problem of low pay in Minnesota's nursing home industry.

Our state is contributing huge amounts of money to this industry, including more than 80% of the revenue paid to nursing homes. Since the state changed the formula for nursing home payments to a value-based reimbursement system in 2015, payments from the state automatically increase based on the allowed costs incurred at each nursing home. The increased payments are adjusted on an average 18- to 20-month lag after the state is able to audit the costs. As a result, state payments to nursing homes have actually doubled since the VBR system went into effect. Meanwhile, our members' pay has not! The money simply isn't making it to workers because our employers have prioritized their profit margins, expansion opportunities and investments in many areas other than caregiver wages.

Where is the money going? According to public documents, we see that Daniel Lindh, the outgoing CEO of Presbyterian Homes in Minnesota - one of the state's largest nursing home chains - made \$919,741 in 2022. Worse yet, their top 10 executives all make at least \$240,000 per year. It seems disingenuous for employers and industry lobbyists to plead poverty, and suggest that state government pay for our

raises when their reimbursement rates have doubled and executives are now earning salaries this generous. Meanwhile, 50% of the workers who actually provide the care in our nursing homes still make less than \$20 an hour. Minnesota's nursing home industry doesn't have a funding problem; we have a priorities problem.

Workers are striking because the system is broken. Low wages cause high turnover as caregivers have to work two or three jobs to make ends meet. And sadly, this has created schedules that wreak havoc on the family lives of those who stay. Workers are being routinely mandated to work double shifts, and many report working 20 to 30 days in a row caring for residents. We see the harm this short-staffing causes, the chaotic mornings when residents wake up and need showers and care before breakfast. We see the meals that are delivered cold because we can't feed dozens or hundreds of residents in a timely fashion. And we see the impact on staff breaking their bodies because we have been working short for so long.

This is what we are facing. With the strike, workers are making one thing clear: Enough is enough. Workers and residents need action from our employers, not more excuses. We're tired of our bosses claiming they can't raise caregiver wages without additional state funding, when our VBR system already allows for higher reimbursements if they raise worker wages. It is true that there is a delay in when that reimbursement increase takes effect, but the executives wasted little time investing millions of dollars of increased state funding into their own salaries, corporate expansion plans and other costs that doubled the state's reimbursement rates, while keeping our wages low.

With this strike we are calling attention to the misplaced priorities of industry leaders. Moving forward we want our employers to invest in caregivers first! It's time for the nursing home industry to address the staffing crisis causing harm to seniors across the state. We ask you to join us in demanding this well-funded industry stop stalling and do what's right to address the staffing crisis hurting families all across our state.

- Jamie Gulley is president of SEIU Healthcare Minnesota and Iowa. Rena Wong is president of UFCW Local 663. Their column originally appeared on the Minnesota Reformer news site, minnesotareformer.com.

Letters

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

The Union Advocate

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Lunds, Kowalski's workers win historic raises, landmark safety language

Contract talks between east metro grocers and United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 1189 got off to an encouraging start last month. Within weeks of opening negotiations, workers at two retail chains reached tentative agreements that include the largest wage increases ever for their bargaining units.

Local 1189 announced a tentative agreement covering workers at five east metro Lunds & Byerly's locations March 14. Within a week, the union had another agreement covering workers at six Kowalski's stores.

Both units were scheduled to take ratification votes early this month, as negotiations continued on contracts covering workers at three other chains: UNFI-owned Cub Foods, Jerry's and Jerry's Cub, and Festival Foods.

The first two settlements have set a high bar, and members of the worker-led bargaining teams credited a pro-labor climate, both locally and nationally, with giving them momentum to win big at the bargaining table.

"You see the headlines with the teachers and what's happened with the auto industry," Lunds & Byerly's worker

Zach Boling Green said. "Unions are kind of gaining traction in a way I haven't seen before - and even the more veteran members haven't seen before. I think that set the stage for this contract."

Local 1189 members also pointed to the aggressive contract campaign taken on by grocery workers in their sibling local, Minneapolis-based UFCW Local 663, last year. It included several strike votes and informational picketing - and led to historic gains in their contracts.

Claire Van den Berghe, Local 1189's organizing director, said it was clear that Kowalski's and Lunds & Byerly's were not eager for another round of contentious bargaining, and they could see that Local 1189 members were mobilizing for a fight.

"We've been doing a lot of work to prepare for bargaining," she said. "The employers have clearly noticed, and I think they are anxious about having another big fight. So to head it off, they actually came with good proposals."

"We had built strong committees because we were expecting to have a big fight. They kind of pulled the rug out from under us."

Gains in the new contracts include increased opportunities for full-time work, protections for meatcutters' jobs, new language protecting workers from having to travel in dangerous weather and industry-leading wage increases.

Lunds & Byerly's full-time workers will earn \$4.50 per hour more by the end of the two-year contract, \$3.50 for part-timers. At Kowalski's full-time workers will see a \$3.75 raise, \$2.50 for part-timers.

The pacts also include new safety language, setting minimum staffing on night shifts and, for Lunds workers, creating a new, first-in-the-nation process to develop policies covering violent events in their stores - from prevention and response to accommodations for workers who experience a violent event.

"After events in Buffalo and El Paso, we know that grocery and retail workers, unfortunately, are sometime targets for this kind of violence," Boling Green said. "We just wanted to ensure the union is present in those discussions around procedures and training. Whenever we can have a hand in those things, I think workers stand to benefit."

- Michael Moore, UA editor

Science Museum union plans contract rally

It's been over a year since workers at the Science Museum of Minnesota voted to unionize in January 2023, but members of the SMM Workers Union are still bargaining a first contract with museum leadership.

Union members want management to quit dragging its feet in negotiations - and to stop implementing changes on its own, which have resulted in several unfair labor practice charges with the National Labor Relations Board.

Workers plan to hold a rally April 2 in Kellogg Plaza, in front of the Science Museum's main entrance, from 11:45 a.m. to 12:45 p.m. All supporters are welcome.

The SMM Workers Union is an affiliate of AFSCME Council 5.

Learn more about Science Museum workers' fight for a fair contract at bit.ly/FIRSTcontract.

Townhall on racial equity, solidarity April 4

The state's largest labor federation, the Minnesota AFL-CIO, will hold a townhall meeting on racial equity and solidarity April 4, featuring a panel of leaders from local constituency groups and the federation's Racial Economic Justice Committee.

Panelists will offer insight on existing efforts to build racial solidarity in the labor movement and explore opportunities for constituency group chapters, which connect underrepresented union members around building power on the job, in the community and at the ballot box.

The federation's Racial Economic Justice Committee was founded after the murder of George Floyd to educate union members and leaders about racial injustice to BIPOC communities and advocate for positive change.

The hybrid meeting will take place at the Minnesota AFL-CIO headquarters, located at 175 Aurora Ave., St. Paul. All union members are welcome to participate in person or virtually. Learn more at aflcio.mn/april4unity.

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 council's mission is to inform members and to organize actions to assure a secure and dignified retirement for all.

Local unions plan Workers Memorial Day ceremonies

Workers Memorial Day is observed each year on April 28 as a time to honor the memory of workers who lost their lives on the job or died from workplace-related illnesses. Unions nationwide hold observances and rededicate their organizations to advocating for safety in the workplace.

Union tradespeople will observe Workers Memorial Day with a public ceremony Monday, April 29, in the Workers Memorial Garden on the grounds of the Minnesota State Capitol, near the intersection of 12th Street and Cedar Street.

The program, sponsored jointly by the St. Paul and Minneapolis Building and Construction Trades councils, will begin at 11:30 a.m.

The Dakota County Labor Assembly will commemorate Workers Memorial Day with a program at 1 p.m. Sunday, April 28, in the Lebanon Cemetery of Apple Valley. The observance will take place at the Monument to Fallen Workers, located near the intersection of County Road 42 and Pilot Knob Road.

The Dakota County Labor Assembly is affiliated with the



Twin Cities Building Trades unions observe Workers Memorial Day on the Capitol grounds each year. Union Advocate file photo

St. Paul Regional Labor Federation, AFL-CIO. For more information on the assembly or its Workers Memorial Day ceremony, contact Colleen Nocerini, RLF political organizer, at cnocerini@stpaulunions.org.



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

April 23rd, 6 p.m.

To register for the Zoom meeting, email cnocerini@stpaulunions.org

Dakota County Assembly

April 11th, 7 p.m.

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

Ramsey County Assembly

April 23rd, 6 p.m.

Saint Paul Labor Center, 353 7th Street West

Washington County Assembly

April 24th, 6 p.m.

United Steelworkers Local 11-00418, 8839 96th St. South, Cottage Grove



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As negotiators met with a state mediator March 2, SPFE members prepared for a potential strike with an “art build” at the Carpenters union’s training facility in St. Paul. SPFE members assembling picket signs included (L to R) Jane Opine, Meghan Karschnia and Chris Baumhover. Union Advocate photo

SPFE contracts increase pay, preserve classroom gains

By Michael Moore
Union Advocate editor

St. Paul educators voted last month to ratify new union contracts that will improve their pay and benefits while upholding the in-classroom supports they won in previous bargaining cycles.

“Educators often bargain for things that are outside of those bread-and-butter issues,” St. Paul Federation of Educators President Leah VanDassor said. “This time around, we’re really struggling to keep our educators in St. Paul, so we did push a lot harder on pay and benefits than in the past. And we did get some classroom wins as well.”

The union said its members voted “overwhelmingly” to ratify contracts covering 3,689 employees in the St. Paul Public Schools. Three bargaining units – licensed teachers, educational assistants, and school and community professionals – negotiated jointly with the district, and each agreed to two-year contracts that will expire after the 2024-25 school year.

Educational assistants, the lowest-paid SPFE members, will see the steepest wage increases under the new contracts, with an hourly hike of \$2.25 retroactive to Jan. 1 and an across-the-board increase of 4% in 2024-25. That amounts to a 16% pay increase.

Other union members will see salary increases of \$3,084 or \$3,500 this school year retroactive to Jan. 1, and a 4% pay increase next year. The contracts also provide longevity bonuses and increased holiday pay to some educators, and the district will increase its contribution to union members’ health plans.

“With historic funding from the state, now was the time to be bold for our members and our students – and we were,” VanDassor said.

Prior to reaching a tentative agreement with SPFE on March 5, school administrators had claimed that the student-centered commitments won by the union in previous bargaining cycles – like language capping class sizes and establishing mental health teams in each school – prevented the district from offering competitive pay increases this cycle.

Not only will existing student supports remain in place under the new contracts, but SPFE won language that will reduce caseloads for some special-ed teachers, as well as new supports for dual language immersion educators. And the agreement restores site councils at

schools across the district, giving local educators, parents, students and district administrators a voice in decisions on budget priorities, events and other issues.

The contracts also establish an easy process for educators who wish to change their names or pronouns used by the district, extending a policy to staff members that has been in place for SPPS students for about a decade.

“No one contract campaign can fix all of the things we need for our students and for our educators,” Erica Schatzlein, a member of the SPFE Executive Board, said during a press conference announcing the agreement. “But I do feel strongly that this is one big step.”

Throughout negotiations, which began last May, the SPFE bargaining team maintained that the district was painting an overly dire financial picture, pointing to a record \$56 million increase in state funding delivered by lawmakers last year.

When union leaders asked for strike authorization in February, members responded with an overwhelming “yes” vote. Two weeks later, the SPFE filed notice of its intent to begin striking March 11 barring an agreement with the district.

A mediation session between two sides scheduled for Friday, March 1, stretched deep into the weekend without an agreement, and VanDassor said administrators’ economic offer did not meaningfully improve until educators held a raucous round of informational picketing outside district headquarters Monday, March 4.

When the two sides returned to the table, the district brought more money, doubling its proposed wage increase for educational assistants, VanDassor said.

SPFE members have voted to authorize a strike in every bargaining cycle since 2018, but union leaders found reason to believe a more collaborative bargaining relationship with the district could be possible. VanDassor credited school board members – six of whom her union endorsed – for taking more active role in negotiations.

“Elections matter, they really do,” she said. “We’ve turned the board over with people who support educators and families. And it’s clear at the table, where we had four of six board members who could participate in negotiations actually show up and do that. It turned the tide.

“This is a step forward in our work with the board so we don’t get to this point again. It’s very encouraging.”



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Bargaining moves at slowest pace in two decades as Minnesota educators get bold

By Michael Moore
 Union Advocate editor

Union educators in Lakeville last month voted down their district's best contract offer 99% to 1%. Days later in Burnsville, hundreds of educators lined the street outside the district's offices to demand administrators do better at the bargaining table.

Educators in the east metro and across Minnesota are being bold in their contract demands during this bargaining cycle, sticking together for compensation gains that, union members say, are overdue after years of underfunding – and key to addressing a teacher shortage.

"Every teacher in the Lakeville district is making less money in real terms than they were 10 years ago, even with raises for additional experience," Johannah Surma, lead negotiator for Education Minnesota Lakeville, said. "Our pay just hasn't kept up with inflation."

Union members don't expect to catch up in one contract, but their "no" vote, Surma said, sent a strong message that it will take more than the district's last offer – a 1% raise in the first year and 5% in the second – to get them to settle.

Lakeville isn't the only district where educators are holding out for more this year, following a record \$2.2 billion state funding increase for public education. As of March, roughly 71% of Education Minnesota-affiliated local unions had settled their contracts.



Members of the Burnsville Education Association showed the school board they are sticking together for fair pay for all members and safety language. Union Advocate photo

"That is the slowest number in the last 20 years," Education Minnesota Vice President Monica Byron said. "But that shows the hard work that all the locals across this state have been doing because they deserve it. We are all worth more."

Already this school year, educators in large school districts like St. Paul, Anoka-Hennepin and St. Francis have voted to authorize strikes, although all three unions settled before a work stoppage.

Dozens of other Education Minnesota locals have staged informa-

tional picketing or public demonstrations before board meetings and outside schools, rallying community support for their contract demands.

The Burnsville Education Association (BEA) served pie to some 300 union members and supporters who joined an informational picket and rally on March 14, or "Pi Day" for math enthusiasts.

Afterward, union members spoke at a school board listening session, demanding a bigger share of the economic pie, particularly for adult basic

education teachers and early learning teachers who are not yet on the union's main salary schedule.

Educators are holding firm to some non-economic demands, too.

BEA members are looking to address concerns about violence in their schools, and demanding that educators who are injured at work don't have to use their personal days to cover any absences before they qualify for workers' compensation.

In Lakeville, educators are resisting a district proposal that would give administrators the power to transfer teachers into other positions that they are licensed to fill. Union members would be subject to involuntary transfers before or even during the school year, Surma said.

"Teachers develop relationships with kids, that's kind of the foundation of how we do our work," she said. "Students build trust with us, and we get to know them and know what they need. Disrupting that is really disruptive to kids."

Both Education Minnesota Lakeville, which represents 765 educators, and the BEA, which represents about 650, had bargaining or mediation dates scheduled in late March.

"We hope to make progress," Surma said. "That's our first choice, to continue to make progress at the table toward a settlement that meets everybody's needs and doesn't disrupt the classroom for the kids."

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FIGHTING TO WIN TOGETHER

Nursing home workers strike during weeklong burst of labor activism in Twin Cities

By Michael Moore
Union Advocate editor

Union members at 12 Twin Cities nursing homes walked off the job March 5, joining a coordinated, one-day strike for better compensation and safer working conditions.

After picketing six facilities in the morning, striking workers descended on the Capitol in St. Paul, where they rallied with union nurses, striking janitors and organizers behind a week of labor activity sweeping across the metro area.

Organizers called the nursing home strike the largest of its kind in state history, impacting nearly 1,000 members of two local unions, SEIU Healthcare Minnesota and Iowa and United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 663.

That indicates how serious the staffing crisis is and how urgently workers and residents need the industry to find a fix, Christine Ciepielinski said during a rally on the picket line at St. Louis Park Estates, where she has worked for 14 years.

“During the pandemic, we were made so many promises of health, supplies, safe staffing – and none of those promises were met from our management,” Ciepielinski said during a rally on the picket line.

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 7)

Nursing home workers on a one-day strike March 5 held an afternoon rally at the Minnesota Capitol after picketing six Twin Cities facilities. The strike brought together about 1,000 members of SEIU Healthcare Minnesota and Iowa and UFCW Local 663 who work at 12 area nursing homes.

Union Advocate photo



SCAN TO LEARN MORE



**PROUD TO SERVE THE HARD WORKING
UNION FAMILIES OF MINNEAPOLIS-ST. PAUL**

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6)

“The only thing we gained from that experience was the trauma.”

An April 2022 report found Minnesota nursing homes had the worst staffing shortages in the nation, and little has improved, workers say, despite an influx of \$300 million in state funding, authorized by lawmakers one year ago.

Like many other nursing home workers, Ciepielinski, a nurse, said she still finds herself being asked to take on responsibilities outside her job description, including dietary, housekeeping and nursing aides’ work. “Day in, day out we are here working short, and all of our staff are forced to jump in and do every single role,” she said.

That won’t change, nursing home workers said, until facilities begin offering competitive pay and benefits. In bargaining, union members’ demands include a \$25 minimum wage, safe staffing, retirement security and the right of every nursing home worker to join a union without fear of intimidation, retribution or coercion.

In a survey of 1,300 Minnesota nursing home workers conducted by SEIU last fall 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.

During a rally outside the Capitol, Nessa Higgins said after 25 years working in the industry, she still doesn’t have a retirement plan “because they don’t pay me enough.” She felt insulted when her employer, during a recent bargaining session, proposed a 20-cent wage increase, she said.

“We all know how it feels when you go home, your feet are tired, your back’s aching, and if you’re working a double shift, you’ve still got to get up the next day and be there at 6:30,” Higgins said. “But we’ve got all these people sitting behind desks, pushing pen and paper, and getting \$50,000 or \$100,000 bonuses, when that money should be coming back to us.”

Nursing home workers’ one-day strike came amid a



Hundreds of workers and activists marched outside MSP Airport’s Terminal 1 on the final day of commercial janitors’ strike March 4-6. Fifteen were arrested, including SEIU Vice President Neal Bisno. Union Advocate photos



flurry of labor activity in the Twin Cities, the culmination of cross-sector organizing among local unions that began last fall around the theme, “What Could We Win Together?” Other highlights of the week included:

- Commercial janitors staging a three-day strike March 4-6. The strike impacted over 100 facilities where about 4,000 members of SEIU Local 26 work. That includes Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport, where union members and supporters held a massive rally March 6 that led to 15 arrests for civil disobedience.

Two other bargaining units with Local 26, retail janitors and security guards, were set to join commercial cleaners on the picket line before reaching tentative agreements on new contracts days before the strike deadline. Both groups won double-digit raises over the life of their contracts, new paid holidays and other gains.

By week’s end, commercial janitors had reached a tentative agreement as well, winning a \$20 wage floor, raises of 17% over the course of the contract and a new, employer-paid retirement benefit.

- Workers at REI in Maple Grove went on an unfair-

labor-practice strike March 1-2, after the outdoors retailer denied merit pay increases to workers at their store and other unionized locations across the country. Blake Buzzo, a member of UFCW Local 663, called the move another attempt by REI to bust their union.

“In a show of good faith, our union presented a side letter at the bargaining table to resolve this issue, and REI, over a week later, has given us no response,” Buzzo said.

- Non-union workers organizing with the Twin Cities worker center CTUL filed a complaint of wage theft March 1 stemming from post-construction work on an Edina housing project developed by Solhem Companies. The complaint, filed with the state Department of Labor, came after a second group of workers on the project were able to recover \$41,000 in unpaid wages with help from Hennepin County.


CTUL and allies from the labor and faith communities marched on the Minneapolis-based developer’s headquarters March 6, demanding that Solhem sign onto the Building Dignity and Respect Program, an independent labor standards monitoring network.

Want to get a jump on your home remodeling projects?

For a limited time, Building Trades Credit Union is offering \$750 off closing costs when you finance a Fixed Rate Home Equity loan or revolving Home Equity Line of Credit with a minimum loan balance of \$10,000.

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Macalester student workers launch public union drive: 'It's been exhilarating'

By Michael Moore

Union Advocate editor

After 14 months of internal organizing, student workers at Macalester College went public in February 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.

Student workers hope to bargain for better pay and assurances that they will get enough hours to maximize their financial-aid packages. They also said unionizing would create protected, respectful lines of communication with their supervisors - who may double as their teachers - on work-related concerns.

"We're treated more as students than we are as workers," Roxy, a sophomore who works in the campus center, said. "We're expected to do the work that any employee would be expected to do, but we're not given the same sort of respect that an employee of the school should be given."

Roughly half of Macalester's 2,000 students have work-study jobs on campus. Organizers are moving quickly to collect enough union cards to demonstrate majority support before the spring semester ends - and hundreds of potential members of the bargaining unit graduate.

In the interest of timing, the Macalester Undergraduate Workers' Union - or "MUWU," an acronym that, yes, served as inspiration for the union's cattle-themed logo - sought a neutrality agreement from the school, and asked for voluntary recognition if they collect enough union cards to demonstrate a majority.

While Macalester pledged to maintain a neutral public stance toward the organizing drive, a spokesperson said the school would force an election before recognizing the union.

For organizers, the decision was dis-



Macalester student workers signed a petition to join MUWU - the Macalester Undergraduate Workers' Union - after organizers went public with the campaign in February. submitted photo



appointing.

"Macalester has always been very prominent when it comes to activism, and they've always been very good about having people feel comfortable in making their voices heard," Schechter said. "We would love to see that continue in recognizing us as a union."

A frenzied start

Despite the setback, Schechter and other supporters described a growing enthusiasm for the union on campus. Hundreds of student workers signed onto the campaign in the days following the public announcement, as organizers posted signs, chalked sidewalks and collected signatures in public spaces.

"I feel like people are being heard, and it always feels good to be heard," junior Bontu Takele, a sports medicine and research assistant, said. "It's been exhilarating."

It's also been a long time in the works.

Student workers at Macalester began organizing in the fall of 2022. Roxy, Schechter and a few other students were planning actions in solidarity with Macalester dining workers who were forming a union at the time, when someone floated the idea of a union of their own.

The group quietly expanded its outreach to student workers in different departments, seeking to identify common issues that collective bargaining might address.

Several student workers cited disparities in the expectations of different work-study jobs that pay the same wage. Students working in the dining hall or assisting the training staff during an early-morning football practice are paid the same amount - minimum wage - as workers in cashier jobs, like staffing an information desk in the library.

"People are working long shifts in hot conditions and making the same

amount as people who are working like three hours a week in an office, doing their homework," Schechter said.

Organizers also heard from workers that lack of respect could be an issue in some positions.

"It feels like straight-up verbal abuse at times, and we don't really have an outlet to talk about it except for with each other because of fear of being heard and potentially getting fired," Takele said. "Having a level of respect between employer and employee is what I would like, not a power imbalance."

Within months of forming an organizing committee, its meetings had grown from six workers to 20. When nearly 50 student workers tried to cram into a meeting space earlier this semester, organizers decided it was time to go public.

"Summer is going to be a huge momentum waster, so we decided it was best to keep the momentum going now," Schechter said. "It feels like we are very much at the start of something. We don't know where it's going to go, and we have no real context for what's going to happen. But it is really exciting."

Seizing the moment

Undergraduate student worker unions are a relatively recent phenomenon, as the National Labor Relations Board waffled for years on the question of whether or not student workers were primarily students and, as a result, ineligible for collective bargaining.

In 2016 the board issued a ruling that affirmed student workers' right to unionize, and it survived a challenge by Duke University last year. Thousands of student workers - mostly graduate, but some undergraduate students, too - have unionized since the 2016 ruling, with a big spike in organizing during the pandemic.

Worker-organizers at Macalester hope to join their ranks soon.

"This is the culmination of a long, long period of work," Roxy said. "It's really cool to see the solidarity and see people coming together, and I really think this can spark more organizing among undergrads."

Training available to union leaders on new sick time law, rights for pregnant workers

New laws recently took effect in Minnesota that expand working people's access to earned sick and safe time and establish new rights for pregnant and parenting workers.

The laws impact thousands of workers - even those covered by union contracts. Union leaders interested in growing their members' awareness of their rights can schedule a "train-the-trainer" session with the Minnesota Training Partnership (MTP), a non-profit affiliated with the Minnesota AFL-CIO.

MTP has received state funding to conduct in-person or virtual trainings

for union staff, stewards, officers and leaders across the state. Trainings can be conducted in English or Spanish, and they last about 90 minutes.

The trainings will cover earned sick and safe time, dedicated sick and safety leave, and pregnancy and parenting rights. Topics include the expanded definition of "family," how to document use of leave, industries covered by the legislation, protections for lactating workers and more.

To schedule a training or learn more about the opportunity, contact MTP trainer Debbie Prokopf at 651-764-6876.

University offers labor education classes covering FMLA, Right to Work laws

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 learn and grow their skills.

Two online classes remain on the schedule this spring: "Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)" on April 23 from noon to 1:30 p.m., and "History of the 'Right to Work'" on May 29 from 1 to 3 p.m.

The FMLA design course will provide an overview of the law for union stewards, officers, staff and rank-and-file members. Participants will learn

who qualifies for leave under FMLA, what counts as a qualifying leave, the rules for using leave and how stewards and others can ensure that workers are able to access their leave.

Right to Work laws erode workers' ability to build power through unionization. Participants in the May 29 class will learn about the laws' racist origins in the U.S. South, how similar measures have evolved over time and how workers have organized and fought back along the way.

Registration is available online at bit.ly/Spring2024CommunityClasses.

Nurses vote to unionize after Allina shrugs off safety concerns

Registered nurses at the Allina Health Cancer Institute voted Feb. 28 to form a union, joining together to push back against changes that, nurses say, have put patient safety – and their professional licenses – at risk.

The bargaining unit brings together 21 nurses at AHCI facilities on three Allina hospital campuses, United in St. Paul, Abbott Northwestern in Minneapolis and Mercy in Coon Rapids.

Nurses voted 17-2 in favor of joining the Minnesota Nurses Association, the union of 22,000 health care professionals. Nicole Novak, an oncology infusion nurse AHCI's Minneapolis facility, called it "a huge victory" in nurses' fight for patient safety.

"With all these budget cuts, it feels like the priority has been taken off of patient safety and on how we can help Allina financially," she said in a video posted on social media to announce the election results.

Allina Health launched its cancer services facilities in 2021. Since then, AHCI nurses "have helped grow these clinics and developed lasting relationships" with fellow care team members, patients and their families, Lisa Fox said. But the St. Paul-based oncology nurse described a downside to AHCI's growth.

"We have seen growth lead to unclear policies and procedures that could threaten the health and safety of our patients, along with our licenses and our livelihoods," Fox said. "Inadequate patient-nurse ratios have led to burnout that many other health care workers are all too familiar with."

AHCI nurses said they got serious about forming a union after management brushed aside their concerns about abrupt changes to the workflow in AHCI facilities resulting from consolidations across the Allina hospital system.

According to nurses, Allina began routing non-oncology patients – including pregnant people – to AHCI facilities for care after executives closed Abbott Northwestern's inpatient infusion center. AHCI oncology nurses like Kate Spitzer worried they lacked the guidance, training and equipment to safely care for the new patients.

"When we brought those concerns to management, we were told they were building the plane as they were flying it, and that we'd be failing forward together," Spitzer said.

AHCI nurses filed for a union election with the National Labor Relations Board on Jan. 24.

When negotiations on a first contract begin, the new union members intend to advocate for fairer schedules and safe nurse-to-patient ratios, as well as policies that protect and value nurses' professional judgment.

"We want our patients to be safe," Spitzer said. "We want our licenses to be safe. We want to have a good work-life balance. We want to continue to do the work that we're so passionate about."

AHCI nurses are the second group of Allina Health workers to form a union with MNA in the last year, joining the system's sexual assault nurse examiner (SANE) employees, who formed a union

Starbucks agrees to 'bargain over bargaining'

PAI Union News Service

After steadfastly refusing for two years to bargain with its unionized workers unless it's behind closed doors and shop by shop, Starbucks has agreed to bargain about bargaining with all of them as a group, in so many words.

The agreement was announced jointly by the coffee corporation and Starbucks Workers United, the Service Employees (SEIU) affiliate supporting the groundswell of Starbucks workers organizing. Both the union and corporate leaders hailed the agreement to talk.

If the firm negotiates, it will have to discuss demands of some 9,000 workers at 400 Starbucks stores nationwide who voted to go union. That includes workers at six stores in the Twin Cities and potentially a seventh, after workers at a Starbucks in south Minneapolis petitioned the National Labor Relations Board for a union election last month.

Some observers, though, wondered if Starbucks agreeing to "bargain about bargaining" could be viewed as yet another stall tactic.

The firm initially refused to bargain with Starbucks Workers United on a master agreement covering all the unionized locations.

Later, Starbucks refused to bargain with local stores because worker representatives invited other union members to join the talks over Zoom. In the only two sessions under that format, Starbucks, led by its union-bust-

ing lawyers, walked out after five minutes.

"A giant step forward made possible by thousands and thousands of us joining together and speaking out... THIS IS HUGE," SWU said in a post on social media announcing the agreement.

"As a result of our courage and persistence over the last 2 years, SBWU & Starbucks are in talks to build a foundational framework toward contract bargaining and organizing," the union continued. "We have a lot of work left to do, but we've never been more optimistic about the future of our union and the working conditions of Starbucks partners everywhere."

SWU's post on X, formerly Twitter, also attached the company's statement: "We have agreed with Workers United that we will begin discussions on a foundational framework designed to achieve collective bargaining agreements, including a fair process for organizing, and the resolution of some outstanding litigation."

But even as the two sides agreed to bargain over bargaining, Starbucks was battling its workers in the courts. It has a case pending before the U.S. Supreme Court challenging when the National Labor Relations Board can seek nationwide injunctions against rampant labor law violators.

Also, Starbucks and other anti-union firms Amazon, SpaceX and Trader Joe's are jointly challenging the very legality of the NLRB. They say its structure, with administrative law judges and prosecutors in the same

Microsoft recognizes Activision Blizzard union, including 330 Twin Cities workers

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

"The way management approached layoffs was terrifying," Junge, a Quality Assurance (QA) functional tester, said. "We'd gotten an email to tell us that layoffs were happening, but nobody knew how many people or who would be laid off. And in the Zoom call, it seemed like even the director of QA didn't know whether or not we were going to be laid off until we were on the call."

"It was an awful experience, and that got a lot of people motivated."

Within weeks of the Jan. 26 layoffs, Activision Quality Assurance United (AQAU) had enough support to request recognition from Microsoft under the terms of its labor neutrality pact with the CWA, reached after the tech giant acquired Activision Blizzard in 2022.

Over 1,000 Microsoft video game workers now have CWA representation. They include quality assurance workers with ZeniMax studios, who unionized last year and have since reached groundbreaking agreements on subcontracting and use of artificial intelligence.

"Microsoft continues to keep its commitment to let workers decide for

themselves whether they want a union," CWA President Claude Cummings Jr. said in a statement. "Time and again, other big companies in the industry have made the decision to undermine and attack their own employees when they join together to form a union. Microsoft's choice will strengthen its corporate culture and ability to serve its customers and should serve as a model for the industry."

In addition to job security and layoff procedures, AQAU members said they hope to bargain a first contract that raises pay, creates more opportunities for advancement and puts remote work back on the table.

Junge, who lives in Minneapolis and began working for Activision Blizzard after the COVID outbreak in 2020, said getting called into the Eden Prairie office in November amounted to a pay cut for him and many other workers, given the added transportation costs and travel time. The policy is particularly burdensome for workers with disabilities, he added.

"Like a lot of tech companies, they put a lot of talk into diversity-equity-

"I think we'll be a good voice for change in not just the gaming industry, but in the tech industry as a whole."

– Allen Junge, Minneapolis

and-inclusion efforts and supporting people with differing abilities and disabilities," Junge said. "But they've taken away the thing that makes our job more accessible to those people."

QA workers run fully built video games through a series of tests before they hit the market to find bugs or crashes. Companies often pitch the work "as a way to get your foot in the door in the video game industry," Eden Prairie QA tester Kara Fannon said.

In reality, Junge said, the work is almost always confined to projects that don't come with opportunities to learn new skills. "We're isolated," he said. "Everything we do has to be QA, and

there's not a lot of options elsewhere."

"At best, we get the internal job posting before the public does," Fannon added. "We're ready to grow our careers here and believe that having a strong union contract will set workers and the company up for success."

As for the "crunch culture" that has become synonymous with video game work, Junge said that's already starting to change, as workers' organizing efforts in recent years have brought the industry under greater scrutiny – and raised workers' own expectations.

"There were some awful experiences that people had, like working 16-hour shifts into the night and having to come in again at the start of their regular shift," Junge said. "A lot of people kind of saw through it, that it is actually pretty terrible."

Having organized the industry's largest union "feels pretty historic," he added.

"I think we'll be a good voice for change in not just the gaming industry, but in the tech industry as a whole."

Members of AQAU-CWA who work in Eden Prairie will join Minneapolis-based CWA Local 7250.

Educators call on lawmakers to restore equity to their pension plan

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

Retirement, said the newly announced budget surplus gives the state an opportunity to live up to its responsibility to education workers.

“We have a promise that we made to you that we would take care of you if you sacrificed the best years of your lives to take care of our children,” Her said. “That is why we need to do right by all of you.”

The statewide educators’ union, Education Minnesota, is making pension reform a legislative priority as disparities that have been baked into the Teachers Retirement Association since 1989 are coming to a head.

That’s when state lawmakers scrapped the “Rule of 90” – a formula that allowed pension participants to retire early with full benefits based on their combined age and years of service – for school employees hired after June 30, 1989, creating a two-tier system.

Now, thousands of “Tier II” teachers with 30-plus years of experience are facing a difficult choice that their colleagues hired before the cutoff never faced. They can work until age 65 and retire with a full pension, or retire early and lose a significant amount of their benefit to penalties.

Educators at the rally said the new system is bad for teachers, students and school districts.



“We have trapped teachers into staying beyond their own expectations of themselves,” Eastview High School social studies teacher Joe Wollersheim said. “Because it is so financially irresponsible to leave before a certain age, teachers are staying when they know they are not as effective as they want to be. And district budgets are squeezed, as they continue paying those at the top of the pay scale.”

Minnesota’s pension tiers not only create inequities within the state’s education workforce, but they also put Minnesota educators behind their colleagues in neighboring states. In Iowa, Michigan, Wisconsin, North Dakota and South Dakota, the combined average age at which an educator can retire without pension reductions is 57.



Hundreds of Education Minnesota members from across the state joined a day of action at the Capitol in support of pension reform. Union Advocate photos

Gustafson, herself a “Tier II” participant in the teachers’ pension plan, introduced a bill this session that would reduce penalties for early retirement. She said making the pension benefit more attractive would help schools attract and retain teachers at a time when most districts are short staffed.

“I know just how much we sacrifice financially to do the job,” she said. “We put our hearts, our souls, our tears and very often our own money into this job, and for most of us the one thing we have to rely on is that when we’re done, we’ll have a pension.”

Whether Minnesota edu-

cators can continue to rely on that promise – “a promise that we earned, that we paid for with every paycheck,” Education Minnesota President Denise Specht said – is up to lawmakers.

“We are not asking for a favor,” Specht said. “We are asking for fairness.”

Labor lobbies Legislature to extend unemployment benefits to striking workers

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

That report estimated the proposed expansion would amount to 0.3% or less of existing unemployment claims.

The benefits, union members said, would far outweigh those costs.

More equal footing

More often than not, employers enter a work stoppage from a position of strength, with deep pockets to cover any losses in productivity. Workers, particularly those in low-wage jobs, begin feeling the impact of lost wages almost immediately.

That dynamic, workers told lawmakers, gives employers an incentive to wait things out and force workers to capitulate to their demands. It’s what Dean Benson, a retired St. Paul Park refinery worker, said Marathon tried to do to members of Teamsters Local 120 when they went on strike for safety and job security three years ago.

“We won that strike, but only because we had the support we needed to keep that fight on,” Benson said dur-

“Going on strike will still be financially challenging, but at least workers won’t be starved back to work.”

– Bart Anderson, AFSCME Council 5 Interim Executive Director

ing a Senate committee hearing on the bill March 13. “That isn’t always the case because Marathon did what many large corporations try to do when their workers are seeking a fair contract. They tried to starve us out.”

Minnesota’s unemployment benefit covers about 50% of a worker’s average weekly wage, up to a maximum of \$890. That’s the right amount, AFSCME Council 5 Interim Executive Director Bart Anderson said, to give workers more bargaining power while keeping the strike a last resort.

“Going on strike will still be finan-

cially challenging, but at least workers won’t be starved back to work,” Anderson said.

Community gains

Other supporters argued that the legislation could reduce the number of work stoppages in Minnesota. Employers would know that union members have access to a partial wage replacement if they strike, giving them reason to bargain a timely, equitable contract.

With record profits in the bank, the Big 3 automakers could have reached a deal before members of the United Auto Workers went on strike last September, UAW member John Kontzelmann told lawmakers.

“The strike didn’t have to take five weeks because these employers knew what their top offer was,” said Kontzelmann, who was on strike at the Twin Cities Stellantis parts facility. “Managers didn’t sacrifice a penny while they tried to starve us out, and despite pleading poverty for weeks they ended up

Send a message!

The Minnesota AFL-CIO is calling on union members to petition their legislators in support of the bill to extend unemployment benefits to striking workers. Add your name to the petition: aflcio.mn/strikeui.

agreeing to a record four-year contract.”

The autoworkers’ contracts, with wage increases of 25% or more, also show the ripple effects of union power at the bargaining table. After the UAW settled, non-union automakers across the U.S. moved quickly to increase their wages by double-digit percentages – the so-called “UAW bump.”

“This bill benefits not just workers, but the entire economy,” Rep. Kaela Berg (D-Burnsville), lead House author of the bill, said. “When workers are earning a living wage, they are contributing to the local economy.”



Minutes of the Saint Paul Regional Labor Federation

MARCH 13, 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, Bell, Butts, Cook, Engeldorf, Gale, Guertin, Hill, Hoerth, Hoppe, Madden, Markham-Kocurek, McNamara, Michelson, Mills, Mullin, Peterson, Roth, Ryan, Sansom, Schmidt, Seath, Tastad-Damer, VanDassor and Varco. Excused were Edwards, Luneburg, Olson, Slattery and Vanderport. Absent were Gibbons and Sturdivant.

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 NALC Branch 28 and SMART TD 911. President Peterson administered the Oath of Obligation to those new delegates and alternates in attendance.

MINUTES

M/S/C TO APPROVE MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 14, 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 MARCH 13, 2024

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

President Peterson reported on the AFL-CIO Legislative Agenda. The Minnesota AFL-CIO board met and endorsed Amy Klobuchar (U.S. Senate) Angie Craig (Congressional District-2), Betty McCollum (CD-4), and Ilhan Omar (CD-5).

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

EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES MARCH 13, 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 unions for the opportunities to be out on the picket lines and at rallies. Discussion on upgrading the Saint Paul Regional Labor Federation's Firewall and Wi-Fi access.

M/S/C TO APPROVE RECOMMENDED OPTION TO UPGRADE THE RLF'S COMPUTER FIREWALL AT A COST OF \$4,020.

• ORGANIZING: UPDATES/CAMPAIGNS: ATU Local 1005, LIUNA Local 363, SEIU Local 26, SEIU Healthcare MN & IA, SPFE Local 28, UFCW Local 1189 gave updates on their organizing activities.

• REQUESTS:

– Request for the RLF to purchase a table of eight at a cost of \$750 to the 37th Annual Nellie Stone Johnson Scholarship Dinner being held on Tuesday, April 2, 2024, at the DoubleTree by Hilton in Bloomington.

– Request for the RLF to make a \$500 contribution to the Minnesota State Retiree's 19th Annual Fundraiser.

• THANK YOU NOTES received from St. Paul Labor Studies and Resource Center for the RLF's \$800 contribution to their thirteenth annual Labor Bowl.

• M/S/C FOR THE RLF TO PURCHASE A TABLE OF EIGHT AT A COST OF \$750 TO THE 37TH ANNUAL NELLIE STONE JOHNSON SCHOLARSHIP DINNER.

• M/S/C FOR THE RLF TO MAKE A \$500 CONTRIBUTION TO THE MINNESOTA STATE RETIREE'S 19TH ANNUAL FUNDRAISER.

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 February 2024. The report was accepted as read.

REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES

• Michael Madden reported on behalf of the Chisago County Labor Assembly. The assembly wants to address union households in the Eighth Congressional District, especially in Chisago and Isanti County. Its 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. The assembly is currently working on its Workers Memorial Day ceremony, April 28, 2024, at 1:00 p.m. Please give lost members names to President Peterson or Colleen Nocerini, political organizer.

Some educators locals in Dakota County have not settled their contracts. There will be an informational picket in Burnsville at the Diamondhead Education Center, located at 200 W B Parkway, from 3:30 – 6:15 p.m. Do not park on the property as there is a free parking ramp across the street.

The assembly's next meeting will be the second Thursday of the month at 7:00 p.m. in person.

• Brian Beedle reported on behalf of the Washington County Labor Assembly. The assembly continues to work with local food shelves and is looking for volunteers for Fare

For All at Grace Lutheran Church.

The assembly has been discussing putting together a Spring Meet and Greet. Our next meeting will be the fourth Wednesday of the month at 6:00 p.m. at the United Steelworkers Hall in Cottage Grove.

• Martin Hoerth reported on behalf of the Ramsey County Labor Assembly. Its next meeting will be on the fourth Tuesday of the month at the St. Paul Labor Center at 6:00 p.m.

PRESIDENT REPORT

President Peterson spoke about being inspired by work and efforts of union locals around organizing and getting contracts settled for our workers. Other unions are showing up in solidarity at rallies being held at the Minnesota State Capitol.

MINNESOTA AFL-CIO REGIONAL ORGANIZER REPORT

Jared Muskovitz, Regional Organizer for the East Metro: St. Paul and Eastern Suburbs, and Micayla Ter Wee, Regional Organizer for South Central, spoke to the delegation regarding support needed on Day on the Hill. They are supporting our affiliates and community allies in moving their legislative priorities that include Broadband Standards, Railroad Workplace Safety and Transportation. The 2024 Legislative priorities of the Minnesota AFL-CIO are protecting 2023's historic progress, cracking down on worker misclassification, and allowing striking workers to access unemployment insurance.

The organizers invited delegates to join the Unity and Racial Justice Townhall on April 4 from 6:00 – 7:00 p.m. at the MN AFL-CIO offices in St. Paul; the Racial Justice and Solidarity event on April 18-19 from 10:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at the Cloquet Public Library; the Racial Justice and Solidarity event June 5-6 from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at the SEIU Healthcare MN & IA offices in St. Paul; and the Three-Day Organizing Institute on May 1-3 at the Minnesota Nurses Association offices in St. Paul.

STAFF/LABOR LIAISON REPORTS

• Michael Moore, Editor, Union Advocate newspaper, let delegates know that the annual ad letter for the

Minnesota 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 specialist, at rgulley@mnaflcio.org.

Racial justice workshop coming to St. Paul in June

Union members and leaders will gather June 5-6 in St. Paul to deepen their understanding of how race impacts organized labor during the Minnesota AFL-CIO's Racial Justice and Solidarity event, hosted by SEIU Healthcare Minnesota and Iowa.

Participants will learn about the history of race in labor organizations and how it continues to have an impact. They will explore ways that union members can change practices and systems that contribute to injustice and exclusion in their organizations.

For more information, contact Robyn Gulley at rgulley@mnaflcio.org.

Union Advocate newspaper will be mailed this week to all affiliates and friends of labor.

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

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

• Art Hill, IUPAT District Council 82, announced that the Labor Council for Latin America Advancement has submitted the paperwork for becoming a chapter, and the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists would love to increase participation in their engagement meetings by inviting all union brothers and sisters to the United Labor Center in Minneapolis, 312 Central Ave., on the fourth Wednesday of the month.

NEW BUSINESS

Mary Sansom, IAM Local 1833 and Minnesota State Retiree Council, AFL-CIO, announced the council's upcoming 19th Annual Fun(d)raiser being held on April 27 at the Sheet Metal Workers Local 10 hall in Maplewood. Raffle Tickets are on sale three for \$5.00. Money raised will be used to continue to work to support active union workers and others.

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

Submitted by
BERNADINE ENGELDORF
Secretary-Treasurer

Register your team now!

13th ANNUAL LABOR BOWL

Our annual fundraiser benefits the Labor Studies and Resource Center, a nonprofit that assists and advocates for union members in the East Metro.

Thursday, May 2 | Sun Ray Lanes

Bowlers are asked to raise \$100 in pledges.
(Teams of four bowlers = \$400, teams of five = \$500.)
All donations are tax-deductible.

To register as a team or individual, call 651-222-3787.

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*Annual Percentage Yield (APY) Represents annualized interest earned for the term of the certificate. APY is effective as of October 11, 2013. Minimum deposit for this certificate series is \$1,000.00. Penalties will be imposed for early withdrawals. An early withdrawal may be deducted from the associated 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 5.25% APY if you do not opt out at the time of maturity. APY is 5.25% for the first 15 months and subject to change at any time. 1.00% and 2.00% per month and our boards. The penalty we may impose will equal 100 days' interest on the amount withdrawn. All business accounts, but not all, included. Advice given to the share certificate at the time of withdrawal. All rates are deemed reliable. Not our guarantee. Please visit the credit union web site and read the conditions you may find regarding rates. Rates can change at any time. All rates are based on term.

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