

Minneapolis Labor Review

116th Year

No. 9

April 20, 2024

www.minneapolisunions.org

Minneapolis Regional Labor Federation, AFL-CIO

Support the Letter Carriers 'Stamp Out Hunger Food Drive' Saturday, May 11

Fill up a bag with non-perishable food items and put it near your mailbox early on Saturday, May 11. Your letter carrier will pick it up. Donations will go to help re-stock a local emergency foodshelf in your area.



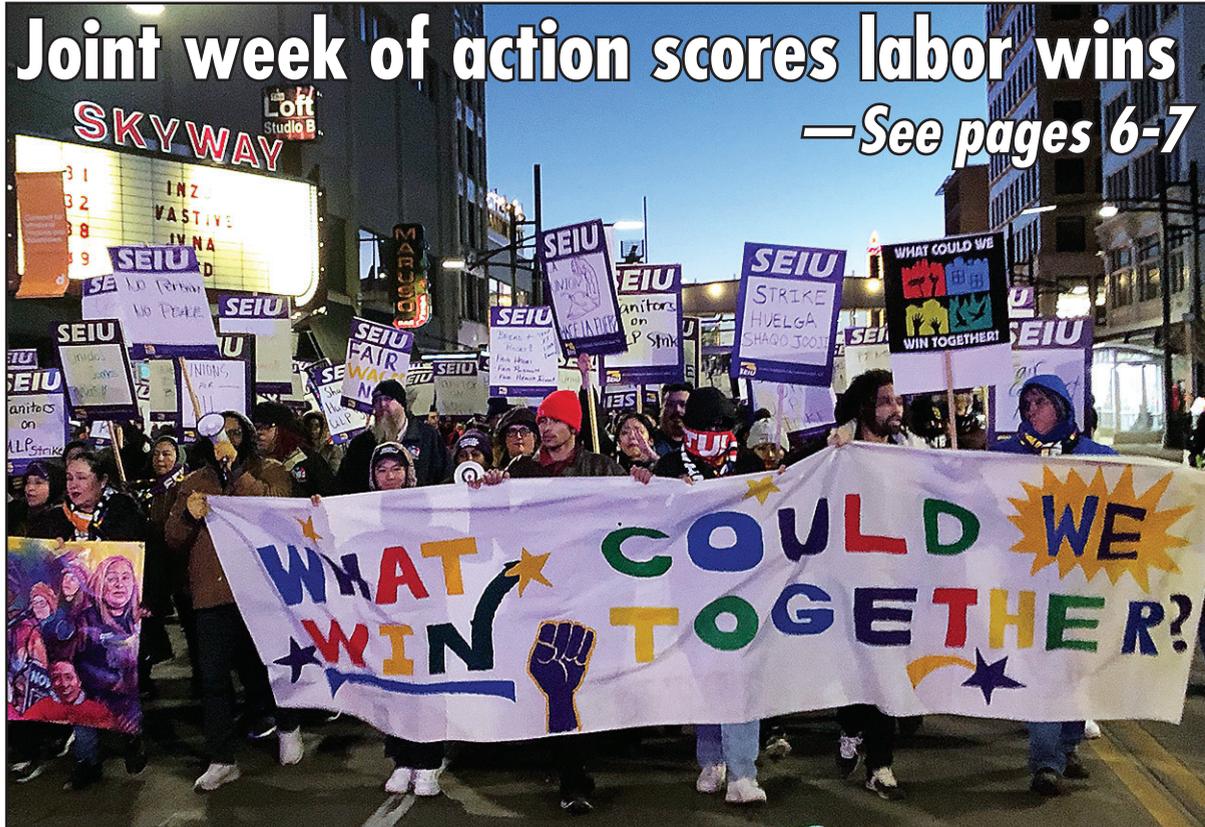
Branch 9 of the National Association of Letter Carriers again is participating NALC's nationwide "Stamp Out Hunger" food drive, the nation's largest one-day food drive, coming Saturday, May 11.

With high grocery prices, "a lot of people are relying on the foodshelves," said Branch 9 food drive coordinator Latasha Mccaleb.

She also encourages the donation of toiletries.

To volunteer: latasham@branch9nalc.com.

Joint week of action scores labor wins —See pages 6-7



Labor Review photo

Striking SEIU Local 26 janitors and supporters marched down Hennepin Ave. in downtown Minneapolis as part of a joint labor week of action March 2-8.

Biden talks up unions in State of the Union address

By Don McIntosh, editor,
Northwest Labor Press

It will either be the final State of the Union address of his first term or his final State of the Union address period, but on March 7, President Joe Biden once again used the widely watched speech as a pulpit to promote labor unions.

"Wall Street didn't build America," Biden said. "They're not bad guys. They didn't build it though. The middle class built this country. And unions built the middle class."

Biden's guests this year included union members from Carpenters Local 432 in Pittsburgh and the United Association of Plumbers and Pipefitters Local 75 in Milwaukee.

And, from Minnesota, another union member Biden guest was Keenan Jones, who is a teacher at the Wayzata Public Schools' Central Middle School and is a member of the Wayzata Education Association.

In introducing Jones, Biden said: "I fixed student loan programs to reduce the burden of stu-



President Joe Biden delivers his 2024 State of the Union address.

dent debt for nearly four million Americans — including nurses, firefighters and others in public service like Keenan Jones, a public-school educator in Minnesota who's here with us tonight.

"He's educated hundreds of students so they can go to college; Now he can help his own daughter pay for college.

"Such relief is good for the economy because folks are now able to buy a home, start a business, even start a family.

"While we're at it, I want to give public school teachers a raise!"

But Biden's guest of honor was United Auto Workers (UAW) president Shawn Fain, who Biden praised as a great friend and a great labor leader.

"I was proud to be the first President to stand in a picket line," Biden said, referring to his appearance at a union picket line during the 2023 UAW strike that won dramatic improvements for autoworkers at GM, Ford, and Stellantis.

Over the course of the 67-minute speech, Biden also called for passage of the PRO Act to make it easier for workers to unionize, an increase in the federal minimum wage, an increase in the corporate minimum tax, and an end to billionaires paying a lower tax rate than teachers, sanitation workers, or nurses.

Biden is running for re-election with the endorsement of the AFL-CIO and a long list of labor unions.

This story includes Labor Review reporting.

Four for four

President Biden has now promoted labor unions in all four of his State of the Union addresses, sometimes multiple times, and named IBEW, Ironworkers, and others.

Some highlights:

2021: "The middle class built the country, and unions built the middle class."

2022: "When a majority of workers want to form a union, they shouldn't be able to be stopped."

2023: "I'm so sick and tired of companies breaking the law by preventing workers from organizing. Pass the PRO Act because workers have a right to form a union. And let's guarantee all workers a living wage."

2024: "Pass the PRO Act for workers rights! Raise the federal minimum wage, because every worker has a right to a decent living."

—Northwest Labor Press

We're advancing pro-worker policy at the state capitol and at city hall

By Chelsie Glaubitz Gabiou, President, Minneapolis Regional Labor Federation

The 2024 session of the Minnesota state legislature is well underway and our labor-endorsed elected lawmakers are hard at work at the capitol in St. Paul delivering on working people's priorities. They're being urged on by union members who have shown up to testify at legislative hearings, visited with lawmakers one-on-one, and turned out for a series of lobby days organized by AFSCME, SEIU, the Minnesota Nurses Association, IBEW, North Central States Regional Council of Carpenters, and others.



This year, Labor is building on the successes of last year's historic session. We are particularly focused on increased worker safety, winning unemployment insurance for striking workers and tackling worker misclassification. Today's efforts to address worker misclassification at the state legislature are a once-in-a-generation opportunity to break down barriers to family-sustaining jobs and a voice at the workplace.

While the legislative session continues, we also are hard at work at the local level advancing policies in cities and counties that will improve the lives of working families and complement our statewide priorities.

I am particularly excited about the work to implement prevailing wage policies in Bloomington and Brooklyn Park. Both Bloomington and Brooklyn Park are major economic drivers for our region and they both are on the front lines of our affordable housing crisis. Address-

ing affordable housing with economic growth comes with development—lots of development.

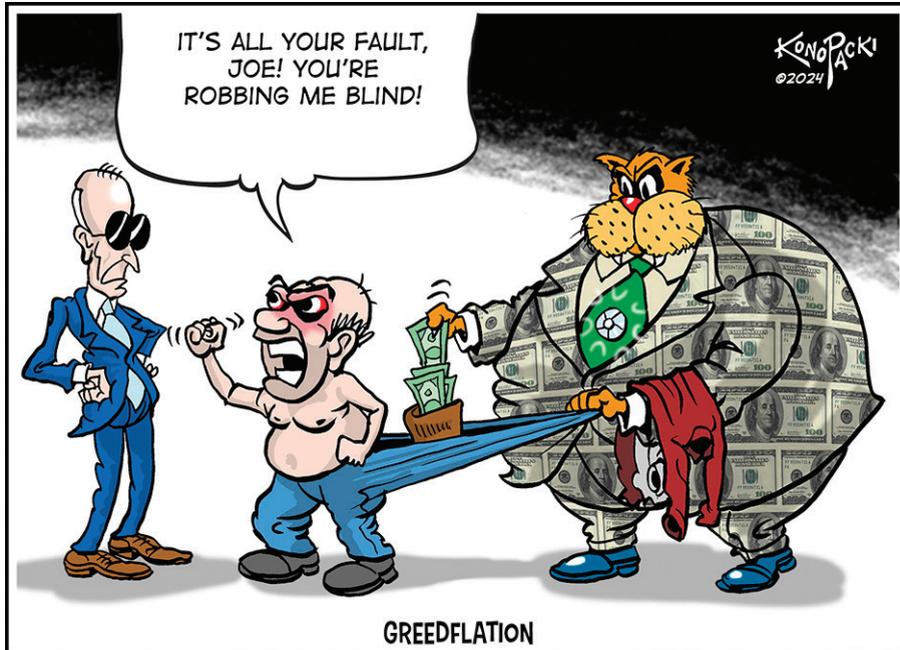
Prevailing wage policies set a minimum standard for workers who will be a part of building publicly-funded infrastructure, buildings and other amenities. While prevailing wages are automatically set in federal and state building projects, they don't apply to local projects unless that community has set their own prevailing wage ordinance. And, we are poised to do exactly that in Bloomington and Brooklyn Park this spring.

These local prevailing wage ordinances allow for all construction companies to bid on publicly-funded projects but with minimum labor standards required. When prevailing wages are not used, it is easy for construction companies who misclassify workers, pay substandard wages or even traffic their employees to win the projects due to their low pricing. Local prevailing wage policies will ensure good standards and create an even playing field.

While adopting prevailing wage is good policy, what is even more important is that our local elected leaders are embracing workers' issues as a core part of their community priorities. Prevailing wage ordinances enacted this spring may mostly target construction, but these steps are just a harbinger for the renaissance of even broader labor standards efforts at the local level going forward.

We look forward to seeing what the year brings for worker-friendly policies at both the state and local levels.

Prevailing wage policies proposed for Bloomington and Brooklyn Park



MN AFL-CIO endorses Amy Klobuchar plus Angie Craig and Ilhan Omar for re-election

SAINT PAUL — In a first round of 2024 endorsements, the Minnesota AFL-CIO's general board voted March 12 to support the re-election of U.S. Senator Amy Klobuchar, Second District U.S. Representative Angie Craig, and Fifth District U.S. Representative Ilhan Omar.

Amy Klobuchar is seeking a fourth term in the U.S. Senate. In her three terms in office, she has earned a 96 percent lifetime voting score from the national AFL-CIO on working family issues.

Angie Craig is seeking a fourth term in the U.S. House representing District 2, which includes areas south of the metro from the Minnesota River to the Mississippi River. In her three terms in office, she has earned a 100 percent lifetime vot-

ing score from the national AFL-CIO on working family issues.

Ilhan Omar is seeking a fourth term in the U.S. House representing District 5, which includes Minneapolis and several suburbs. In her three terms in office, she has earned a 91 percent lifetime voting score from the national AFL-CIO on working family issues and a 100 percent score in 2023.

"Representative Omar always stands with working Minnesotans and our unions," commented Bernie Burnham, Minnesota AFL-CIO president. "As a former union member and organizer who knows what it's like to walk a picket line, Ilhan understands that workers are the **ENDORSED page 11**

MRLF makes first local endorsements for 2024

MINNEAPOLIS — Delegates to the Minneapolis Regional Labor Federation, AFL-CIO voted March 13 to approve the MRLF's first local endorsements for 2024.

For Anoka County Board, the MRLF endorsed three incumbents seeking re-election: Mike Gamache in District 5, Julie Jeppson in District 6, and Mandy Meisner in District 7.

The MRLF also endorsed Greta Calla-

han for Minneapolis School Board, District 6.

Anoka County Board: Gamache, Jeppson, Meisner

First elected to the Anoka County Board in 2014, Gamache represents parts of Andover, Coon Rapids and Fridley. He currently serves as the Board's chair and is seeking a fourth term on the Board. Gamache is a former mayor of Andover. **MRLF page 11**

'Welcome' to new Minneapolis Labor Review readers

As a member of a union affiliated with the Minneapolis Regional Labor Federation, AFL-CIO, you now are receiving a subscription to the monthly *Minneapolis Labor Review*. Several affiliates recently have updated their *Labor Review* mailing lists. For subscriber service, see page 11.

Minneapolis Labor Review

Since 1907

Steve Share, Editor

Next issue: AFL-CIO

May 25, 2024

117th Anniversary Issue!

Deadline:

May 8, 2024

See page 11 for complete 2024 schedule

"The rights labor has won, labor must fight to protect."
—Floyd B. Olson, Minnesota Governor, 1930-1936

Minneapolis Labor Review (USPS 351120) (ISSN 02749017) is published monthly, except January, March and June, 9 times per year for \$10.00 per year in the United States by the Minneapolis Regional Labor Federation, AFL-CIO, 312 Central Avenue SE, Suite 542, Minneapolis, MN 55414-1097. All other countries \$5.00 additional per year. Periodicals postage paid at St. Paul, Minnesota.

POSTMASTER send address changes to: Minneapolis Labor Review / Minneapolis Labor Review Newspaper, 312 Central Avenue SE, Suite 542, Minneapolis, MN 55414-1097.

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Events

April 23: Labor journalist Hamilton Nolan will discuss new book exploring labor and inequality

SAINT PAUL — Labor journalist Hamilton Nolan will discuss his new book, “The Hammer: Power, Inequity and the Struggle for the Soul of Labor,” Tuesday, April 23 at 7:00 p.m. at the East Side Freedom Library, 1105 Greenbrier St., Saint Paul.

Admission is free.

Nolan is a labor journalist who writes regularly for *In These Times* magazine and *The Guardian*. His work also has appeared in *The New York Times* and the *Washington*

Post.

He helped lead the effort to unionize Gawker Media in 2014 and is a member of the Writers Guild of America.

In “The Hammer,” Nolan highlights labor struggles across the country where workers are building power through organizing and strikes at a time of historically high levels of support for organized labor.

Visit eastsidefreedomlibrary.org/events for more information.

April 27: MN State Retiree Council’s annual ‘Fun(d)raiser’ will support political work

MAPLEWOOD — The Minnesota State Retiree Council, AFL-CIO will host its 19th annual “Fun(d)Raiser” Saturday, April 27 from 3:00-7:00 p.m. at the Sheet Metal Workers Local 10 union hall, 1610 Cope Ave., Maplewood

Admission and parking are free.

The event will include free food, live music, games, a silent auction, a raffle, and hourly drawings for prizes.

Statewide raffle prizes this year include: 1st prize: One \$500 cash prize; 2nd prize: One \$300 cash prize; 3rd prize: One \$150 cash prize; 4th prize: Three \$100 cash prizes; 5th prize: Seven \$50 cash prizes.

Proceeds will support the State Retiree Council’s Labor 2024 political efforts.

Visit mnretired.org for more information. To request raffle tickets: 651-227-7647.

April 29: Minneapolis and St. Paul Building Trades will observe ‘Workers Memorial Day’

SAINT PAUL — Monday, April 29 is set for local Building Trades unions to mark Workers Memorial Day at the Workers Memorial Garden on the grounds of the Minnesota State Capitol, near 12th and Cedar. This year’s program will begin at 11:30 a.m., sponsored jointly by the Minneapolis Building and Construction

Trades Council and the St. Paul Building and Construction Trades Council.

Observed nationwide, Workers Memorial Day honors the memory of workers who in the past year lost their lives on the job or died from workplace-related illnesses. The day also calls for improvements in workplace safety standards.

‘Fare For All’ offers savings of 40 percent on groceries at monthly community pop-up sales

MINNEAPOLIS — Stretch your grocery dollars by visiting a community location for a Fare For All pop-up food sale, which offers discounted grocery packages.

Fare For All offers a savings of 40 percent on grocery items.

Fare For All’s regular offerings include a produce pack for \$10, a mini meat pack for \$11, a mega meat pack for \$25. Other monthly specials also are available.

Fare For All is open to everyone and has no income requirements.

Cash, credit cards, debit cards, and EBT cards are accepted. Checks are not accepted. No need to call or register in advance — just stop in to shop!

Here is the schedule for May for Fare

For All’s sites in the Minneapolis Regional Labor Federation’s seven-county region, listed alphabetically by city:

■ **Anoka, Thursday, May 23, 4:00–6:00 p.m.**, Zion Lutheran Church, 1601 S. 4th Ave.

■ **Blaine, Thursday, May 16, 3:00–5:00 p.m.**, Christ Lutheran Church, 641 89th Ave. NE.

■ **Bloomington, Friday, May 17, 11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.**, Creekside Community Center, 9801 Penn Ave. So.

■ **Buffalo, Tuesday, May 7, 4:00–6:00 p.m.**, Zion Lutheran Church, 1200 Highway 25 South.

■ **Chaska, Thursday, May 23, 4:00–6:00 p.m.**, Crown of Glory Lutheran
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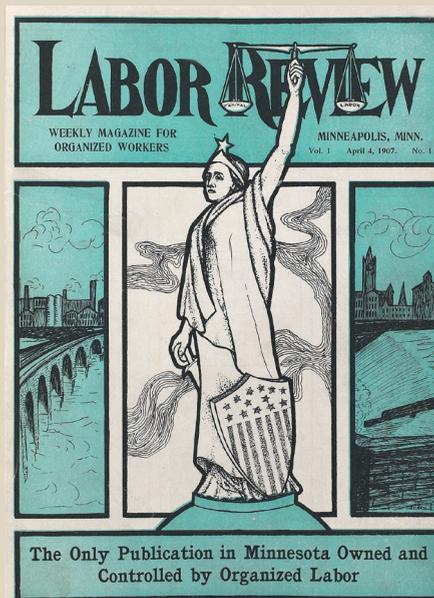
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Events

May 1: MIRAC plans annual May Day march on Lake St. for immigrant and workers' rights

MINNEAPOLIS — May 1 is celebrated worldwide as “International Workers Day” with marches and rallies.

In Minneapolis, organizers plan a “March for Immigrant and Workers’ Rights” on East Lake Street.

Gather at 5:00 p.m. for a program at East Lake Street and Minnehaha, followed by a march at 5:30 p.m.

Participants are asked to wear a mask. March organizers include the Minnesota Immigrant Rights Action Committee and Minnesota Workers United.

At press time, other endorsers included labor groups CTUL and Minneapolis Federation of Teachers Local 59.

Visit facebook.com/miracmn/events for more information.

Opens May 4: ‘Skeleton Crew’ at the Guthrie offers tale of black auto workers’ struggles

MINNEAPOLIS — Set in Detroit during the Great Recession of 2008, the play “Skeleton Crew” portrays the struggles of black auto workers facing the prospect of their plant closing.

“Skeleton Crew” will run May 4 through June 9 at the Guthrie Theater.

Tickets are \$29 to \$82.

The third work in a trilogy by playwright Dominique Morisseau, the play

premiered on Broadway in 2022 and won three Tony Award nominations.

Critic Bill Marx, however, in 2018 wrote for artsfuse.org that the script fails in depicting the role of the workers’ union.

Post performance discussions are planned for five dates and a BIPOC Community night is set for May 17.

For more information, or to reserve tickets, visit guthrietheater.org.

May 16-18: MN Orchestra will perform score with screening of ‘Star Wars: The Last Jedi’

MINNEAPOLIS — The films in the “Star Wars” series are known not just for their action, but also for their soundtrack. May 16-18, “Star Wars: The Last Jedi” will be shown on a giant screen at Orchestra Hall while the Minnesota Orchestra performs the 2017 film’s score live in concert.

Performance times include: Thursday, May 16 at 7:00 p.m.; Friday, May 17 at 7:00 p.m., Saturday, May 18 at 7:00 p.m.

The members of the Minnesota Or-

chestra are members of Twin Cities Musicians Union Local 30-73.

Sarah Hicks will conduct as the Orchestra performs the Oscar-nominated score by John Williams.

The performances will run 2 hours, 45 minutes including intermission.

The film is rated PG-13.

For tickets and other information, visit minnesotaorchestra.org/tickets/calendar.

June 6: Women Building Success will honor tradeswomen at annual awards event

SAINT PAUL — Nominations are due Monday, May 20 for the annual Women Building Success awards.

Women Building Success works to promote and support women working in the union construction trades.

The awards ceremony will be Thursday, June 6 at Kellerman’s Event Center, 2222 Fourth St. in White Bear Lake, with social networking and a buffet beginning at 4:00 p.m. and the awards ceremony beginning at 6:00 p.m.

Tickets are available through local Building Trades unions.

The event normally sells-out, so request tickets early!

For more information about the awards ceremony, visit womenbuilding-success.org.

This year’s event will present awards in four categories:

- Apprentice of the Year,
- Journeyworker of the Year,
- Women’s Advocate of the Year;
- Tradeswomen in Leadership.

The “Tradeswomen in Leadership” award is a new award this year.

Nomination forms, guidelines and criteria are available at womenbuilding-success.org.

Submit nomination forms by May 20 to events@womenbuildingsuccess.org.

Hunt? Fish?



The July issue of the *Labor Review* will preview the annual Game Fair in Anoka County and continue our annual tradition of featuring union members discussing their love of hunting or fishing.

If you or someone you know would like to share stories and photos, please call editor Steve Share ASAP at 612-715-2667 or e-mail laborreview@minneapolisunions.org.

Bill to combat worker misclassification advances in Minnesota legislature

By Steve Share, Labor Review editor

SAINT PAUL — “We worked 5-6 days a week, an average of 12 hours per day and never received overtime pay,” said Jose Alfredo Gomez Rosales. He recently shared his experience working as a roofer paid in cash in testimony to the Labor and Industry Finance Committee of the Minnesota House of Representatives. One day, Rosales continued, he fell from the roof of a two-story house. His injuries were so severe he was airlifted by helicopter to a hospital. He stayed there several days and had several surgeries. He received hospital bills in excess of \$60,000 but his boss said he wasn’t covered by insurance. “I wasn’t receiving any benefits so we did not have money to pay for our basic needs,” Rosales told the committee.

Stories like the one shared by Rosales illustrate what happens when workers are misclassified as independent contractors by unscrupulous employers or contractors.

Misclassified workers don’t have payroll taxes withheld. They don’t have protections like overtime pay and workers compensation insurance. They’re often victims of wage theft. They’re not protected as employees under the National Labor Relations Act and other employment laws. And they’re not able to accrue benefits under Minnesota’s new Earned Sick and Safe

Time law.

To address the rampant problem of worker misclassification, State Representative Emma Greenman has introduced House File 4444. The companion bill in the Senate is Senate File 4483.

The bill would establish new tests for clarifying whether a worker is an employee or independent contractor, increase penalties and enforcement when a worker is misclassified, and direct state agencies to work together to address misclassification and coordinate enforcement.

Greenman also serves as chair of a task force on worker misclassification created by Minnesota Attorney General Keith Ellison. “In the task force, we’ve had six hours of testimony,” she said. Many of the stories workers told were “scary and devastating,” she reported. “How do we make sure we’re preventing workers from being cheated out of the social safety net?”

“Misclassification impacts many of our members, particularly in the construction industry,” said Briana Kemp, policy lead for worker center CTUL. “It really has become the norm in the industry outside the union sector to mis-classify workers as independent contractors.”

“This is incredibly harmful to workers and their families, especially in the construction industry, which is one of the most

A Midwest Economic Policy Institute report estimates that more than 30,000 workers are misclassified in Minnesota’s construction industry

dangerous industries,” Kemp noted.

“Misclassification is an enormous problem in the construction industry,” said Lucas Franco, research manager for LIUNA Minnesota & North Dakota. He cited a report by the Midwest Economic Policy Institute which used 2020 government data to estimate that more than 30,000 workers are misclassified in Minnesota’s construction industry — more than 20 percent of the state’s construction workforce.

He added: “it makes it hard for companies that want to play by the rules... you’re getting undercut by companies that rely on misclassifying workers” to drive payroll costs down.

“This growth of independent contracting has really revolutionized employment relationships,” Franco said. Many times

workers don’t know they’re independent contractors — until they get hurt.

“Rarely does misclassification happen without wage theft,” added Richard Kolodziejcki, government affairs director for the North Central States Regional Council of Carpenters. “Workers are being misclassified more often than not by dishonest contractors who are choosing to exploit workers.” For these companies, he added, “the financial gains are far too great for them to stop.”

As the *Labor Review* went to press April 11, both House File 4444 and Senate File 4483 had been advancing through the committee process in their respective chambers.

“This law is going to level the playing field for honest contractors,” Kolodziejcki said.

The bill also will give individuals a private right of action to file a claim if they’ve been misclassified, noted Carin Mrotz, senior advisor in Attorney General Ellison’s office, who staffed the misclassification task force. “We want people to be able to fight for what they deserve,” she said.

Workers like Rosales, meanwhile, are organizing with CTUL to press non-union contractors to adopt a set of standards to protect workers from misclassification, wage theft, and other abuses.



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What Could We Win Together?

Twin Cities unions join for strikes, rallies, marches — and wins

By Steve Share, Labor Review editor

MINNEAPOLIS — In the weeks and days counting down to the first week of March, unions from different job sectors representing 15,000 Twin Cities area workers had authorized strike votes: teachers, transit workers, janitors, nursing home workers, public works employees, and retail staff. March 1 through March 8 saw rallies, picketing, marches, testimony at public hearings — and even civil disobedience. Some of the unions settled their contracts before members needed to go on strike. Other union members walked strike lines for one or more days before their unions won new agreements from employers. Still other contract campaigns continued.

The coordinated action, planned a year in advance, brought the different unions and allied community organizations together in a campaign asking, “What Could We Win Together?”

March 1 through March 8 brought an answer: More than any one union could ever win acting on its own.

The coordinated union actions won national media coverage as well as local news coverage.

“Minneapolis is the center of worker power today,” declared Joseph Bryant, an SEIU international executive vice president who came to witness the week of action. “This is unique in the moment in what’s happening here... seeing the intentionality, the coordination, the solidarity — not one union, but many unions — all coordinating to use collective power to support each other... Hopefully, others will follow suit.”

Here’s a very brief review of the actions and voices seen and heard during the week.

Saturday, March 2

The “What Could We Win Together?” week of action kicked-off with a rally at the North Central States Regional Council of Carpenters union hall in St. Paul.

On the other side of the metro area in Maple Grove, workers at the REI Co-op outdoor goods retailer walked picket lines for the second day of an Unfair Labor Practices strike. The workers, members of UFCW Local 663, still are seeking a first contract nearly one year after organizing. “Ultimately what we want is a fair say in the policies that govern our working conditions,” said worker Blake Buzzo (see more page 9).

Monday, March 4

About 4,000 SEIU Local 26 janitors began a three-day unfair labor practices strike at more than 100 buildings with picketing, a rally, and a twilight march through downtown Minneapolis.

That morning, workers from across job

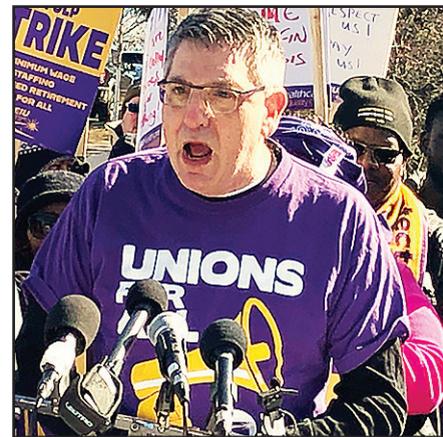


Labor Review photos, pages 6-7



Photo, above: Striking nursing home workers gathered for a March 5 rally on the State Capitol steps.

Photo, left: “We are so overworked and understaffed,” said nursing home worker Nessa Higgins, who is a member of both SEIU and UFCW.



Photo, right: Neal Bismo, SEIU international executive vice president said, “we’ve got a message for corporate Minnesota, don’t we? Your efforts to divide us by race, by union, by neighborhood — they only serve to unite us!”

sectors spoke out in favor of a proposed Labor Standards Board at a Minneapolis City Council public hearing. “So many problems would be avoided if workers had a say,” said Chris Pederson, a member of SEIU Local 26 who works for FirstService Residential, a property management company which has opposed union organizing efforts. “We know if we had a voice we could be part of making jobs better.”

Tuesday, March 5

In the largest nursing home strike in Minnesota history, 1,000 workers at 12 metro area nursing homes went on a one-day Unfair Labor Practice strike. The workers are members of SEIU Healthcare Minnesota & Iowa and also UFCW Local 663. At The Estates nursing home in St. Louis Park, strikers chanted, “We

WEEK OF ACTION page 7



Advocates for airport workers engaged in civil disobedience March 6 at MSP airport.

Week of Action: March 2-8, 2024

For dignified work, stable housing, a livable planet and good schools

continued from page 6

work! We sweat! Put \$25 on our check!”

During the afternoon, workers from all 12 strike locations came together for a rally outside the Minnesota State Capitol. “We are so overworked and understaffed,” said nursing home worker Nessa Higgins, who is a member of both SEIU and UFCW. She added, “I’ve worked in this field 25 years and I don’t have a retirement plan.”

Wednesday, March 6

Ramping up the action, union members and supporters gathered at the Lindbergh Terminal at MSP airport in support of SEIU Local 26 airport workers. They marched in the traffic lanes for vehicles dropping off departing travelers, with airport police shutting down the roadway. Later, 15 activists refused to leave the traffic lanes in an act of civil disobedience and were arrested.

‘Minneapolis is the center of worker power today.’

— Joseph Bryant, SEIU

Later that evening, an informational picket line went up outside the headquarters of the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board in Minneapolis. Park Board workers — who are members of LIUNA Local 363 — are fighting for a fair contract. “They want to push us to take pages of concessions,” said Mitchell Clendenen, Local 363 member. “Everyone’s disgruntled. It’s just working to barely survive... We’re done taking it.”

Across town that same night, union workers joined with community members to announce support for a block-by-block clean energy transition plan including workforce training for skilled union jobs. “We have the opportunity to impact an entire generation of workers,” said Chelsie Glaubitz Gabiou, president of the Minneapolis Regional Labor Federation, AFL-CIO.

Thursday, March 7

CTUL members who work in non-union construction jobs, together with supporters, marched on the offices of Solhem Companies in northeast Minneapolis calling on the employer to adopt a set of standards to guarantee dignity and respect for the workers who build their projects.

On the city’s south side, grassroots housing advocacy group United Renters for Justice/Inquilinx Unidxs por Justicia convened a forum to discuss creating stable and affordable housing to be built by construction workers who have a voice on the job.

Friday, March 8

The last action of the week focused on quality schools. Participants gathered at the Education Minnesota offices for a short

march to a rally on the State Capitol steps.

Speakers represented Education Minnesota, Minneapolis Federation of Teachers, St. Paul Federation of Educators, SEIU Local 284 and TakeAction Minnesota. They urged the legislature to fund school needs and pass the Education Support Professionals Bill of Rights and called for school districts across the state to reach fair settlements for the record-high number of not-yet-resolved contracts with teachers, ESPs and other school staff.

“It feels like we’re all in the same situation,” said Catina Taylor, president of the Minneapolis Federation of Teachers ESP chapter. “When we say we want schools where everyone can thrive, we mean students and educators.”

“We’re fighting and we might be striking all over this state,” said Sara Olson, 8th

grade science teacher for the St. Francis school district, whose union was three days away from taking a strike vote.

Assessing what was gained

The unions and community groups who came together behind the “What Could We Win Together?” banner for the March 2-8 week of action were aligned on four main issues: “dignified work, stable housing, a livable planet and good schools.”

Measuring the week’s impact will continue for some time, but in the weeks before, during and after the week of action, here were some of the near-term gains:

- Members of Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1005, who had authorized a strike, ratified a new Metro Transit contract February 18-19 bringing wage increases;

- SEIU Local 26’s 2,000 security officers reached a tentative agreement with contractors February 28 — just five days before planning a ULP strike for March 4 — and winning employer-funded retirement for the first time along with wage increases;

- City of Minneapolis public works department workers, members of LIUNA Local 363 — who also had authorized a strike — voted March 4 to ratify a new contract offering historic wage gains of 30 percent over three years;

- The St. Paul Federation of Educators settled a new contract March 5 — two days after picketing at school district headquarters — winning improved pay and benefits;

- By the end of the week of action which began with their three-day ULP strike, SEIU Local 26’s commercial janitors had reached a tentative agreement on a new contract. They won a raise to \$20 per

WEEK OF ACTION page 8



Minneapolis Park Board workers and supporters walked an informational picket line outside Park Board headquarters March 6. The workers — members of LIUNA Local 363 — are seeking a fair contract and pushing back against proposed concessions. Later, Local 363 members voiced their views at the Park Board meeting.



Striking SEIU Local 26 janitors and supporters marched through downtown Minneapolis March 4 as part of the week of action.

Community banker Sean Cole named new president & CEO of Union Bank & Trust

By Steve Share, Labor Review editor
MINNEAPOLIS — Community banker Sean Cole became the new president and chief executive officer of Union Bank & Trust, effective March 25.

He follows Ruth Peterson in leading the union-owned bank, who stepped down as president and CEO in December 2023 after serving in that role for about one year.

“Our number one goal right now is to develop a thoughtful and engaging strategic plan,” Cole said. He added, “I don’t believe in strategic planning without strategic execution... Otherwise it’s pointless.”

Cole, White Bear Lake, grew up in Marshall, Minnesota. He graduated from the University of North Dakota in Grand Forks with a business degree in finance and later attended the Graduate School of Banking at the University of Wisconsin in Madison.

He comes to Union Bank & Trust

with 25 years of community banking experience, most recently as chief operating officer for Luminata Bank in Minnetonka.



Sean Cole

Union Bank is like other community banks in many ways, he noted, and “the similarity is that we can positively impact people’s lives by what we do,” including financing homes, college educations, and new business ventures.

But, Cole added, Union Bank is unique in its ownership by 24 building trades unions and in its role as a lender to unions and provider of trust services — not just in Minnesota but nationwide.

“The difference at Union Bank,” Cole said, is “when we’re helping finance a new training center or a union hall, it’s a lot of people who are going to be impacted, not just one person. The scale is different.”

Three weeks into the job, Cole told

UNION BANK page 11

Fare For All: Offers fresh produce packs and frozen meat packs, beginning at \$10-\$11

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an Church, 1141 Cardinal St.

■ **Fridley, Friday, May 24, 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 noon**, Fridley Community Center, 6085 7th Street NE.

■ **Golden Valley, Friday, May 24, 11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.**, Animal Humane Society, 845 Meadow Lane N.

■ **Hutchinson, Thursday, May 9, 3:30–5:30 p.m.**, Oak Heights Church, 1398 South Grade Road SW.

■ **Minneapolis, Wednesday, May 22, 11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.**, Mill City Church, 685 13th Ave. NE.

■ **New Hope, Wednesday, May 15, 3:00–5:00 p.m.**, St. Joseph Parish Center, 8701 36th Ave. N.

■ **Norwood Young America, Tuesday, May 2, 3:00–5:00 p.m.**, All Saints Lutheran Church, 511 Merger St..

■ **Richfield, Tuesday, May 21, 1:00–3:00 p.m.**, Richfield Community Center, 7000 Nicollet Ave. So.

■ **St. Louis Park, Wednesday, May 15, 4:00–6:00 p.m.**, Vista Lutheran Church, 4003 Wooddale Ave. So.

See www.fareforall.org for more information and dates for all 30-plus locations.

Week of Action

continued from page 7

hour, plus an additional 17 percent pay increase over four years, additional paid time off, and, for the first time, an employer-funded 401(k), plus other benefits.

■ By the end of March and into early April, SEIU Healthcare Minnesota & Iowa reported contract settlements at several of the nursing homes where workers went on strike March 5, with workers winning pay raises as high as 17 percent, retention bo-

nuses, plus other wins.

What’s next?

“We’re going to show those in power that we’re not going to stop until we get what we need,” said Jamie Gulley, president of SEIU Healthcare Minnesota & Iowa. “The bosses are scared of the power we have when we come together.”

“We all deserve better wages and respect for us and our families,” said Eva Lopez, SEIU Local 26 janitor and union vice president.

“This is just the beginning,” said Kelly Gibbons, president of SEIU Local 284.

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Fellows will have the opportunity to **learn about the labor movement, get training to organize in the services sector, and assist in various labor organizing campaigns with partners across Minnesota.** Fellows will receive a monthly stipend and a sign-on bonus and must be willing to relocate to Minnesota, outside the Twin Cities metro area.

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New Brookwood Labor College strives to address racial, economic, and social imbalances of power by educating workers and providing opportunities to gain practical organizing experiences.

We are based in St. Paul, Minnesota.



Local Union News

ATU Local 1005: Members ratify

Metro Transit contract offer

Members of Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1005 voted February 18-19 to ratify a contract offer from Metro Transit: The vote was 82 percent in favor, 18 percent opposed.

The previous agreement expired July 31, 2023.

The new three-year agreement will run from August 1, 2023 through July 31, 2026 and provides for a general 5.5 percent wage increase the first year, a 4.5 percent increase the second year, and a 3 percent increase in the third year. The first year's increase will be retroactive to August 1, 2023.

On top of the general pay increase, mechanics will receive an additional jump: 10.79 percent the first year, 4.5 percent the second year, 3.01 percent the third year. The first year increase will be retroactive only to the March 1, 2024 contract approval date.

The additional increase for the mechanics "puts them into a competitive range so hopefully we can hire more mechanics" and retain current ones, said David Stiggers, Local 1005 president.

The new agreement also includes increases in shift differential pay for late night and early morning hours.

The new agreement ends months of difficult negotiations.

Members of ATU Local 1005 voted in September 2023 to authorize a strike, with 94 percent voting in favor (*Labor Review*, September 23, 2023).

Bloomington Federation of Teachers: Members ratify new contract

Members of the Bloomington Federation of Teachers voted February 12 to ratify a new two-year contract, with high voting turn-out by 76 percent of members. The vote was nearly 88 percent in favor.

The new contract includes across-the-board pay increases higher than won in the past: four percent the first year and five percent the second year. "We've never seen this kind of increase before," said Wendy Marczak, BFT president.

The new pay scales will make the Bloomington school district more competitive in the market, she said.

Bricklayers Local 1: Free pre-apprentice training program runs June 3 to July 12

Bricklayers and Allied Craftworkers Local 1 is offering a free, unpaid six-week pre-apprentice training program for workers with no experience. The program will run June 3 through July 12.

The Local 1 newsletter reports a 90 percent job placement rate with a \$30.97 per hour starting wage, plus benefits.

During the training program, pre-apprentices will be able to choose a career path as a bricklayer or pointer-cleaner-caulker. For more details, visit bactraining.org/become-apprentice.

Workers with some experience can call 763-404-8345 to schedule an evaluation.

City Employees Local 363: Minneapolis public works employees wins historic wage gains

City of Minneapolis public works employees voted overwhelmingly March 4 to ratify a historic new contract bringing a 30 percent wage increase over three years.

The contract win came 12 days after the workers — who are represented by LIUNA Local 363 — voted by a whopping 99 percent margin to authorize a strike.

Local 363 won the biggest wage increase for the local ever, the union reported, as well as important health and safety protections for members, seniority rights, limits on temp workers, holiday pay for dual certifications, and greater union rights and protections. The new agreement also established a means of addressing staffing and scheduling problems.

Local 363 also successfully blocked employer attempts to undermine workers' contractual rights and benefits.

"This victory shows that when we are united in solidarity with our union brothers and sisters, we have the power to win," said A.J. Lange, Local 363 business manager. "When we stand together, we can't be ignored. When we fight, we win."

Local 363 represents about 450 workers at the City of Minneapolis and, in a separate bargaining unit, another 220 workers at the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board.

Updating negotiations between Local 363 and the Minneapolis Park Board, Lange reported April 9, "we are still in mediation."

Local 363 members have been turning out to Park Board meetings and speaking up during open comment time.

"Give us a fair and honest contract," implored Local 363 member Scott Jaeger, arborist for five years, speaking at the March 6 Park Board meeting. "We are falling behind."

"We are over-worked and understaffed," said Mitchell Clendenen, crew leader.

**CWA Local 7250:
Activision video game workers organize under neutrality agreement**
About 330 workers at an Activision site in Eden Prairie have voted to organize with Communications Workers of
LOCAL UNION NEWS page 10

Retiree Meetings

IMPORTANT NOTICE

If your union retiree group is meeting in-person or online, and you want to share that information, or if you have other important announcements, contact the editor at laborreview@minneapolisunions.org or 612-715-2667.

Minneapolis Regional Retiree Council: Next meeting May 16

The next regular monthly meeting of the Minneapolis Regional Retiree Council, AFL-CIO will be a hybrid meeting — in person and by Zoom — Thursday, May 16 from 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Lunch will be provided for people at the in-person meeting after the meeting adjourns. The in-person meeting will be in Room 218 at the United Labor Centre, 312 Central Ave. SE, Minneapolis.

Parking is available at the Saint Anthony Public Parking Ramp (at the corner of 2nd St. SE and University Ave. SE), across University from the United Labor Centre building. The ramp recently moved to a new payment method, so contact Graeme Allen for more information about parking reimbursement.

To request the Zoom link for the May 18 meetings, or for more information about the Council, contact Graeme Allen, community and political organizer for the Minneapolis Regional Labor Federation, at 612-481-2144 or e-mail graeme@minneapolisunions.org.

ATU Local 1005 Retirees: Meet first Wednesday of the month

The Southside Retirees of Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1005 are now meeting for breakfast the first Wednesday of the month at 8:00 a.m. at the Richfield VFW, 6715 Lake Shore Drive South, Richfield.

Carpenters Retirees: Next meeting May 30

Carpenters Retirees will meet Thursday, May 30 at 10:00 a.m. at the North Central States Regional Council of Carpenters union hall, 710 Olive Street, St. Paul. Lunch follows the meeting. The meetings will continue through October on the last Thursday of each month.

IBEW Local 292 Retirees:

'Senior Sparkies' will meet May 14

The IBEW Local 292 Retirees — "Senior Sparkies" — will meet Tuesday, May 14 at IBEW Local 292's union hall, 6700 West Broadway Ave. in Brooklyn Park. A buffet lunch will be served at 11:30 a.m. and the meeting will begin at 12:30 p.m. We will be having a guest speaker.

Save the date for special 2024 events: Spring casino trip, April 30; Boat trip, June 19; Retirees summer picnic, August 8. For more information, contact the IBEW Local 292 office at 612-379-1292.

Minneapolis Retired Teachers, Chapter 59: Next meetings April 23, May 28

The Minneapolis Retired Teachers, Chapter 59 will meet Tuesday, April 23 and Tuesday May 28 at 10:00 a.m. in-person at the Minneapolis Federation of Teachers office, 67 – 8th Ave. NE. Lunch will follow at 12:00 noon.

The April meeting will discuss how the future of the Minneapolis Public Schools may be impacted by new district, school board, and union leadership.

The May meeting will review the 2024 legislative session. For more information, e-mail RTC59info@gmail.com.

Minnesota Nurses Association Retirees: CARn will meet May 8

The Council of Active Retired Nurses (CARn) will meet Wednesday, May 8 from 10:00 a.m. to 12 noon at the Minnesota Nurses Association, 345 Randolph Ave., St. Paul.

CARn meets the second Wednesday of the month. Future meeting dates for 2024 include: June 12, August 14, September 11, October 9, November 13, December 11.

All retired members of the Minnesota Nurses Association are welcome to attend. For more information, contact Barb Martin at jimbarbmartin@aol.com.

Pipefitters Local 539 Retirees:

'Fazed Out Fitters' meet third Wednesday

Pipefitters Local 539 retirees — the "Fazed Out Fitters" — meet the third Wednesday of each month at 11:00 a.m. at Elsie's, 729 Marshall St. NE, Minneapolis. New members welcome.

Plumbers Local 15 Retirees:

Meet the third Tuesday of each month

All retired Plumbers Local 15 members are invited to attend retiree meetings, continuing the third Tuesday of every month at 12 noon at Elsie's Restaurant, Bar & Bowling Center, 729 Marshall St. NE, Minneapolis (corner of Marshall and 8th Ave.). For more information, contact the Local 15 office at 612-333-8601.

Sheet Metal Workers Local 10 Retirees:

'Rusty Tinnars' meet May 14

The Sheet Metal Workers Local 10 "Rusty Tinnars" retirees club will meet Tuesday, May 14 at the Maplewood union hall, 1681 E. Cope Ave. A pot luck salad lunch begins at 12 noon followed by the meeting at 1:00 p.m. If available, one of our business agents and/or someone from the benefits office will share updates and answer questions.

We don't meet during the summer months but remember we start again in September.

All retired Sheet Metal workers and spouses are welcome to our monthly meetings. We meet the second Tuesday of the month, September through December and March through May. For more information, contact Frank Costa at 651-484-1363.

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America Local 7250. They're part of a larger group of 600 Activision workers in three states — who perform quality assurance work on popular video games — and who have organized under a labor neutrality agreement between Microsoft and CWA.

The neutrality agreement went into effect when Microsoft acquired Activision Blizzard in October 2023.

Under the agreement, workers could demonstrate support for unionizing either by signing a union authorization card or by affirming their support for the union via a confidential online portal.

CWA reported that a neutral arbitrator confirmed March 8 that the final tally was 390 for unionizing, 8 against.

"We wanted to see improvements in the workplace, including higher wages and getting more career opportunities and so we're eager to unionize," said a statement by Kara Fannon, a Microsoft quality assurance game tester in Eden Prairie. "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."

"We're showing what's possible when workers are able to freely organize," said Tom Shelley, Activision technical requirement specialist.

Activision video games include Candy Crush, Call of Duty, and World of Warcraft.

IBEW Local 160:

Members approve monthly meeting time change to 6:00 p.m.

The IBEW Local 160 executive board and membership have voted to approve a bylaw change for the local's monthly meeting time.



'Water's Off' community service day assists needy

MINNEAPOLIS — Plumbers Local 15 members Scott Espy, Justin Truesdell and Sam Husnik were among 94 Plumbers union members who volunteered Saturday, March 25 as part of the annual "Water's Off" community service day to provide free assistance with plumbing repairs to needy homeowners. All in all, volunteers from Minneapolis Plumbers Local 15, St. Paul Plumbers Local 34, and Rochester Plumbers and Pipefitters Local 6 provided service at 43 homes with a donated value of \$37,000. The event is a partnership between the three local Plumbers unions, the Minnesota Mechanical Contractors Association, the Metro Plumbing and Cooling Contractors, and three Community Action Partnership agencies.

Beginning May 2, 2024, 6:00 p.m. will be the start time for IBEW Local 160's monthly general membership meeting on the first Thursday of the month.

(The old start time was 7:30 p.m.)

The meetings take place at the IBEW Local 160 union hall at 13220 County Rd. 6 in Plymouth.

Minneapolis Federation of Teachers: Voting will take place April 29 through May 10 for union leadership

Electronic voting will take place between April 29 and May 10 for the leadership of the Minneapolis Federation of Teachers Local 59, including both the teacher chapter and the ESP chapter.

An open house to meet the candidates will take place at the MFT union hall Thursday, April 25 from 6:00-8:00 p.m.

Chapter meetings earlier in April featured candidate speeches.

Member will receive voting instructions via postcard.

Electronic ballots will be sent via district e-mail. For questions about the elections or voting, e-mail electioncomm@mft59.org.

Operating Engineers Local 70: Monthly meeting moves to third Tuesday of every month

Under a bylaws change approved in February, the monthly general membership meeting for Operating Engineers Local 70 now will be the third Tuesday of every month.

(The meeting previously was the second Tuesday of the month).

The meeting time will remain at 5:00 p.m. and the location will continue to be the North Saint Paul American Legion, 2678 7th Ave. East in North Saint Paul.

SEIU Local 284:

Union offers members paid summer jobs as member-to-member organizers

SEIU Local 284 is seeking members to work up to 20 hours a week this summer connecting with other Local 284 members. The summer "M2M" organizers will engage with other Local 284 members about how to collectively build power in their bargaining unit to win better contracts and pass the "ESP Bill of Rights" to raise pay to a minimum of \$25 per hour and more.

Participants will meet at a regional office for training and daily work planning, make worksite and home visits, staff phone banks and text banks, and learn other invaluable skills to strengthen their union.

SEIU Local 284 members interested in participating can contact Shaun Laden at ShaunL@Local284.com.

UFCW Local 663:

Oxendale's closes new grocery near Mall of America

Open just three months, a new grocery store near the Mall of America opened by union grocer Oxendale's Market closed suddenly, the *Star Tribune* reported February 14.

The full-service grocery store opened November 1, 2023 staffed by members of United Food and Commercial Workers Local 663. The opening staff came from Oxendale's four other locations and, when fully-staffed, the store was expected to employ 30-35 workers (*Labor Review November 18, 2023*).

The new Oxendale's Market was located at 3051 E. 80-1/2 Street in Bloomington's "South Loop District," a planned, multi-phase development envi-

sioned by the city as a walkable neighborhood with housing, retail, restaurants — and a grocery.

Instead, Oxendale's new Bloomington grocery closed February 1, laying-off 16 workers, according to the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development.

UFCW Local 663:

REI workers in Maple Grove wage two-day Unfair Labor Practice strike

Workers at the REI store in Maple Grove walked picket lines for a two-day Unfair Labor Practice strike March 1-2. The workers voted to organize with UFCW Local 663 in June 2023 and still are seeking a first contract.

"We're out on a ULP strike because REI is illegally withholding our merit raises," said shipping and receiving specialist Madison Dirnen, Minneapolis. Workers at REI stores where workers have not organized have received the merit raises.

"Becoming a full-time employee at REI is nearly impossible," added Dirnen, who has worked three and one-half years there. "A lot of people need to have two jobs."

Workers on the picket line said scheduling is another issue. "They only give us nine days to plan our lives," said five-month retail sales specialist Brian Rusche, Maple Grove. "I can't make family plans."

"Ultimately what we want is a fair say in the policies that govern our working conditions," said bike mechanic Blake Buzzo, Minneapolis, who has worked six years at the store.

The action was part of the "What Could We Win Together" week of action during the first week of March in the Twin Cities.

UNITE HERE Local 17:

Indeed Brewing workers organize

Workers at Indeed Brewing in north-east Minneapolis have become the latest local craft brewery workers to organize with UNITE HERE Local 17.

Indeed Brewing is located at 711 15th Ave. NE in Minneapolis. The venue offers a tap room, to-go sales, event spaces, and an outdoor patio.

Indeed Brewing Company has recognized its workers' request for a fair process to unionize with Local 17, the union reported April 14 on Facebook.

The Facebook post added, "UNITE HERE Local 17 and Indeed Brewing Company have together agreed to immediately enter into good faith negotiations, with the intent of providing a clear path to that fair process through a Labor Peace Agreement."

The bargaining unit would include about 30 workers who work in the tap room, production, warehouse and delivery and possibly other positions.

Sources: *Labor Review reporting and local unions. Next deadline: May 8.*

Pipefitters Local 539

PIPERS

Dues Reminder

Please remember to pay your January-June 2024 dues. You are able to pay online for your dues on the Pipefitters Local 539 website. You do not need to log in to do so.

State Apprentice Contest

Thank you to the three apprentices who competed in the MN Pipe Trades State Apprentice Contest: Ben Benzon, Dillon Johnson, and Nick Kelly. Even though they didn't place first, they represented Local 539 very well!

Condolences

Condolences to the families of Mark Amireault, Steven Flynn, Arthur Lanman, and Russell Martin.

If you would like something added to the Pipers section of the Labor Review, call the office at (612) 379-4711.

Paid for by Pipefitters Local 539 • www.pipefitters539.com

MRLF: Callahan endorsed for Minneapolis School Board

continued from page 2

Julie Jeppson, seeking a second term on the Anoka County Board, represents most of Blaine and Spring Lake Park. She previously served two terms on the Blaine City Council.

Mandy Meisner, seeking a third term on the Anoka County Board, represents Columbia Heights, Fridley, Hilltop, and a portion of Spring Lake Park.

Minneapolis School Board: Greta Callahan, District 6

MRLF-endorsed Greta Callahan is seeking an open on seat the Minneapolis School Board to represent District 6 in southwest Minneapolis.

The incumbent, Ira Jourdain, is not running for re-election and instead is seeking election to the Minnesota House.

Callahan has served as president of

the Minneapolis Federation of Teachers since 2020 and previously worked seven years as a kindergarten teacher for the Minneapolis Public Schools.

Callahan also serves as executive vice president of the Minneapolis Regional Labor Federation, AFL-CIO as well as a member of the Education Minnesota Governing Board.

Endorsed: Omar for Congress

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ones that make our economy work. No matter what comes her way, she has always had our backs. She will never stop working to level the playing field in our state and country, and we are proud to endorse her for re-election.”

Union Bank

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the *Labor Review* that he's struck by the fact that “the people so believe in our mission and vision... Person by person by person, everybody is excited to be here and excited for our future.”

“We are thrilled to welcome Sean as our new CEO,” said Terry Nelson, board

chair of the bank. “Our board of directors was impressed by his strong leadership skills, variety of executive-level banking experience, extensive strategic planning knowledge, and execution abilities. With Sean at the helm, we're looking forward to a strong and fruitful future.”

Although new to Union Bank, Cole said he knows the neighborhood well. His daughter graduated from DeLaSalle high school in 2017. “It's a great area.”

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Minneapolis Labor Review 2024 Publication Schedule

The *Labor Review* will publish 9 issues in 2024. Note: NO issue published in January, March or June. The publication date normally will be the last Saturday or second to last Saturday of each month.

May 25

Deadline: May 8
117th Anniversary Issue

June

No issue published

July 27

Deadline: July 10
Primary Election Issue

August 24

Deadline: August 7
Labor Day Issue

September 21

Deadline: September 4

October 19

Deadline: October 2
General Election Issue

November 16

Deadline: October 30
Holiday Shopping Guide

December 14

Deadline: November 27
Holiday Issue

Next Special Issue:

May 25, 2024 — 117th Anniversary Issue!
Discounted ad rates available

For more information, to suggest a story idea, or to advertise, contact the editor at 612-379-4725 or laborreview@minneapolisunions.org

IBEW Local Union 292 Minneapolis Electrical Workers

Brotherhood Committee

The Local 292 Brotherhood Committee assists members in need or distress, with either gift cards from our Local 292 food shelf or teams of Brothers or Sisters to help around the house. If you need assistance or know of another member in need, please call our Brotherhood line at 612-617-4247 or send an e-mail to brotherhood@ibew292.org.

Continuing Education

The Minneapolis Electrical JATC's Continuing Education registration is now open. Visit their website at www.mplsjatc.org. Click on the "Continuing Ed" registration link and log

See you at the General Membership Meeting, 5:30 p.m. on the Second Tuesday

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in to your account. You can also register in-person at the JATC in St. Michael during normal business hours of 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Check the website and class list frequently for additional classes and changes to classes.

Condolences

Brother Darwin Draisey; Brother Orville F. Bachmann; Brother Clifford R. Ebert; Brother Joseph A. Westbrook; Brother Michael W. Kellner; Brother Ronald B. Flostrand; Brother Donald F. Boeshans; Brother Douglas H. Renlund.

AFSCME Council 5 Day on the Hill

'We need to have our voices heard and make change happen!'

By Steve Share, Labor Review editor

SAINT PAUL — “We need to have our voices heard and make change happen!” That’s why Yunuén E. Brown from AFSCME Local 34 said she and several co-workers from Hennepin County Human Services took the day off April 2 to attend AFSCME Council 5’s “Day on the Hill.” The day included training to learn about legislative issues and lobbying skills, meetings with legislators to lobby for AFSCME’s agenda, and a rally in the State Capitol rotunda.

“Today is about putting a face on stories,” Council 5 president Eric Hesse told the crowd at the rally.

“You being here, you wearing the colors, you getting in people’s faces, absolutely matters,” said Minnesota Secretary of State Steve Simon, who addressed AFSCME members at the rally along with other state elected leaders.

“We have a legacy to uphold,” said Council 5’s Bart Anderson, interim executive director, addressing the rally. “You show up every day to make Minnesota happen... There is no progress without our folks coming to the table and demanding dignity.”

“Minnesotans know they can count on AFSCME to be there for them,” said Governor Tim Walz. “When AFSCME wins, Minnesota wins.” Walz added: “When AFSCME members improve their standing, non-union workers in the state improve their standing.”

“My pledge to you is continuing to work on the issues you care about,” Walz said.

The top issues at the legislature for AFSCME this year include passing a bonding bill for investments in public infrastructure, protecting public employee pensions, extending unemployment insurance to striking workers, expanding the MinnesotaCare state health insurance program, and passing a supplemental budget to fund state services — including reversing a decision to close the state’s substance abuse treatment centers in Carlton and St. Peter.

“The work we have done in the past couple years is fan-fricking-tastic,” said Senate Majority Leader Erin Murphy. “The list that we accomplished last year... is a body of work that will impact people for generations to come... I believe deeply in what we can accomplish together when we set our sights.”



Photo from Governor Tim Walz Facebook page

Governor Tim Walz addressed the rally: “Minnesotans know they can count on AFSCME to be there for them.”



AFSCME members came from locals across the state for the April 2 “Day on the Hill” event. Left: AFSCME Local 34 executive board members in attendance — who work at Hennepin County Human Services — included (left to right) Deborah Konechne, recording secretary; Tamika Hannah, vice president; Loranzie Rogers, co-chief steward; Yunuén E. Brown, member-at-large.

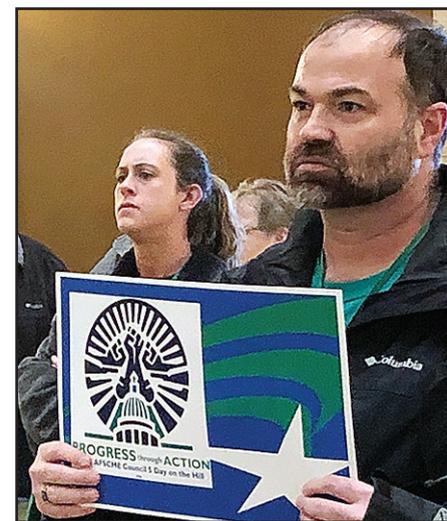
Labor Review photos except as noted



With kids on spring break, the AFSCME Day on the Hill rally became a family outing for AFSCME Local 3937 members and co-workers Emily Erpelding and Margot Welshinger, who work as childcare teachers at the University of Minnesota.



AFSCME Council 5 president Eric Hesse, member of AFSCME Local 404, works at the St. Peter Regional Treatment Center as a security counselor.



Michael Goenner, 17-year AFSCME Local 9 member and accounting technician for the city of Minneapolis, said he came “to support labor’s agenda.”