

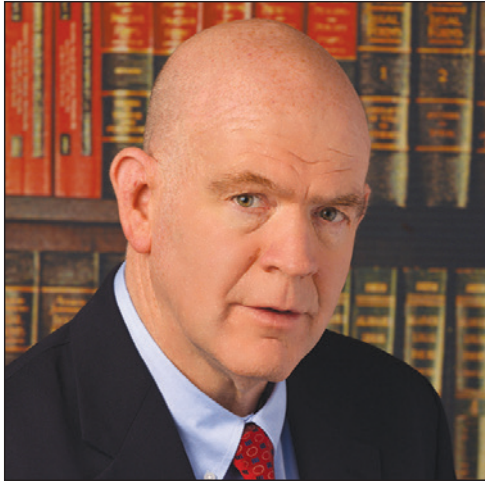
# OPEIU CONNECT

Issue 551, Winter 2022/2023



**Union Approval at Record High  
as People Demand a Voice at Work**





# If You Build It, They Will Come

By Richard Lanigan  
President

In the classic movie “Field of Dreams,” Kevin Costner plays Ray Kinsella, an Iowa farmer visited by the ghosts of baseball players from the early years of the sport. The ghosts urge Kinsella to build a baseball diamond in his cornfield. The message was “if you build it, they will come,” and, sure enough, people come.

OPEIU has a benefit for members founded on the same premise. We thought if we built it, in this case a 401(k) program, members would take advantage of it. Some have done so, and we hope others will see the advantage this program creates for them and their families.

There are important reasons we built our own 401(k) program. Several years ago, while negotiating contracts, I discovered many OPEIU members enrolled in employer-sponsored 401(k) plans did not understand how the benefit worked. Many were paying fees they were unaware of for services. These participants made few, if any, of the decisions about their retirement plan, relying instead on their employer or plan managers to make those choices. Worst of all, their plan investment managers could put their own interest in commissions before the retirees’ interests.

There were other disturbing problems. Many members were not aware their plan required them to contribute to initiate their employer’s matching contribution. This, of course, meant if they did not contribute to a 401(k) account, they were not participating in the retirement plan. When I researched

this, I learned the 401(k) program had become the most popular retirement option in the United States. Yet nearly half of the employees eligible for a matching contribution did not participate in such plans.

I realized many of these plans did not benefit union members to the extent they should. As a result, I proposed the union extend its learning curve in this area and build its own low cost, simple 401(k) plan that put members’ retirement interests’ first. The delegates to the 2016 OPEIU Convention agreed and voted to build the plan.

It took a lot of hard work, but we are convinced we built a better plan! Less than five years since its introduction, the plan has tens of millions of dollars and more than 1,000 active participants. The OPEIU 401(k) plan has even been written about in trade journals, with one referring to it as the ideal plan for union members. The plan has been compared by professionals to employer-sponsored plans and been found superior because it saves members money, has an optional annuity-like feature, offers members greater flexibility to invest on their own, has a patented target date plan for those who are not interested in the work of investing and provides extensive participant education.

While the plan has these great attributes, capable professionals administering it and is clearly better than many employer plans, many of you do not participate! Those who do not participate are missing out on one of the very few tax shelters available to working Americans.

Studies have shown participation in a 401(k) plan can easily mean an extra \$150,000 to \$350,000 in retirement money. That’s because 401(k) plans are tax-deferred, meaning you don’t pay taxes on the money you contribute—or on any gains, interest or dividends the plan produces—until you withdraw money from the account. That makes the 401(k) not just a way to save for retirement, but also the best way to cut your tax bill.

So, please consider this a reminder. If you think your local union should raise the issue in negotiations, make sure they know you are interested. Ask them to request a comparison between the OPEIU 401(k) and the employer plan. We are certain our plan will meet or beat any employer-sponsored 401(k) plan. By joining our plan you may save thousands of dollars more, which you can certainly use for your retirement.

We know negotiating this plan can be complicated, but it really is worth the effort, especially because we have the experts to run it and the support to help local unions and bargaining committees negotiate for it.

Economists have always agreed 401(k) plans are a good benefit, and we firmly believe the OPEIU plan has made them even better. We hope members will consider participating in the OPEIU plan. For those members who don’t yet have access to the OPEIU plan, we hope you will consider negotiating for it. The plan can make a substantial beneficial difference in your retirement years.

# Young Workers Tearing Down ‘Taboo’ of Discussing Wages at Work: Survey

A growing number of younger workers are increasingly breaking the “workplace taboo” of discussing wages with co-workers, according to a survey conducted by Bankrate.com. This wage transparency is a good start to ensuring all workers are paid fairly and equally for their work.

Nearly 42 percent of Gen Z workers (aged 18-25) and 40 percent of millennials (aged 26-41) have shared their salary information with a co-worker or colleague, compared with just 31 percent of Gen Xers (aged 42-57) and 19 percent of baby boomers (aged 58-76).

Though discussing wages at work is protected under the National Labor Relations Act, older workers report feeling more uncomfortable having those conversations than those who first entered

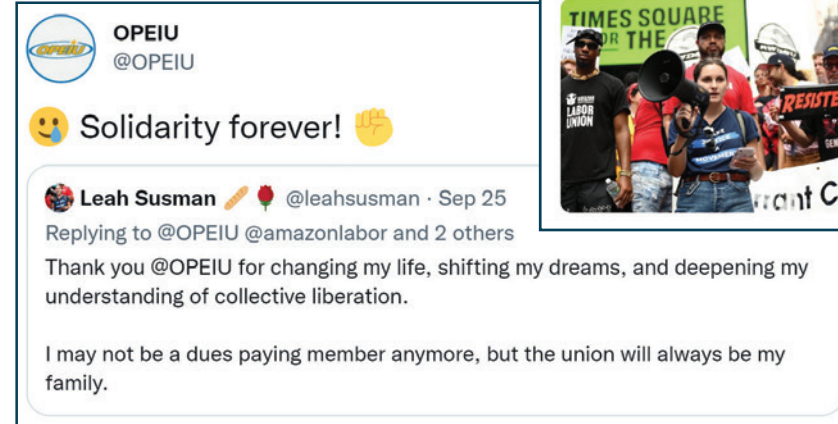
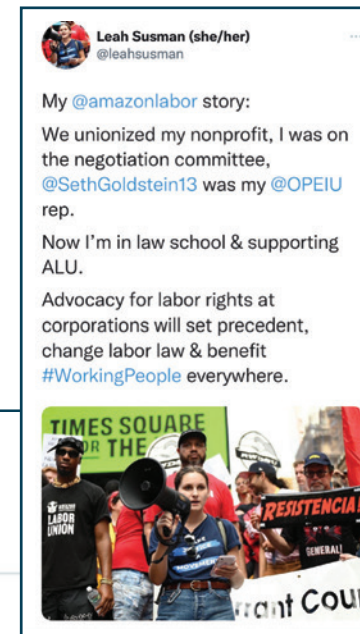
the workforce during the economically tumultuous past two decades.

Experts attribute the increasing openness to broader structural shifts, which have left younger workers getting the short end of the stick. Though they make up a plurality of the workforce, millennials hold just 6.4 percent of the nation’s wealth. When baby boomers were around the same age, the survey noted, they controlled more than three-and-a-half times that amount.

Openness about pay can help identify gender or racial gaps in compensation and gives workers leverage to earn more. As 55 percent of survey respondents report they feel they’re underpaid, open discussions among co-workers about wages and working conditions are a crucial first step toward remedying wage inequities within workplaces and throughout the economy.

# ‘Thank You, OPEIU, for Changing My Life’

Former Local 153 member Leah Susman served on her union’s bargaining committee as they negotiated a contract with the nonprofit arm of the New York City Bar Association, the City Bar Justice Center. Building her union with her co-workers at the mission-based nonprofit, she said, inspired her to explore a career in labor law. She is now enrolled at Fordham Law School. Way to go, Leah! Solidarity forever!



Announcing the  
**29<sup>th</sup> OPEIU Convention**

June 12-16, 2023  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

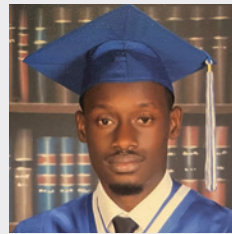


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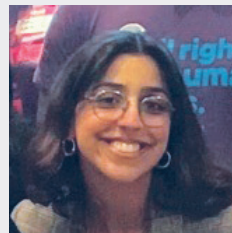
**On the Cover:** A spirited group of Local 32 stewards and activists attend grievance handling and member mobilization training at Rutgers Labor Education Center in New Brunswick, New Jersey. “I appreciated the chance to interact with stewards from across the local union you don’t see every day and learn how similar your job issues are, no matter where you work,” said Steward Ron Cupitt.

With a whopping 71 percent of Americans reporting their approval of labor unions, working people throughout the country are realizing what these Local 32 folks already know — a union contract is the best way to ensure you have the wages and benefits you need and receive the dignity and respect on the job you deserve.

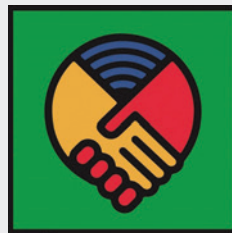
Unions aren’t only good for working people, but also for communities and democracy. Turn to page 12 and read more about how approval of unions is at a record high and how more and more working people are organizing with OPEIU to experience the union difference for themselves.



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## CEO Pay Skyrockets, Again

The pay gap between workers and CEOs has reached a record high, with the average CEO earning 399 times as much as a typical worker, according to a new report by the Economic Policy Institute (EPI).

Since 1978, EPI reports, CEO pay has skyrocketed 1,460 percent. In contrast, worker compensation grew a paltry 18.1 percent during the same period.

Being in a union is the best way to close the growing wage gap. A recent paper published in Cornell University’s *JLR Review* shows being in a union could mean you’ll earn \$1.3 million more over your lifetime.

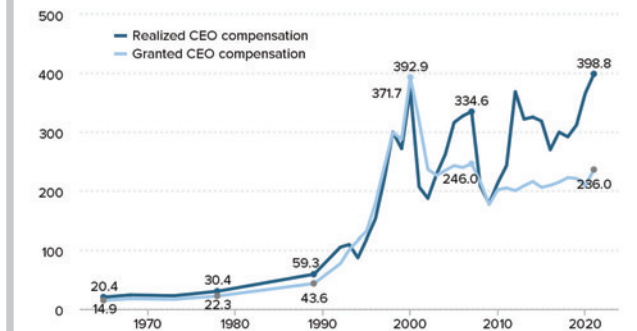
“We find that a person who spent the entirety of their career in a labor union were predicted to earn about a million dollars more over the course of their career compared to somebody who was never in a labor union,” Tom VanHeuvelen, a researcher at the University of Minnesota Twin Cities and one of the paper’s authors, told *Business Insider*.

The paper also shows being a union member your entire career can have even more value than a college degree. A person without a college degree who has been in a union their entire career on average will earn more than a nonunion person with a college degree.

Clearly, it pays to belong to a union!

CEOs make 399 times as much as typical workers

CEO-to-worker compensation ratio, 1965–2021



**Notes:** Average annual compensation for CEOs at the top 350 U.S. firms ranked by sales. Typical worker compensation is the average annual compensation (wages and benefits of a full-time, full-year worker) of production/nonsupervisory workers in the industries that the top 350 firms operate in.

**Source:** Authors’ analysis of data from Compustat’s ExecuComp database, the Bureau of Labor Statistics’ Current Employment Statistics data series, and the Bureau of Economic Analysis NIPA tables

Economic Policy Institute



Scan here with your phone’s camera to read the full EPI report.

## Scholarships just for you

The Union Plus Scholarship program has awarded more than **\$5.2 million in scholarships** to union families who want to begin or continue their post-secondary education.

Help with the cost of college



See more at [unionplus.org](https://unionplus.org)

### OPEIU CONNECT

Official Organ of  
THE OFFICE AND PROFESSIONAL EMPLOYEES  
INTERNATIONAL UNION  
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**RICHARD LANIGAN** President  
**MARY MAHONEY** Secretary-Treasurer



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## Protect Yourself from Identity Theft

Identity theft cases are at an all-time high, with nearly 42 million Americans falling victim in 2021 alone. This cost consumers more than \$52 billion in losses, according to a recent report from AARP.

This alarming trend is due to the ever-increasing array of ways personal information can be compromised, including unemployment fraud, unauthorized account takeover, fraudulent disability claims, QR code scams and medical and synthetic identity theft.

Your union is here to help. OPEIU members and their families have access to a comprehensive defense against identity theft through OPEIU's Identity Protection benefit program. The benefit, administered through IDIQ (IDIQ), is provided at no cost to all OPEIU members and their families.

Enroll today at [opeiudprotect.com](https://opeiudprotect.com).

Once enrolled, you'll receive a monthly email letting you know if all is well or if a problem has been detected on the dark web. In the event you receive a monitoring alert your information has been found on the dark web or you are the victim of identity theft or fraud, you can have an IDIQ remediation specialist help you get back to pre-theft status by calling IDIQ at 800-637-5680, Monday-Friday 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. CT, and Saturday 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. CT.

More information about OPEIU's Identity Protection benefit can be found at [opeiu.org](https://opeiu.org) under the Member Resources tab and by clicking the OPEIU Membership Benefits link.

## How to Protect Yourself Against Identity Theft and Fraud

While you can't prevent identity theft and fraud completely, these steps can make you and your family safer:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enroll in OPEIU's Identity Protection benefit at <a href="https://opeiudprotect.com">opeiudprotect.com</a></li> </ul>       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Set up two email accounts, one for social and one for financial/legal</li> </ul>                             |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Activate a credit freeze and credit fraud alerts with TransUnion, Experian and Equifax credit reporting agencies</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Set up two-factor authentication on all online and mobile accounts</li> </ul>                                |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use a secure virtual private network (VPN) when working away from your home network</li> </ul>                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do not click on suspicious emails, as they could be phishing</li> </ul>                                      |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create strong passwords/passphrases that are 15 characters or more in length</li> </ul>                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Activate USPS Digest at <a href="https://usps.com">usps.com</a></li> </ul>                                   |
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Check <a href="https://irs.gov">irs.gov</a> for a Taxpayer Guide to Identity Theft</li> </ul>                |
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review Social Security fraud protection tips at <a href="https://ssa.gov/fraud">ssa.gov/fraud</a></li> </ul> |

## OPEIU Towing Benefit Keeps Members on the Road!



OPEIU's Towing/Service Calls benefit program is helping keep members and their families safe and on the road all year.

The program, provided by your union at no cost, gives all members and family living in the same household up to two tows/service calls annually, valued at up to \$100 each.

The 24-hour plan includes free hookup and towing up to 15 miles. But it's much more than towing! The benefit also includes 24-hour roadside assistance, battery and lockout service, delivery of certain supplies, emergency tire service, travel discounts and more.

To utilize the service, you must call the OPEIU Towing/Service Calls benefit dispatch service at 800-617-2677 and provide OPEIU's Producer Code 74046 and Plan Letter B.

A full description and a copy of your towing card can be found at [opeiu.org](https://opeiu.org) under the Member Resources tab and by clicking the OPEIU Membership Benefits link.

You can also get all the information you need about the program and the host of OPEIU benefits you're entitled to on the OPEIU app, available for free download on the App Store and on Google Play by searching **OPEIU**.



**Towing/Service Calls  
Benefit Program**



The bearer of this card is a member of an OPEIU Local Union, Guild or Directly Affiliated Group entitled to the Towing/Service Calls Benefit.

Up to two towing/service calls per year, per household, valued at up to \$100 (\$80 + \$20 administrative fee) each through Nation Safe Drivers (NSD). The benefit applies to all OPEIU members and family members living in the same household as the member.

For service, please call the OPEIU designated toll-free number:  
**1-800-617-2677**

Provide your name (or the name of the OPEIU member)  
Producer Code: **74046** Plan Letter: **B**

*The program, provided by your union at no cost, gives all members and family living in the same household up to two tows/service calls annually, valued at up to \$100 each.*

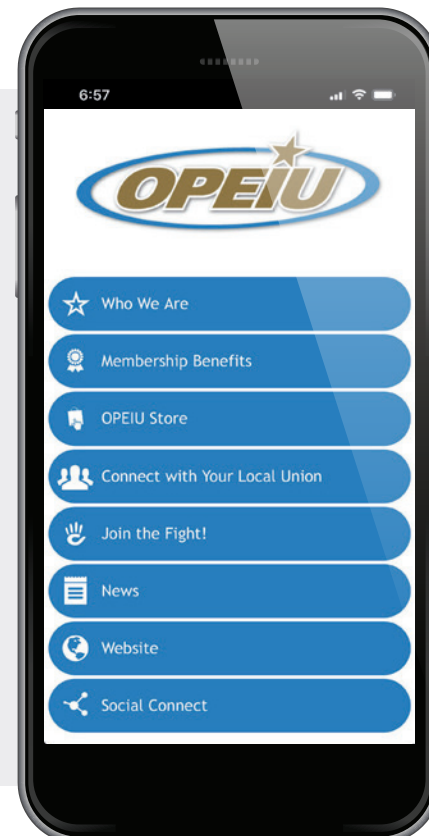
## Get the OPEIU App Today

The OPEIU app is available for free download.

It's a great way to stay connected to your union, learn more about your membership benefits, find links to OPEIU's social media networks and much more. Available for free download for iOS devices on the App Store and for Android devices on Google Play by searching **OPEIU**.



Follow us on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram



## Helpful Tips When Using the OPEIU Towing Benefit

To utilize the service, always remember to:

- **Call OPEIU's towing program** dispatch at 800-617-2677
- **Provide OPEIU's Producer Code 74046, Plan Letter B and your local union number**
- **Provide your full name as recorded by your local union. If your name is hyphenated, provide the entire name.** If you use a middle name or initial, make sure to provide it. For dispatch to locate you, your name must match the name listed with your local union
- **Make sure your information is updated and accurate with your local union.** Ensure your name, address and phone number are correct. Inform your local union when you move, change your name, email or cell phone number. If any of this information is incorrect in your local union's database, dispatch will be unable to locate you and provide service
- **If a family member is calling,** they must provide the OPEIU member's name to the dispatcher



# Congrats to OPEIU Scholarship Winners

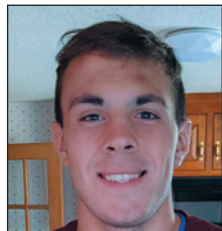
Congratulations to recipients of the 2022 OPEIU scholarships. OPEIU awards numerous scholarships to further the education of members and their families annually. All are encouraged to apply.

Scholarship opportunities include the Howard Coughlin Memorial Scholarship, which awards up to 12 full-time higher education scholarships of up to \$6,500 and up to eight part-time scholarships of up to \$2,650 to OPEIU members, associate members and dependents.

The John Kelly Labor Studies Scholarship awards up to eight scholarships to members pursuing a degree in labor studies, industrial relations or union leadership and administration.

More information about all OPEIU scholarship opportunities can be found at [opeiu.org](https://opeiu.org) under the Member Resources tab and by clicking on the OPEIU Membership Benefits link, as well as on the OPEIU app, available for free download for iPhones on the App Store and for Android devices on Google Play by searching **OPEIU**. Applications for 2023 scholarships will be posted in January.

## Howard Coughlin Memorial Scholarship— Full-Time Winners



Mitchell Aarons  
Local 6



Pinyue Liu  
Local 8



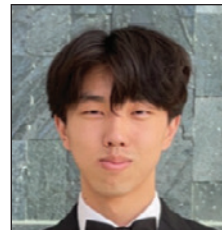
Jaap Kaur  
Local 29



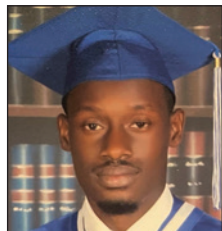
Giovanni Arredondo  
Local 30



Stephen McCleod  
Local 32



Treyson Viela  
Local 50



Desmond Gibson  
Local 100



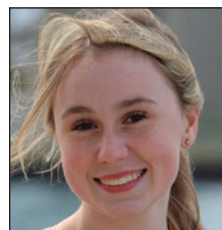
Christine Shen  
Local 153



Edward Fernandez  
Local 251



David Raigoza  
Local 537

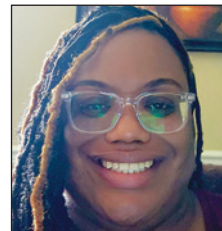


Isabelle Nogueira  
Local 2002



Mallaidh Pouti  
Local 2007A

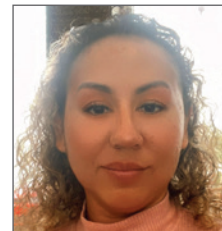
## Howard Coughlin Memorial Scholarship— Part-Time Winners



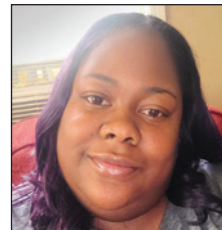
Natasha Hannah  
Local 2



Helen Angell  
Local 8



Maria Fernandez-Garcia  
Local 30



Tasia Warner  
Local 42



Chanda Min  
Local 50



Pamela Bell  
Local 4873

## John Kelly Labor Studies Scholarship



Margie Chavez  
Local 30



Ezequiel Diaz  
Local 30

OPEIU 2023 scholarship applications will be posted on [opeiu.org](https://opeiu.org) in January!

# OPEIU Members Awarded Union Plus Scholarships

OPEIU members and their families are among the 189 students representing 38 unions to be awarded a 2022 Union Plus scholarship to further their higher education.

**April Williams**, a member of Local 537 who lives in Los Angeles, has been awarded a \$1,000 scholarship. Williams, a field representative for the International Association of Theatrical Stage Employees (IATSE) Local 871, is in her first year of a four-year, part-time Juris Doctor Program at Northwestern California University School of Law. She has a bachelor of arts from American University and a master of science in labor studies from the University of Massachusetts Amherst.

Williams is the daughter of a former United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) member. She said working for unions has been the most rewarding work of her life and wants to continue working in labor as a legal counsel. “I have reached a point in my career in which I am ready for a new challenge and feel like attorney training is a dynamic way for me to continue fighting for workers,” Williams said. “I am excited about this new challenge and opportunity to obtain more skills in furtherance of the rights of working people.”

**Blaine Hoover** of Tyrone, Pennsylvania, whose mother Kristen Hoover was a member of Local 153 when she was awarded a \$500 scholarship, graduated high school summa cum laude and was a member of the National Honor Society for grades 9-12. She is now enrolled at Slippery Rock University as an exercise science major on the pre-physical therapy track. “This degree will help provide me with the skills to pursue my passion of helping people to better their lives,” Hoover said. “It will also allow me to provide for myself and my future family.”

**Cindy Castro** of Vancouver, Washington, was a member of Local 8 when awarded a \$1,000 scholarship and is a business management major at Clark College who expects to graduate in May 2023.



April Williams is one of three OPEIU members or family to receive a 2022 Union Plus scholarship.

The Union Plus Scholarship Program awards scholarships based on outstanding academic achievement, personal character, financial need and commitment to the values of organized labor. The selection process is very competitive, with 3,741 applications received this year.

Visit [unionplus.org/scholarship](https://unionplus.org/scholarship) for 2023 applications and benefit eligibility.



## Stay Connected!

Keep up on news you can use about your union, including info about free membership benefits, such as scholarships, student debt reduction and identity theft protection.

**DON'T MISS OUT!**  
Sign up to receive texts from OPEIU.  
Text **OPEIU** to 844-240-4114.

Message and data rates may apply. You can cancel your participation in the OPEIU SMS at any time. To unsubscribe, text “STOP” to 844-240-4114. After you send the message “STOP,” OPEIU will reply with a message to confirm you have been unsubscribed. After you opt out, you will no longer receive text messages from OPEIU.



# A New Model to Meet New Challenges

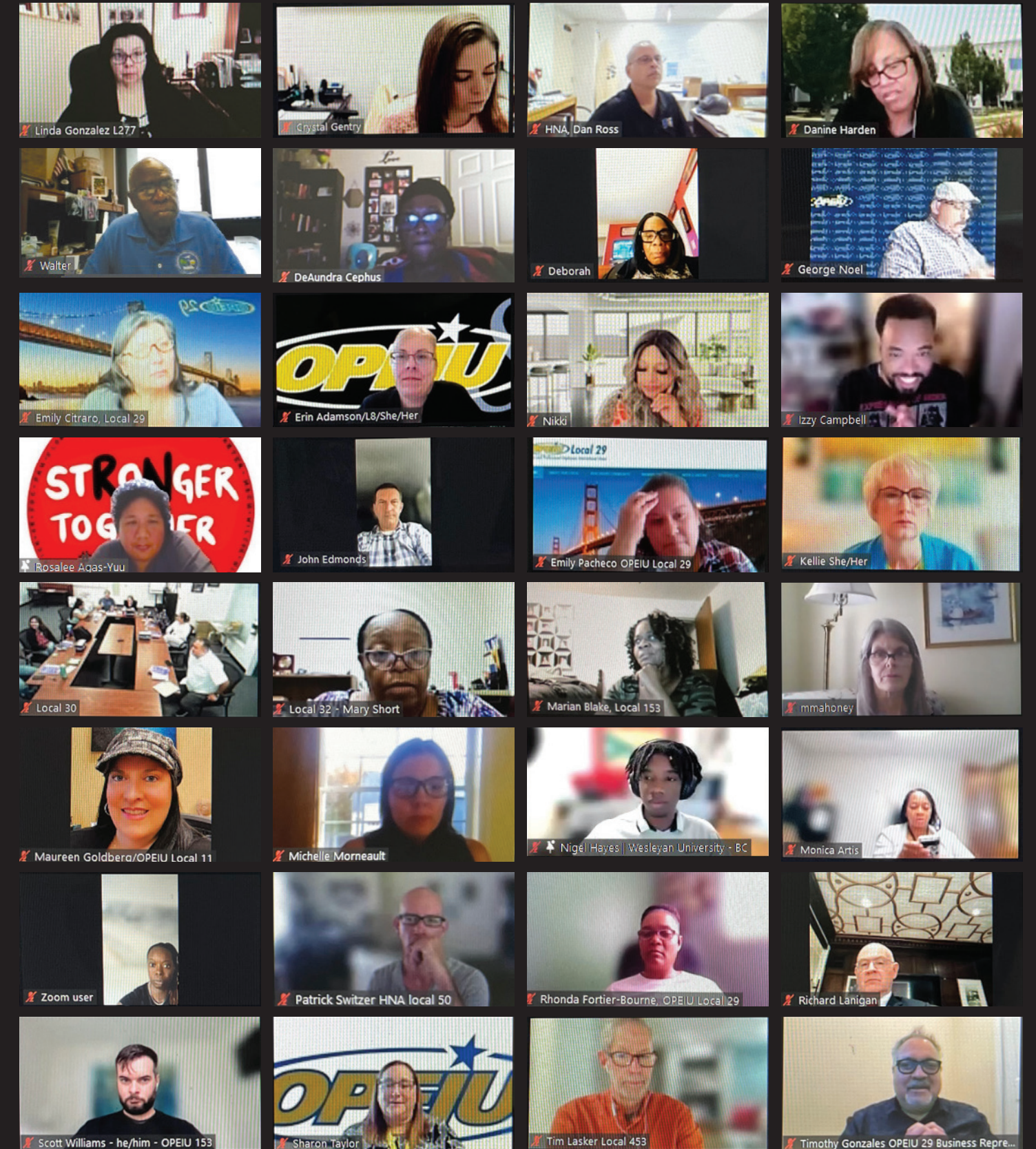
OPEIU leaders and member activists from across the country came together virtually for a weekend-long educational conference focused on bolstering our union’s strategic shift to an all-out organizing model to build union power. Importantly, they explored the critical role our union plays in the fight for racial and economic equity for all working people.

With the midterm elections approaching and union approval ratings at modern highs, OPEIU seized the moment to bring together more than 250 members of our union family to develop new skills, share stories and discuss how to build a movement needed to meet the moment.

The fall conference featured three days of panels, workshops and lively discussions on a range of subjects, including identifying future leaders, creating effective plans to win organizing campaigns, using grievances to prepare for contract negotiations, leveraging the media and digital strategies to help secure organizing and contract wins and bargaining for the best health care and 401(k) benefits possible.

The first day of the conference featured an introduction to the “race-class narrative,” a framework meant to connect racial and economic struggles into one cohesive message. A pair of presentations, led by bargaining department staff, also explored challenging trends in bargaining and bargaining with transparency to help engage all members in the contract negotiating process.

The event was capped off with OPEIU’s inaugural BIPOC Caucus, which will serve as an ongoing meeting space for our members. For more information and to get involved in the BIPOC Caucus, email [frontdesk@opeiu.org](mailto:frontdesk@opeiu.org) with the subject line **BIPOC Caucus**.





# Union Approval Keeps Climbing, for Good Reason

Not since 1965 have unions polled so well among Americans

A staggering 71 percent of Americans approve of labor unions, according to a new poll conducted by Gallup, marking the highest level of support among the public at-large since the mid-1960s. The approval ratings fall just four points shy of the all-time high recorded in 1953. Just a year later, in 1954, union density would reach a record 35 percent.

Today's surge in approval ratings comes, as it did then, amid a significant uptick in union activity across the U.S. Interest in unionizing is so strong it's overwhelming the National Labor Relations Board, which has facilitated more than 2,000 union elections in the past 12 months despite federal funding for the agency remaining stagnant and insufficient for years.

It's no surprise better pay and benefits were listed by those surveyed as among the most important aspects of their union membership. Nonunion workers earn just 83 percent of the average union worker's wages, according to the most recent Labor Department data. Over the course of one's lifetime, that wage differential can be significant.

The authors of a paper published by Cornell University's *ILR Review* in October found "unionization throughout one's career is associated with a \$1.3 million mean increase in lifetime earnings, larger than the average gains from completing college."

But the union wage premium isn't the only factor driving organizing campaigns. Across the U.S., tens of thousands of workers are organizing to end surveillance at work, combat sexual harassment, lower the cost of health care, implement humane parental leave policies, end racial discrimination in hiring processes and win real decision-making power within the organizations they care about.

Workers in different industries and workplaces may not face the same issues at work, but recent events have shown — from the nonprofit and higher education sectors to warehouses and coffee shops — working people are demanding a voice at work.

At the 2019 OPEIU Convention, delegates resoundingly affirmed our union's commitment to organizing the unorganized. That collective commitment has helped raise living standards and improve working conditions for the previously unorganized workers who have joined OPEIU in recent years and made our union stronger than ever.



Employees of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights and The Leadership Conference Education Fund understand the benefits of a union. They recently secured voluntary recognition of their union with Local 2 in Silver Spring, Maryland, and are negotiating their first contract.

*Nonunion workers earn just 83 percent of the average union worker's wages.*



Members of the Augsburg Staff Union, who organized with Local 12 in Roseville, Minnesota, rally for a contract with Augsburg University that includes fair wages and benefits, particularly affordable health care. The university employees fought for their union, demonstrating they believe in the power of a union contract. Their efforts paid off. Hours after the rally, members voted overwhelmingly to ratify their first union contract — the first private university workers in Minnesota to do so.



## Secretly Staff Win First Union Contract in Indie Music



The Secretly Group Union (SGU) ratified their first contract in October, the first group of workers to win a union contract at an independent record label. SGU is affiliated with Local 174 in Burbank. “We hope this is a beacon to other labels and other people struggling to work in music,” SGU wrote on Twitter.

Though the group was voluntarily recognized in early 2021, negotiations with their employer — one of the most prominent indie music companies and an amalgamation of five record labels, plus the company’s publishing and distribution arms — lasted 14 months. The four-year contract, ratified by a supermajority of members, addresses many of the issues prompting workers at the company to organize in the first place. The agreement includes 100 percent employer-paid health insurance coverage, guaranteed wage increases each year, sick leave, bereavement leave, severance pay and a one-time \$750 ratification bonus.

“The fight never ends with a first contract,” concluded SGU’s announcement. “We’re excited to engage with the energy this contract brings at Secretly and in our industry at large to continue advocating for our workers and everyone in the music industry.”

## IATSE Training Trust Fund Staff Win Recognition with Local 174

Staff at the IATSE Training Trust Fund (TTF) won voluntary recognition of their union in September with Local 174.

The unit includes all 14 part- and full-time employees of the TTF, which was created in 2011 to provide safety training and skill development to IATSE’s members. (IATSE is the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees, Moving Picture Technicians, Artists and Allied Crafts.)

Committee members say their union hopes to win the wages, benefits and working conditions they deserve at the bargaining table.

“We are really looking for a contract that gives us the respect of being treated fairly,” said Melinda Labita, a member of the new unit. “Right now, so much depends on which supervisor you ask, and nothing is in writing. A contract will help clear up so many ‘gray areas.’

“It’s encouraging to know you have your union behind you to enforce those rules” after the first contract is negotiated, Labita concluded.



New Local 174 members at the IATSE Training Trust Fund, clockwise, from left, are Aaron Montes, Trevor Benson, Branden Sun, Kyle Landgraf, Colleen Lorick, organizing committee member Melinda Labita, Corey Wisler and Local 174 Organizer and Assistant Representative Michael Kanyer.

## Local 40 Members Care for Their Community

Local 40 members in Macomb Township, Michigan, are making a huge difference in the lives of those in their community. Recently, the union, which represents registered nurses and medical service employees, conducted a blood drive in partnership with UAW Local 228. The local also donated 65 backpacks filled with needed school supplies to area schoolchildren.



Local 40 members deliver backpacks to local schoolchildren. Left to right, front row, are Vice President for Ascension RNs Cassandra Bell, Trustees Mike O’Neill and Nancy Anschuetz, President Dina Carlisle, Vice President for McLaren RNs Terri Dagg-Barr and Chief Steward for Ascension RNs Becky Coppersmith, back row, Recording Secretary Joseph Smithson, Vice President for Ascension Radiology Michelle Foster, Chief Stewards for McLaren Service Group Anastasia Ellwood and McLaren RNs Maria Szejbach, Vice President for McLaren Service Group Brad Schuneman and Trustee Marty VanDerHeyden.

## Land Stewardship Project Workers Win First Contract

Workers at the Land Stewardship Project (LSP) unanimously voted to ratify their first union contract, joining Local 12 in Roseville, Minnesota. The three-year contract covers 18 organizers, specialists and leads working for the nonprofit organization across Minnesota and Wisconsin.

Contract highlights include 13 paid holidays, paid time off between Christmas and New Year’s Day, eight weeks of paid extended leave, up to 39 days of paid time off per year and 100 percent employer-paid insurance.

“The traditional board model for nonprofits, in which a small number of people make all the decisions for staff while only seeing a small percentage of the on-the-ground work, is out of date,” said Elizabeth Makarewicz, a membership support specialist who has been with the organization for nearly six years and served on the union’s bargaining and organizing committees.

“The unionizing process is a great stepping stone toward flattening hierarchy in the nonprofit world,” Makarewicz continued.

LSP workers began organizing in July 2021 and won voluntary recognition of their union two months later.

The agricultural nonprofit focuses on assisting small- and medium-sized farms. This includes, among other initiatives outlined by the organization, building healthy soils, stopping the spread of factory farming and sustainably building out local and regional food systems.



Land Stewardship Project (LSP) negotiating team members celebrate their first contract with Local 12 staff. Clockwise, from left, are LSP Policy Organizer Jess Kochick, former Local 12 Apprentice Organizer Kai Shelley, LSP Lead Organizer Matthew Sheets, Local 12 Organizer Cesar Montufar and LSP Policy Organizer Maura Curry.

## Local 98 Members Ratify Three-Year Contract at Springdale

Workers at the Springdale Ice Cream and Beverage Company, members of Local 98, ratified a new three-year contract with strong majority support.

The contract — covering 130 Cincinnati-area members who manufacture products for Kroger grocery stores — features wage increases, including 6.5 percent in the first year of the contract,

and insurance premium freezes for the first two years. Crucially, it also protects workers’ vacation days if they take leave under the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA).

Workers rejected management’s first proposal because the proposed wage increases were insufficient. Management’s second offer, said

Local 98 President Brandon Guthier, addressed workers’ concerns.

“They stuck together, demanded what they deserved and ratified a strong contract,” he said. “It goes to show how vital these workers are, how unified they are, that they were able to bargain for and win what they are owed and have earned.”



# Take Me Out to the Ballgame

The baseball season may have come and gone, but the memories of warm summer nights and the smell of hot dogs and pretzels linger, as does the feeling of union solidarity!

In late August, Local 2 First Vice President Michael Spiller had the honor of throwing out the first pitch at a game between the Baltimore Orioles and the Boston Red Sox during the AFL-CIO Union Night at Camden Yards. "It's been a dream of mine as a die-hard Orioles fan and previous season ticket holder, so I couldn't pass up the opportunity," said Spiller, who also serves as the interim president of the Metropolitan Baltimore Council AFL-CIO. The Orioles went on to beat the Red Sox 15-10.

OPEIU members with Locals 30 and 174 on the West Coast got into the game, too, by representing their union at the L.A. Fed Union Night at Dodger Stadium in early August. More than 9,000 union members in attendance watched the Los Angeles Dodgers' 8-1 win over the San Diego Padres. "We also watched a tribute to the beloved voice of the Dodgers, Vin Scully, who passed away just a few days before,"

said Jamie Campbell, Local 30 organizing director. "The energy was electric from the opening pitch.

"Taking more than 160 members from our two locals, it was a great time for them, their family and friends to celebrate with each other after not being able to have in-person events of this magnitude in more than two years," Campbell continued.

"It was a memorable and awesome time for my children and me," said Christina Guevara, a Local 30 member at the First Financial Credit Union. "Thank you Local 30 for making this event a success."

"I enjoyed being able to see so many of our members and to meet their families, and being able to celebrate together and recognize the hard work our members put in each and every day throughout the year," Campbell said.

Both union nights at the ballpark featured tributes to labor before the start of the game.



Photos courtesy of the Baltimore Orioles

Local 2 First Vice President Michael Spiller throws out the first pitch during the AFL-CIO Union Night at Camden Yards. Also pictured is Spiller with Orioles pitcher Spenser Watkins and the team's mascot, the Oriole Bird.



Locals 30 and 174 members enjoy the game at Dodger Stadium.



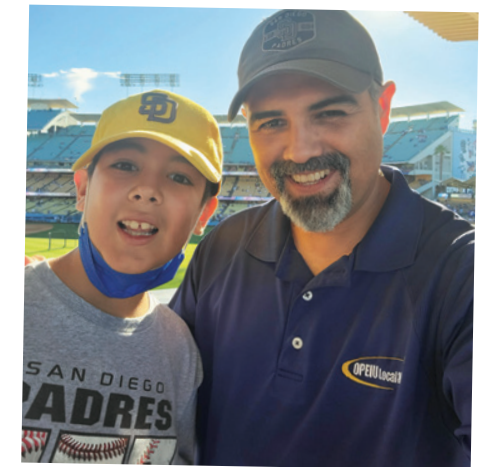
Local 30 Executive Board members Margie Chavez, left, who serves as recording secretary, and Tamua Newton.



Local 30 member Clara Gonzales, waving, and family enjoy the game with other members of Locals 30 and 174.



Local 30 member Damien Vincent and his wife, Abbey, enjoy the stadium fare.



Local 30 Executive Board Trustee Manuel Santillan and his son, Manuel Jr.



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Julie Murray, RN

## Julie Murray Appointed Retiree Advisor to OPEIU Nurses Council

The OPEIU Nurses Council (ONC) Executive Board has appointed retired Local 459 member Julie Murray, RN, to serve as a retiree advisor, offering counsel on issues affecting retired members and representing the interests of retired health care professionals to the nursing body.

The ONC amended its constitution to establish the non-voting position, noting the retiree advisor shall be a retired member in good standing and serve a three-year term.

Prior to her retirement, Murray served as ONC vice chair. She also is coordinator of the Nurses Honor Guard.

## OPEIU Remembers the Life and Service of Paul Bohelski

OPEIU remembers the life and many contributions of Paul Bohelski, who served as an International representative for many years and was instrumental in organizing helicopter pilots and flight instructors into the union. Bohelski died after a long illness Sept. 12. He was 74.

“Paul was an integral part of OPEIU’s organizing efforts for more than 20 years, helping to bring union benefits to traditionally underrepresented workers like helicopter pilots and taxi drivers,” said President Richard Lanigan. “OPEIU is grateful for his many lasting contributions and years of dedicated service to working people.”

Bohelski spent more than 30 years in the labor movement. He began his labor career as a steward for the International Brotherhood of Teamsters in Chicago, moving to San Antonio in 1980. After a company merger and under Bohelski’s leadership, the surviving independent union — the Union of Transportation Employees — affiliated with the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers, of which he was elected business representative and then president. Bohelski joined Local 277 April 2, 1997, spending the next 20 years assisting OPEIU local unions in their organizing efforts and negotiating historic contracts.



Paul Bohelski



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# Happy Holidays from OPEIU

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of holidays, and all the best for a healthy  
and prosperous new year!

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