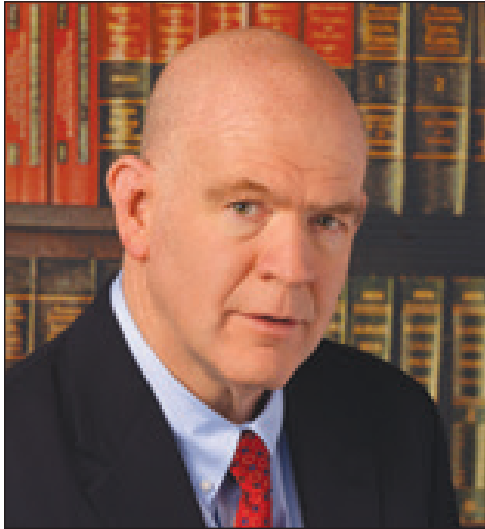


**Decision**  
**2024**

Choosing a president who will protect  
the interests of working families



# Elections Have Consequences

By Richard Lanigan  
President

In 2016 the Heritage Foundation published its “Mandate for Leadership: A Comprehensive Policy Agenda for a New Administration,” a three-part series recommending several reforms to a conservative administration should one be elected in November 2016.<sup>1</sup> Part One recommended a tax cut, building up national defense and reforms to entitlement programs. After enacting a tax cut in 2018, the Trump administration proudly announced it had implemented more than 60 percent of the recommendations of the Heritage Foundation and implemented them faster than any administration in history, including during the Reagan administration.<sup>2</sup>

After the 2020 presidential election, more than 100 officials of the Trump administration went to work for the Heritage Foundation. In 2022 the Foundation released “Project 2025 Presidential Transition Project,” written by many of those Trump administration officials, to serve as a blueprint for a potential second Trump administration, just as “Mandate for Leadership” was for his first administration. The report includes nearly 900 pages of policy recommendations, many of which would cause significant upheaval, including:

- Eliminating and replacing 50,000 career trained government employees with people who have never performed the work for the agency.
- Eviscerating Veteran’s Administration health benefits.

- Banning unions for public sector workers.
- Allowing employers to stop paying overtime.
- Eliminating child labor protection.
- Creating company unions dominated by the employer called “employee involvement organizations.”
- Cutting retiree benefits for federal workers.
- Allowing businesses to put workers’ safety at risk.
- Allowing companies to secretly hire union busters to work behind the scenes.
- Allowing an employer to try to remove the workers’ union in the middle of a signed and valid contract.
- Reducing workplace protection from employment discrimination.
- Privatizing all student college loans.

There are too many recommendations to delve into here, so let us focus on four.

One recommendation of greatest concern is the “Project 2025” call to allow employers to eliminate a union in the middle of a signed contract and create company unions. At present, more than 70 percent of the workforce is in favor of union protection.<sup>3</sup> Working people want greater workplace protection and more out of the work they perform. Why then would the next administration be looking to weaken unions when most Americans support them?<sup>4</sup>

Another recommendation calls on the U.S. Department of Labor to “amend its hazard-order regulations to permit teenage workers

access to work in regulated jobs, such as slaughterhouses and factories, with proper training and parental consent.” Why would they recommend permitting teenagers to perform hazardous work when they know it is against 90-year-old federal policy enacted, in part, to save the lives of youth?

Millions of Veterans who put themselves in harm’s way for the rest of the country would lose promised medical benefits in the “Project 2025” plan. How can any American think this is a proposal good for the country?<sup>5</sup>

Finally, “Project 2025” calls for the elimination of career federal employees. Shortly before Hurricane Katrina, the Bush administration appointed an inexperienced person to be the director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) who was not prepared to lead the response. Civil service has been around for thousands of years and is used in many countries. How does replacing experienced people with inexperienced people to do government work help the country? How do any of these recommendations help the country?<sup>6</sup>

The rest of the recommendations are on the Heritage Foundation website at [heritage.org](https://www.heritage.org). When you consider the Heritage Foundation’s impact on the policies of the first Trump administration, it is hard to fathom Trump himself has not been fully apprised of these recommendations.

*Continued on page 4*

# CLUW Celebrates Five Decades Building Power, Improving Lives for Working Women

The Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW), AFL-CIO, celebrated five decades of building power and community for women throughout the labor movement at its 50th Anniversary Gala and Education Conference in Niagara Falls, New York.



At the CLUW Convention, left to right, are Local 30 Executive Director/Chief Financial Officer Marianne Giordano, Local 30 Executive Board member Gayle Noon, Local 42 President and CLUW Vice President Lisa Blake, Local 30 Executive Board member Jeannie Shim and Local 2 member and Metro D.C. CLUW Chapter President Chelsea Bland.

“Fifty years ago, women came together to establish an organization that supports women in the labor movement to make life better for them and their families,” said Lisa Blake, Local 42 (Region VII) president and an OPEIU vice president. “Fifty years later there is still a need for women in the labor movement to fight for change in our places of work.”

Blake, who serves as a vice president on the CLUW National Officers Council, was joined at the conference by fellow OPEIU Vice President and Local 30 (Region V) Executive Director/Chief Financial Officer Marianne Giordano and Local 2 (Region II) member and Metro D.C. CLUW Chapter President Chelsea Bland. AFL-CIO President Liz Shuler delivered the keynote address celebrating the history of CLUW and the important role the organization plays in labor’s mission to ensure safety on the job for every woman, close the wage gap and uplift women’s voices in our democracy.

Formed March 24, 1974, CLUW is the country’s only national organization for union women. CLUW’s core mission of “helping women become more involved in their unions, organizing the unorganized and championing social justice in the workplace are as important and urgent as when CLUW was founded,” according to the organization.

# APALA Champions the Interests of AAPI Workers

Aina Iglesias, a labor relations specialist with the Hawai’i Nurses’ Association (HNA)/OPEIU Local 50 (Region VIII) in Honolulu, recently attended a meeting of the national executive board of the Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance (APALA), AFL-CIO, held to chart the organization’s future and its role within the labor movement.

“The discussion focused on APALA’s role in empowering Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) workers, especially in relation to the upcoming 2024 elections,” said Iglesias, OPEIU’s representative to the board.

“APALA is committed to ensuring AAPI voices are heard and represented in the democratic process,” Iglesias said. APALA is in a unique position from other AAPI organizations due to its affiliation with the AFL-CIO, Iglesias said, with its “robust network and resources, enabling it to effectively advocate for AAPI workers on a national scale.”

The meeting also explored membership growth strategies to provide support to AAPI workers nationwide, especially in regions with significant AAPI populations such as Hawai’i.

“For me, the meeting underscored APALA’s unwavering commitment to empowering AAPI workers within unions and beyond,” Iglesias said. “As we look to the elections and beyond APALA stands ready to champion the rights and interests of AAPI workers and ensure their voices are heard in the democratic process.”



Hawai’i Nurses’ Association (HNA)/OPEIU Local 50 Labor Relations Specialist Aina Iglesias, kneeling far left, with fellow members of the APALA National Executive Board.

## Elections Have Consequences

Continued from page 2

Keep in mind this report does not recommend ways to secure a person’s retirement or strengthen their rights or safety at work. The recommendations all seek to change the employment relationship in a way that strengthens the employer’s hand in the workplace.




So, this November when you go to the ballot box think carefully. Elections have consequences. Your future employment security and that of your family will be on the ballot as well.

- <sup>1</sup> The Heritage Foundation, “Mandate for Leadership: A Comprehensive Policy Agenda for a New Administration,” Aug. 26, 2016, [heritage.org](https://www.heritage.org)
- <sup>2</sup> The Heritage Foundation, “Trump Administration Embraces Heritage Foundation Policy Recommendations,” Jan. 23, 2018, [heritage.org](https://www.heritage.org)
- <sup>3</sup> Gallup, “U.S. Approval of Labor Unions at Highest Point Since 1965,” Aug. 30, 2022, [news.gallup.com](https://www.news.gallup.com)
- <sup>4</sup> Forbes, “3 Ways Project 2025 Will Impact American Workplaces,” July 8, 2024, [forbes.com](https://www.forbes.com)
- <sup>5</sup> Task and Purpose, “Opinion: Project 2025 Would Slash Veteran’s Hard-Earned Benefits,” July 21, 2024, [taskandpurpose.com](https://www.taskandpurpose.com)
- <sup>6</sup> Federal News Network, “Project 2025 and Your Federal Job: Better Read Up on This One,” July 11, 2024, [federalnewsnetwork.com](https://www.federalnewsnetwork.com)

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## Steward Spotlight

# Stewardship in a Small Shop Requires Communication



*By Kate Verellen-MacDonald  
Steward and Solutions Specialist  
People Driven Credit Union  
Local 42 (Region VII), Michigan*

**Stewards in small shops wear many hats. Bargaining, organizing and stewardship become intertwined. It can be a lot to manage, but by maintaining open lines of communication, and using them often, a steward’s many responsibilities can be made much easier.**

The more communication you have with your members, the more likely they are to engage with whatever issue you are organizing around. Open, honest communication not only allows union-related work to be done more productively, but it creates a healthier culture for everyone in the unit. If you are not communicating well, you cannot expect your members to be fully engaged.

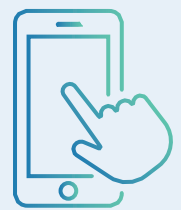
Communication is a two-way street. For members to listen to you, you must listen to them. The more opinions you hear and thoughtfully consider, the better chance you have of reaching your goals, whatever they may be. In my shop, I do this through informal one-on-ones and in regular open meetings where everyone is free to speak. When meeting with management, I feel better equipped to advocate for and support our members because

*“If you know exactly where people are coming from, and if you can put yourself into their situation, you are able to advocate for your members more effectively.”*

I know exactly where they are coming from. Even if there is no existing contract language to support a member dealing with a specific issue, we then know it is a priority for that member in the next round of negotiations and can develop a plan to win language to address it.

Being on the bargaining committee has also helped me as a steward in my day-to-day work. You learn how and why management thinks the way they do. That insight allows you to better explain to members why management is proposing a specific contract article and helps you thoughtfully frame counterproposals at the bargaining table. If you know exactly where people are coming from, and if you can put yourself into their situation, you are able to advocate for your members more effectively.

Although it can be challenging, it is critical to know your contract and employer’s policies inside and out. In my shop, we are developing several teams of members to focus on specific issues ranging from grievances and research to bargaining. In doing so, we are increasing the level of engagement and cooperatively educating ourselves on the particulars of our contract, which helps us all see the big picture a little more clearly.



### 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.*

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# Decision 2024

**On our cover:** On Election Day, working people will be faced with a critical choice to elect a president and vice president who will protect their interests and those of their families. Also at stake are critical gubernatorial, Senate and House races throughout the country that will impact millions of working families. Make a plan now to vote Nov. 5. See the cover story on page 8 for more about the candidates so you can make an informed decision.



## OPEIU Family Members Awarded 2024 Union Plus Scholarships

Two OPEIU family members have been awarded Union Plus Scholarships recognizing their academic ability, character, leadership and commitment to the values of organized labor.

**Esther Fannymae Ganda** of the Bronx, New York, whose stepfather, William Henning, is a member and the business manager of Local 32 (Region II), was awarded a \$500 scholarship.

A member of the National Honor Society, Ganda will attend Syracuse University and aspires to become a professor. "I firmly believe our youth hold the key to our future, and I am committed to contributing to a better world for them, one step at a time," she said.

Léman Manhattan [New York] Preparatory School Interim Counselor Molly McKeown said Ganda is an exceptional human, an enlightened scholar and a critical thinker. "Esther strives to become a better version of herself each day," McKeown said. "Her character is reflected in the ways her peers reach out to her for honest and judgment-free advice. She challenges herself to contribute to class discussion, even when it is outside of her comfort zone. Esther may be the most academically well-rounded student I have had in my career. She simply loves to learn. I believe she will find great success in higher education and beyond."



Esther Fannymae Ganda

**Caleb North** of Enterprise, Alabama, whose late father, Brian North, was a member of Local 102 (Region III), has been awarded a \$1,000 scholarship.

A Spirit of Auburn Presidential Scholar, North will major in computer science at Auburn University and aspires to a career in the technology industry as a computer programmer. He has already earned college credits through dual enrollment classes at Enterprise [Alabama] State Community College. When North first expressed interest in coding a decade ago, it was his father, Brian, who encouraged him to pursue it as a career. The elder North was diagnosed with Stage 4 esophageal cancer in 2019, and died in a vehicle accident while en route to Houston for treatment at MD Anderson Cancer Center in October 2020. "My father was my biggest supporter,"



Caleb North

Caleb said. "This tragedy has forever scarred me, but it has also undeniably matured me into a young man of faith and love for the world around me, appreciative of the life I have been given."

That sentiment is evidenced through his work leading a grief-management group and training for a leadership position at a camp for children whose families have been affected by cancer. "I've had the opportunity to befriend and comfort people who have been through similar situations, offering counsel from a genuine, empathetic heart," he said. "My perspective on life is grounded by the pressing reality of life and death." North also expressed appreciation for the support his father's fellow OPEIU members showed during his cancer battle and following his death. "OPEIU provided many tangible benefits — both during and after my father's life — that made a horrible situation a little easier."

To learn more about the UP scholarships and to apply for 2025, visit [unionplus.org/scholarship](https://unionplus.org/scholarship). The application deadline is Jan. 31.

### 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)

## Local 6's Christine Richards Earns Two Degrees Through OPEIU College Benefit

Through OPEIU's Discount College Benefit, members and their families can earn college degrees at a fraction of the cost.

Christine Richards' educational journey began with OPEIU. An information systems administrator at Plymouth County Registry of Deeds in Massachusetts, Richards has been a Local 6 (Region II) member since 2009 and a member of the local's executive board since 2013.

In 2018, Richards decided to go to school after learning about OPEIU's college benefit. "I felt I was lacking something in my life," she said. "Because I had not gone to college before, that part of my life was unfulfilled.

"I thought 'now is as good a time as ever,'" she recalled. With two kids who have earned college degrees, she said, "I felt a calling to get mine and show my kids I can do it, too."

She enrolled in an associate degree program at Eastern Gateway Community College. By 2021, she had earned her associate degree. She did not stop there, though, opting to work toward her bachelor's degree.

After earning her associate degree, she enrolled at Franklin University, again through her OPEIU benefit. By December 2023, she had earned a second degree — a bachelor's in criminal justice with a minor in public administration. "All of my classmates and professors were fantastic," she said.

Using her degree, Richards plans to volunteer with a local program sponsored by Plymouth County Outreach to assist those dealing with substance abuse issues and impacted families like her own.

"It's something I'd like to help tackle and help other people deal with," she said. "The more education you have, the more you can do for your fellow employees, your children and your community.

"It felt amazing" to graduate, Richards continued, encouraging other OPEIU members to take advantage of the program. "It does not matter how old or young you are. Whatever field you are in, go for it!"



Christine Richards



Scan the QR code to learn more about the OPEIU Discount College Benefit.

## Decision 2024

## Who Will Best Protect Working People?

At every step of her distinguished career in public office, Vice President Kamala Harris has proven herself a tough and principled fighter for working people. As a true partner in the Biden-Harris administration, she has strengthened workers' rights, protected our retirements, lowered prescription costs, made historic investments in infrastructure, boosted Buy American rules, taken on illegal corporate union-busting, saved millions of Americans from the burden of student debt, helped families through a pandemic and much more.

Above all, Harris has championed unions. The record shows she has been part of the most pro-union, pro-working family administration in history.

"I'm running to fight for an America where the economy works for working people," Harris said. "Where health care is a fundamental right. Where women have the freedom to control their own bodies. And where our democracy and institutions are revered and protected."

As vice president, she saved the pensions of more than one million union workers and retirees, capped the price of insulin at \$35 a month for seniors and led the effort to increase access to affordable child care and expand the child tax credit. Harris also championed worker organizing and chaired the White House Task Force on Worker Organizing and Empowerment, where she advocated for new worker organizing and training to create pathways to good union jobs. In the Senate, Harris introduced the Domestic Workers' Bill of Rights and legislation to extend overtime rights and guarantee new minimum wage rights to agricultural workers, strongly supported the PRO Act and walked the picket line with UAW GM workers.

Harris is a dedicated fighter for reproductive rights, has a strong record on climate change and a history of pro-worker votes in the Senate. Given her pro-labor credentials, deep experience and demonstrated competence, she has proven to be the candidate who will best protect the interests of working families.

Harris' running mate, Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz, enhances the ticket's pro-labor bona fides even further. As governor, Walz signed into law paid sick and medical leave, banned non-compete agreements and provided a raise for ride-share drivers in the state. A former public school teacher and union member, Walz's experience, track record and background make him a strong choice for vice president.

Working people have an important decision to make on Election Day: Will we support Harris, a candidate who will build upon the progress of the last four years, or will we elect Donald Trump, who will continue to put first the interests of corporations and billionaire CEOs?

Consider Trump's vice-presidential pick, Sen. J.D. Vance of Ohio. "Vance has introduced legislation to allow employers to bypass their workers' unions with phony corporate-run unions, disparaged striking UAW members while collecting hefty donations from one of the major auto companies, watered down safety protections for rail workers at the request of industry lobbyists and opposed the landmark Protecting the Right to Organize (PRO) Act, which would end union-busting 'right-to-work' laws and make it easier for workers to form unions and win strong contracts," AFL-CIO President Liz Shuler said.

Vance supports an extreme, anti-working families agenda, saying he's against the Affordable Care Act, which millions of Americans rely on, and calling Social Security and Medicare "the biggest roadblocks to any kind of real fiscal sanity."

"If Trump wins, he would once again stack the federal agencies that exist to protect workers with union-busting corporate executives and anti-union extremists, strip funding for workplace health and safety and do everything in his power to take away workers' voice on the job — just as he did in his first term," Shuler continued. "That would mean weaker union contracts, lower pay and fewer benefits, so greedy bosses and his corporate donors could get richer. We can expect a Vice President Vance would be fully engaged in helping Trump roll back decades of worker gains.

"A Trump-Vance White House is a corporate CEO's dream and a worker's nightmare," Shuler said. "Look no further than the devastating 'Project 2025' plan that would eviscerate unions and empty workers' pockets just to boost the profits of their corporate friends and donors. That is the Trump-Vance agenda."

The labor movement and working people can stop the harmful agenda of these anti-worker politicians from becoming a reality. With Harris, we will have a true union champion in the White House who believes in the power of unions to improve the lives of working people.

"When union wages go up, everyone's wages go up," Harris said. "When union workplaces are safer, all workplaces are safer. And when unions are strong, America is strong."

Visit [betterinaunion.org](https://betterinaunion.org) or scan the QR code on the next page for more about the candidates and where they stand on issues important to working families. And plan now to vote Nov. 5!



Vice President Kamala Harris

## Harris-Walz Will Build on the Last Four Years of Progress for Working Families

- **Job creation:** The last four years saw the creation of 14.8 million jobs. America experienced the longest streak of unemployment rates of less than 4 percent in more than 50 years.
- **Investment in critical infrastructure:** Labor led the push in Congress for the bipartisan infrastructure law that is creating hundreds of thousands of good-paying union jobs, repairing our roads and bridges, expanding broadband internet and upgrading our water and sewer systems.
- **Enacting fair tax policy:** The administration has stayed true to its promise not to raise taxes on working families. Instead, it shifted the tax burden to the wealthy and large corporations, ensuring they pay their fair share.
- **Protecting pensions:** Union members successfully fought to rescue the pensions of more than 1 million workers who were at risk of losing their hard-earned retirement.
- **Strengthening workers' rights:** Working with the administration and our allies in Congress, organized labor ensured we had a pro-labor National Labor Relations Board (NLRB). It was the administration's NLRB that sided with workers organizing at Starbucks and striking workers across the country.
- **Boosting Buy American rules:** The administration strengthened federal Buy American rules, requiring any goods purchased with taxpayer money contain 75 percent American-made content, up from the previous 55 percent requirement.
- **Helping families make ends meet:** Labor worked with the administration and representatives in Congress to pass aid for families during the pandemic and enact a child tax credit giving families hundreds of dollars a month to help make ends meet.
- **Requiring a \$15 minimum wage for federal contractors:** The administration signed an executive order requiring federal contractors are paid a minimum wage of \$15 per hour, ensuring these workers receive a living wage.

## What Working People Can Expect Under a Trump-Vance Administration

"Project 2025" includes proposals to:

- **Make it easier to bust unions,** allowing employers to hire union busters to operate in secret and use aggressive anti-union strategies without public oversight.
- **Empower employers to take away your union** in the middle of your contract.
- **Make voluntary union recognition illegal,** making it harder for workers to form a union.
- **Make it easier for your employer to discipline or even fire you** for engaging in collective action and organizing.
- **Ban all public employee unions.**
- **Allow states to ban labor unions,** eliminate overtime protections and choose not to follow the national minimum wage.
- **Eliminate the child labor rules protecting children** from working in mines, meatpacking plants and other dangerous workplaces.
- **Cut retirement benefits for federal workers,** making them comparable to the weaker private-sector benefits.
- **Make it harder for working people to receive health care** and cut Medicaid benefits.



Get the facts to make the choice that is right for you and your family!

Scan the QR code to learn more about the candidates.



# Building Union Power Through a Diverse, Engaged Membership

OPEIU local leaders and activist members from throughout the country gathered in Chicago for the 2024 All Regions Educational Conference to discuss ways the union can best be an inclusive, diverse organization providing pathways to engagement and responsibility for all members.

Hundreds of attendees from across OPEIU spent four days learning new skills, sharing experiences and building relationships among local unions. The conference's theme, *Building Union Power Through an Engaged Membership*, was incorporated throughout an array of workshops and presentations equipping OPEIU's local leaders to meet the needs of all members, building a strong and effective union in the process.

Workshops focused on grievance handling, using digital tools to help organize, developing issue campaigns in organizing and bargaining, having organizing conversations, developing research supporting these campaigns and combating gender-based violence and harassment in the workplace, all while building pathways to responsibility and leadership in the union for members.

During the conference, Local 153 in New York (Region II) was awarded the 2023 Henderson B. Douglas Organizing Award for bringing the benefits of unionization to 1,700 new members in the last year. "You can do this, too," said Nick Galipeau, Local 153 secretary-treasurer and an OPEIU vice president. "As a whole, we can and must organize both internally and externally to build real power for our members and our mission."

The conference also featured two guest speakers who shared the importance of both union and political activism. The first, Stacy Davis Gates, has served as president of the powerful Chicago Teachers Union since 2022. As legislative and political director in 2019, Davis Gates led a 15-day strike against the Chicago Public School System resulting in a historic contract providing for smaller class sizes, ensuring a nurse and social worker in every Chicago public school, securing sanctuary protections for immigrant families and supporting students and families experiencing homelessness.

Davis Gates' remarks focused on her path to leadership within her union, emphasizing the importance of taking bold action, putting members' needs first and recognizing the immense power organized workers wield.

The second guest speaker, Rep. Nikki Budzinski (D-IL-13), spoke on the conference's closing day about the importance of unions being politically active, calling for union members to turn out for pro-union candidates. A former union staffer with LIUNA, IAFF and UFCW, Budzinski was elected to Congress in 2023 on a pro-labor platform. Speaking of the upcoming election, she said, "union members will decide the outcome," reminding us all how important it is to vote Nov. 5.



Participants discuss ways to make the union as inclusive and supportive for all members as possible.



Stacy Davis Gates, president of the Chicago Teachers Union, emphasizes the tremendous power workers have when they organize.



OPEIU leaders and members from throughout the country gather in Chicago for the conference.



Local 153 accepts the 2023 Henderson B. Douglas Organizing Award from OPEIU President Richard Lanigan, far right, and Director of Organizing Brandon Nessen, far left. Pictured are Local 153's Secretary-Treasurer and OPEIU Vice President Nick Galipeau, member Nina Goldshmid, Assistant Business Manager John Edmonds, Trustee Frances Avnet, Executive Board Member and Steward Grace Adams-Cunningham and President Jessica Timo.

## More than 300 at Brilliant Corners Join Local 30

**Hundreds of nonprofit workers at Brilliant Corners, a California-based housing services organization, voted to join Local 30 (Region V). Their union, BC United, is one of the largest nonprofit workforces to join in union with OPEIU.**

The 178-61 vote at the statewide nonprofit covers an array of job titles and includes members in San Diego, Los Angeles and the Bay Area. The campaign to form a union was years in the making, beginning before — and then accelerated by — the COVID-19 pandemic.

“The resiliency of the group to get their organizing committee up and running and continuing to have those conversations, shows their energy and their ability to still organize in the midst of a pandemic,” said Jamie Campbell, Local 30 organizing director.

Staff at Brilliant Corners were spurred to organize for a range of reasons, including low pay, safety concerns and the organization’s travel policies.

“I’ve heard from a lot of people it’s just not as safe as they’d like it to be,” said Joshua Brennecke, who has worked at Brilliant Corners since 2023 and served on the organizing committee. Brennecke, who also is a member of the bargaining committee, said both field staff and receptionists in their offices have been confronted with unsafe situations without proper training — an issue they hope to address at the bargaining table in the coming months.

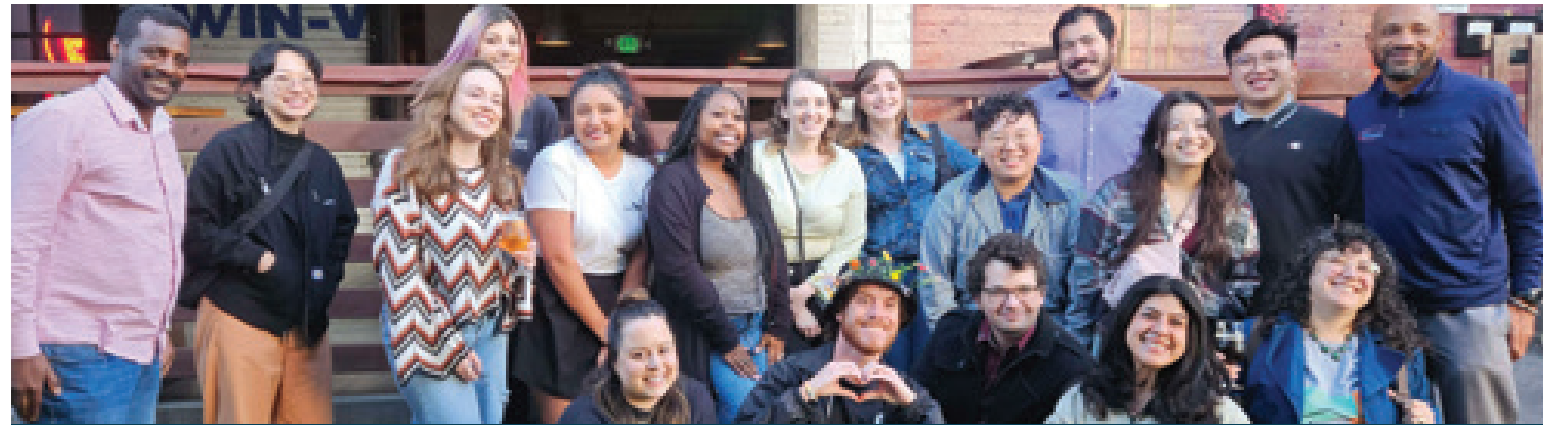
Julia Bautista-Corro, a senior housing acquisition specialist, said the safety issues are compounded because many of her co-workers are uncomfortable asking supervisors or human resources for assistance. “Housing coordinators are the driving force of our agency,” she said. “We wouldn’t be Brilliant Corners without them.

“The fact they don’t feel comfortable going to supervisors or to HR is not fair at all,” said Bautista-Corro, who served on the organizing committee and was recently elected to sit on the bargaining committee.

Throughout the campaign, workers conducted one-on-one conversations with their colleagues in person, by phone banking and even visiting each other at their homes to shore up critical support. Those conversations, said Campbell, “drove the campaign to the numbers we needed to win decisively.”

Bargaining is underway, though organizing committee members noticed a cultural shift within the organization even before negotiations began, following the union vote.

“Once the election results were posted,” Bautista-Corro said, “I felt there was hope among my co-workers, like ‘finally, something will change.’”



*The Brilliant Corners organizing committee with supporters after the winning election vote.*

## Local 153 President Jessica Timo Receives NAACP Award

Local 153 (Region II) President Jessica Timo was honored by the New York Branch of the NAACP with its annual Freedom Award for her tireless efforts as a union leader to improve the quality of life for members of her union and all New Yorkers.

“To be recognized by an organization as venerable and impactful as the NAACP is both a monumental honor and a powerful reminder of the responsibilities in advancing the cause of justice and equality,” Timo said.



*Local 153 President Jessica Timo is presented the NAACP Freedom Award by Anthony Harmon, president of the New York Branch of the NAACP. The award recognizes individuals for their unwavering commitment to the labor movement of New York City.*

## Resident Advisors at UPenn Unanimously Ratify First Contract

Undergraduate and graduate resident advisors (RAs) at the University of Pennsylvania unanimously voted to ratify their first union contract. The new contract, ratified 98-0, features several improvements for RAs, including a new \$3,000 stipend, 20 additional meals and a \$750 contract ratification bonus.

Penn RAs won their union with Local 153 (Region II) in September 2023, despite the university’s insistence they were not considered employees. Bargaining began in December, but the university delayed discussing economics until the semester concluded, prompting RAs to hold a rally in front of the Philadelphia City Council and seek support from the student body. The pressure worked.

“Penn tried to slow us down, but we persisted and won a first contract, which improves so many aspects of working in the College House system,” said Shaashi Ahlawat, a graduate RA. “We have shown student workers can win at Penn.”

The historic agreement is the first of its kind for student workers at the Ivy League university. The two-year contract includes a guaranteed room, support during the disciplinary process, a grievance and arbitration procedure, a labor-management committee to give workers input into the College House system and no givebacks or losses in current duties or rights.



*University of Pennsylvania resident advisors and supporters at a rally held during bargaining.*

“As a graduating senior who has worked on this campaign for years, it is remarkable to finally see RAs receiving compensation for the important work they do at Penn,” said Conor Emery, an RA. “I hope other RA unions in the Philadelphia area and beyond can learn from our negotiation campaign to strike even better deals with their employers, and other student workers on Penn’s campus can feel energized to unionize and bargain their own contracts too.”

## Student Workers Continue to Organize with Local 153

**Drexel and Georgetown student workers unionize with Local 153 (Region II) in New York to address low compensation and managerial abuses.**



*Resident assistants (RAs) at Drexel University won their union with Local 153 earlier this year in a 63-4 vote. Bargaining is underway for the 102 RAs at the Philadelphia university.*



*Georgetown University resident assistants voted 79-3 to form a union with Local 153. The unit is comprised of 103 student workers who are bargaining a contract to address low compensation and unfair terminations.*



## Local 11 Members at NW Natural Ratify New Contract

**In a 296-30 vote, Local 11 (Region VI) members at NW Natural, formerly Northwest Natural Gas Company, ratified a new four-year agreement with the public utilities company.**

The contract raises wages at least 23 percent over the life of the agreement, protects against layoffs, reduces health care costs, safeguards against intrusive monitoring and reestablishes a pension for employees for the first time since 2009.

Prior to negotiations, professors from the University of Oregon's Labor Education and Research Center trained members of the contract action team on steps they could take during bargaining. "You could see the impact" these actions had on the company's positions, said Howard Bell, Local 11's executive officer/secretary-treasurer. The local is based in Vancouver, Washington.

As the contract was negotiated, he said, Local 11 members slowly ramped up pressure on the company through a variety of tactics, including wearing union buttons, coordinating shirts and seeking vocal support from other local unions in the area.

Bell said office, construction and field staff coming together helped deliver major improvements at the bargaining table. "Our team was well-trained and even-tempered throughout the process," he said. "The members, the bargaining team and the contract action team were all keys to getting this agreement finalized."

In 2009, pensions at the company were halted for new hires in favor of an "enhanced 401(k)," creating a two-tier system. After conducting a bargaining survey last year, Bell said, restoring the pension proved to be the highest priority for bargaining unit members.

The new agreement "gets rid of the two-tier system," he said, putting all members "back on the same page." In addition, the agreement adds two new paid holidays, Martin Luther King Jr. Day and Veteran's Day, and increases personal protective equipment allowances.

The contract covers 610 office, field and construction employees at NW Natural across 17 locations throughout the Pacific Northwest.



*Office employees at NW Natural.*



*As part of its bargaining preparation, professors at the University of Oregon's Labor Education and Research Center taught a variety of negotiating tactics to members of the local's contract action team. At this Strike School, left to right, are Local 11 Executive Officer/Secretary-Treasurer Howard Bell, member Jennifer Grahm, Trustee Christine Jeibmann, member Konswaylu Nelson, Union Representative Jordan Fosdick and members Joe Paul and Irene Pirtle.*

## Howard Bell Among Those Honored by NW Oregon Labor Council

Howard Bell, executive officer/secretary-treasurer of Local 11 (Region VI) in Vancouver, Washington, was among a small group of labor leaders honored by the Northwest Oregon Labor Council (NOLC) for their work building and strengthening the labor movement.

NOLC recognized eight local individuals at its 24th Annual Labor Appreciation Dinner, which raises funds for Labor's Community Service Agency. The agency aids working families in need in the community.



*Howard Bell, executive officer/secretary-treasurer of Local 11, left, receives a labor award from Northwest Oregon Labor Council President Scott Zadow.*

*Photo by Emma Darden, courtesy of Northwest Oregon Labor Council*

## Local 6 Members Turn Out to Support RNs at Tobey Hospital in Massachusetts

Local 6 (Region II) Executive Board members Brian Dunn and Christine Richards joined the Massachusetts Nurses Association (MNA) in solidarity earlier this year for an informational picket outside of Tobey Hospital, where registered nurses had been fighting for a fair contract since July 2023.

Due to efforts like this, the nurses were able to secure a three-year contract this summer with significant improvements, according to the MNA.

The two sides met at the bargaining table more than 20 times before settling the contract. At issue was chronic understaffing at the hospital, coupled with low wages. The informational picket was the first ever at the Wareham-based hospital, one of two hospitals in the southeastern part of the state. Nurses reported being overwhelmed by poor staffing levels maintained by hospital management.

As Local 6 delegates to the Greater Southeastern Massachusetts Labor Council, Dunn and Richards answered the call from the Massachusetts AFL-CIO to stand in solidarity with picketers at the facility.

"I was inspired by the number of local politicians in attendance at Tobey," Richards said of her experience. "The support they received was very inspirational. They're not getting this type of support from management."

Staffing issues at hospitals like Tobey impact both patients and the health care professionals who serve them. "We're fighting for ourselves, for our patients, for this community," Christopher Souza, RN, told Wareham Week during the informational picket.



*Local 6 Executive Board members Brian Dunn, left, and Christine Richards, right, with Becky Coletta, a candidate for state representative. Dunn serves as political director of the Massachusetts AFL-CIO.*



## Local 8 Solidarity Summit Creates Space to Discuss Important Labor, Social Justice Issues

Local 8 (Region VI) in Seattle held its first-ever Solidarity Summit, sponsored by the local’s Race, Equity and Social Justice (RESJ) Committee. The event offered members an “intersectional space for sharing and learning on an array of important labor and social justice topics that ultimately help us build community, be better allies and grow overall awareness and connection,” said Valarie Peaphon, Local 8 union representative.



Local 8 Executive Board member Paul Bender, member Jani Myles, Executive Board members Alex Taylor-Yaconetti and Misha Smith and member Suzi Trumbull.

Participants heard from leaders of Pride at Work and the Washington State Labor Council, educators from Seattle Central College and others who shared insights and spurred discussion on topics such as anti-racism, queer history, LGBTQIA+ rights, labor history, international worker solidarity and the history and significance of Juneteenth.

The day kicked off with a powerful spoken word performance by poet Jamaar Smiley,

who urged participants to show up as their authentic selves and emphasized the importance of cultural awareness and racial equity in our union work.

Jarel Sanders and Rachelle Martin of Pride at Work guided a discussion on how to better support LGBTQIA+ members, advocating for contract protections such as inclusive bathroom access, updated dress codes not rooted in traditional gender roles and gender-affirming health care.

According to Local 8, its RESJ Committee works to ensure the union is accessible and inclusive. Its mission is to support and empower marginalized workers, and it is committed to fighting for social and economic justice for all through training, educational resources, public advocacy, community organizing and creating space for hard conversations.

“The summit wasn’t just educational, but also a space for sharing stories and resources, fostering an intersectional community where everyone felt included and valued,” Peaphon said. “We left with new knowledge, stronger connections and a renewed commitment to justice and equity within our union.”

## Local 494 Culture Committee Seeks to Foster Inclusion and Unity Among Members

Local 494 (Region VII) in Detroit has formed a Culture Committee to foster an environment centered around inclusion and positivity and strengthen the bond of unity among members, said Local 494 President Dana Soltis.

Founded by Local 494 members Cassandra Banks-Nettles and Erin Rodabaugh, the committee’s goal is to make members aware of the many services and benefits provided by the union and create a place where all can feel included, appreciated and valued. “The committee aims to create a better sense of community and family,” Rodabaugh said.

The committee will also “listen and address any culture-related concerns and help address common challenges like miscommunication, low employee morale or lack of inclusion,” Rodabaugh continued.

The committee takes the initiative to celebrate members’ birthdays with handwritten cards and to recognize their retirements and work anniversaries.

In addition to co-chairs Banks-Nettles and Rodabaugh, committee members are Kristie Mimms, Melissa Randazzo, Piper Dhue, Ashley Duety, Scott McCallister and Lisa Early.

“The committee is important because we spend a third of our adult life at work,” Rodabaugh said. “Work should be a safe place and should encourage a sense of family and belonging. The Culture Committee is working to ensure everyone feels comfortable, seen and heard. We want to see a real sense of a union family come back to Local 494.”

“We look forward to many events in the future to come together and better get to know one another,” Soltis added.



Local 494 members enjoy an event organized by the local’s Culture Committee. Pictured are Local 494 Vice President Tia Darden, member Angie Townsel, Recording Secretary Carmara Brandon, Culture Committee Co-Chair Cassandra Banks-Nettles, members Antoinette Troup and Anthony Cardamone, Secretary-Treasurer Melissa King, Culture Committee Co-Chair Erin Rodabaugh, members Renate Tritt, Melissa Randazzo and Kristie Mimms and President Dana Soltis.



## Local 537 President Honored for 50 Years of Service to Her Union Employer

Maria Riggs, president of Local 537 (Region V) in Pasadena, California, was honored for her 50 years of service to her employer, the United Firefighters of Los Angeles City, IAFF Local 112. IAFF General Secretary-Treasurer Frank V. Lima presented a plaque to Riggs to commemorate her service and thank her for her dedication to the union and its members in Los Angeles for the past five decades.

“My life has been so much richer and rewarding working for a union,” Riggs said. “My union siblings have truly been my family.”

As president of Local 537, Riggs supports approximately 1,400 clerical and professional staff employed in the building trades, labor federations, credit unions, law firms and others.

IAFF General Secretary-Treasurer Frank V. Lima presents a plaque to Local 537 President Maria Riggs honoring her 50 years of service to the IAFF.

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## Local 29 Elects New Leadership

Local 29 (Region V) members have elected a new executive board to lead the Oakland, California-based local, choosing Kelly Gschwend as president and business manager. Gschwend previously served as secretary-treasurer and replaces Tamara R. Rubyn, who retired after more than three decades of service to the local.

"I am proud to take over the leadership at Local 29 and continue to grow our membership, as well as our strength and political engagement to build on the work that has been done," Gschwend said.

Gschwend became a Local 29 member in 1988 when she began working at Roadway Express. Three years later, she became a shop steward, eventually interning at the local. She was elected a vice president, and was named business representative in 2000. Gschwend went on to serve as vice president and then secretary-treasurer before being elected president.

The new officers and executive board members were installed earlier this year and will serve a three-year term.



The new Local 29 Executive Board, left to right, are EB-Miscellaneous Cameron Hopson and Emily Citraro, EB-Insurance Minnie Chan, EB-Hospital Bethany Easiley, Trustees Joanna Harris and Danine Harden, Secretary-Treasurer/Business Representative Pharaoh Stone, Recording Secretary Rosemarie Boothe-Bey, Vice President Catherine Pearson, President/Business Manager Kelly Gschwend, President/Business Manager Emerita and OPEIU Vice President Tamara R. Rubyn, Trustee Emily Pacheco and EB-Miscellaneous Hang Le To.

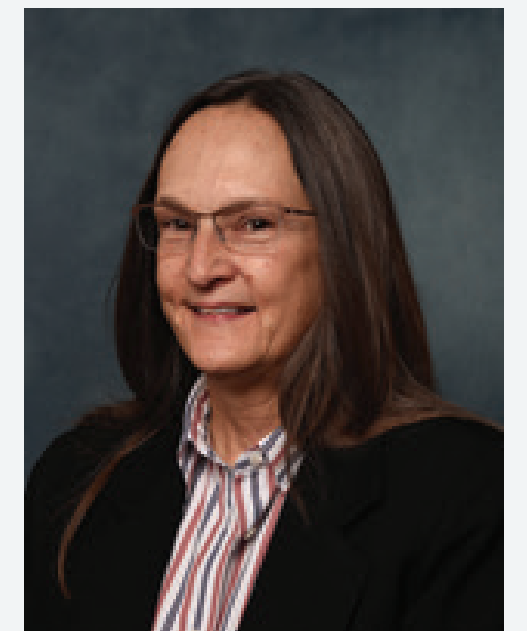
Not pictured are EB-Hospital Ryan Vilardi, EB-Insurance Michelle Medrano and EB-Miscellaneous Christina Grady.

## Longtime Local 29 President Tamara Rubyn Retires

After more than 35 years as a Local 29 (Region V) member, 25 of those on the leadership staff, Tamara R. Rubyn has retired.

Until the election held earlier this year, Rubyn served as Local 29 president and business manager, as well as a trustee to the health and pension plans. While preserving the rights of working people, negotiating meaningful collective bargaining agreements and representing the members, Rubyn also recognized the importance of training the next generation of leaders. She and her leadership team mentored and coached the membership to ensure they had the knowledge and skills necessary to become the future leaders of Local 29.

Rubyn has also been a vice president on the OPEIU Executive Board since 2004, and will continue to serve on the board until the end of her term in 2027.



Tamara R. Rubyn



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