

# OPEIU CONNECT

Issue 555, Winter 2023/2024



## Stronger Together!

Kaiser Health Care Workers Stand Together  
and Settle Historic Contract





# An Exciting Time for Young Working People

By Richard Lanigan  
President

Americans are embracing unions now more than at any time in 60 years. University campuses, where large numbers of employees are joining unions, may be the best indicator of the changing perceptions.

The National Labor Relations Board now views workers on a college campus very differently than they have in the past. Graduate students, adjunct faculty and resident assistants are now all considered employees under the National Labor Relations Act. While college students have not traditionally joined unions, times are changing.

The Office and Professional Employees International Union (OPEIU) and other unions have represented people who work on college campuses for almost 50 years. We are excited to organize on college campuses because we know it strengthens the bargaining power of members already employed on campuses. As students graduate and go into the workforce, they take with them an education and positive experience with unions. Until recently, one such campus-based occupation — the resident assistant, sometimes known as the resident advisor — did not have the right to form a union.

At universities like Wesleyan, Tufts, Barnard, Fordham, Rensselaer Polytechnic and the University of Pennsylvania, resident assistants have joined unions; more specifically, your union, OPEIU. Resident assistants are forming unions all over the country, as reported in The Wall Street Journal, The Boston Chronicle and other major regional and national publications.

Why are these people joining unions? The short answer is, like many others across the country, they want a better outcome from

their work. In nearly every occupation people are finding the deck stacked against them in the workplace.

As your union has engaged with more people who work as resident assistants, we hear the stories of responsibility, including dealing with anxious parents, noise complaints, a lack of hot water and middle of the night calls from students who are locked out of their rooms to the more serious issues of first-year students who have not acclimated to life away from home, a roommate who has overdosed and disputes between roommates or significant others. The list goes on.

For this work, the resident assistant receives “free” room and board. While they may receive room and board, in today’s complicated maze of financing college education — where a year of tuition, room and board are in the

range of \$80,000 and financial aid counselors have master’s degrees — things are not as simple as free room and board. For example, after the student applies to the school they may be offered, if they qualify, a “need-based” grant of 100 percent of tuition, room and board. Often this commitment from the school is what influences the student to enroll in a particular school. What’s more, the school often conditions this financial aid on the student’s commitment to become a resident assistant.

Sometime after becoming a resident assistant, the student receives the financial statement from the school. What they notice is the \$80,000 need-based grant that led them to enroll at the school has been reduced by the imputed value of the room and board, frequently between \$14,000 and \$17,000 per year, and the resident assistant does not receive actual wage compensation for the work.

By now you must be asking, are these people working for free? Sometimes it seems like that.

By joining your union these students are now negotiating with their university employers. Some of them have had to strike to change their workplace. Because they joined the union, their new union contracts provide meal allowances and a weekly stipend, benefits they did not have before.

Importantly, resident assistants have embraced strong union values and demonstrated they understand the importance of having a union and voice on the job, voting overwhelmingly pro-union in all OPEIU’s recent university elections.

This is an exciting time for working people in many different occupations.

***We are excited to organize on college campuses because we know... as students graduate and go into the workforce, they take with them an education and positive experience with unions.***

# The State of Our Unions is Strong

Union popularity is at modern highs among American voters. Notably, a record-breaking 88 percent of young workers under 30 view unions favorably, according to recent polling.

With this unprecedented level of support working people in unions — including OPEIU — are prepared to organize like never before, holding big corporations accountable and restoring America’s promise for all working families.

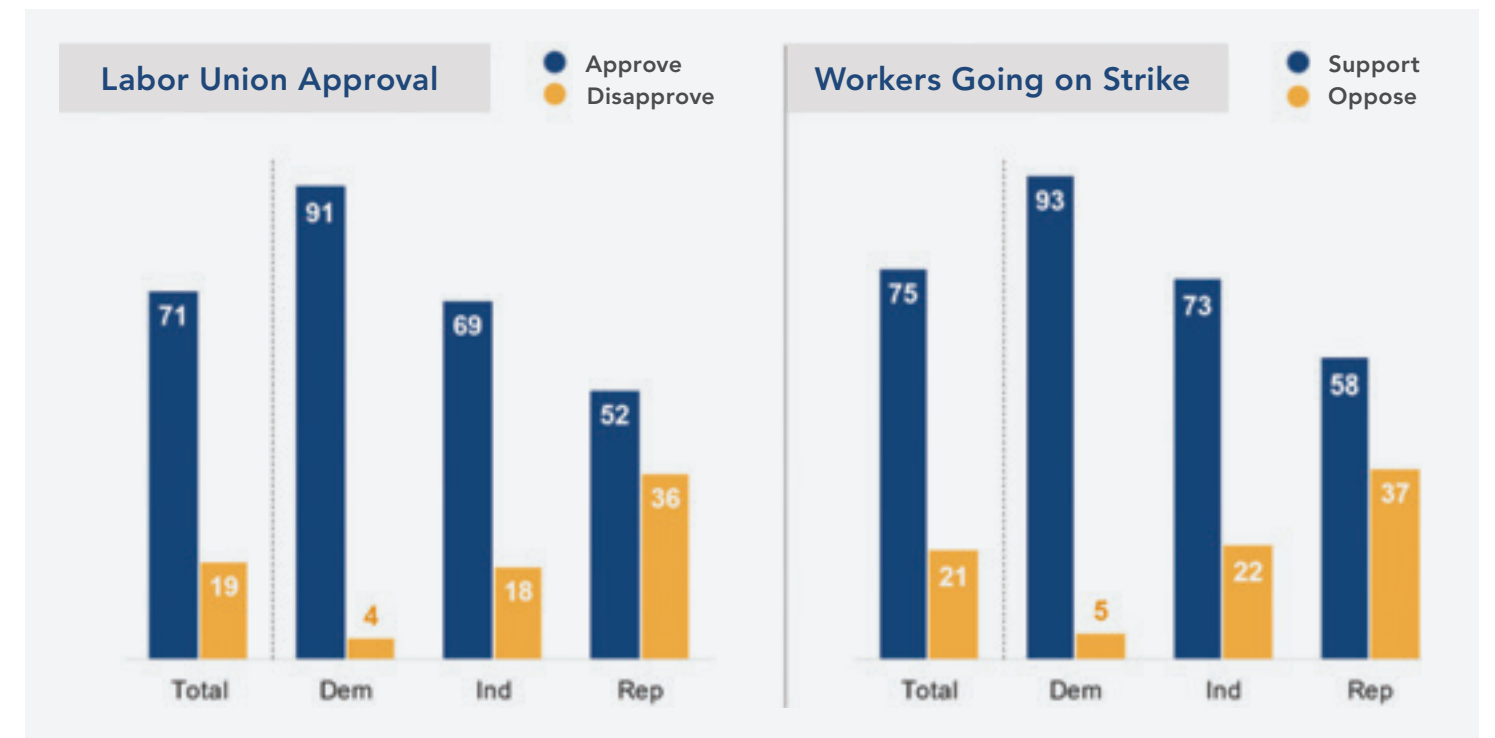
An overwhelming majority of voters support unions, according to an August poll commissioned by the AFL-CIO. Seventy percent of voters approve of labor unions, the poll revealed, with support transcending party lines. Majorities of Democrats (91 percent), Independents (69 percent) and Republicans (52 percent) report favorable opinions of unions.

The numbers are even stronger when the participants were asked about strikes. Seventy-five percent of those polled, regardless of party affiliation, support “workers going on strike to negotiate for better wages, benefits and working conditions.” Democrats (93 percent), Independents (73 percent) and Republicans (58 percent) report favorable views of strikes.

The poll also identified areas of concern for working people. Americans are concerned about tech companies putting profits over the well-being of people in the implementation of artificial intelligence (AI), with 70 percent expressing concern that AI will displace workers. Women workers are especially concerned given AI’s potential to exacerbate inequity on the job.

The poll, conducted by GBAO, surveyed 1,200 registered voters as thousands of workers across the country were on strike and making headlines, including thousands of OPEIU members.

“People are recognizing the strength that comes with joining together in a union,” said Richard Lanigan, OPEIU president. “OPEIU is committed to bringing that strength to all working people, organizing in new and exciting industries.”

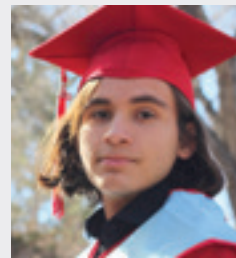


SOURCE: GBAO FOR AFL-CIO

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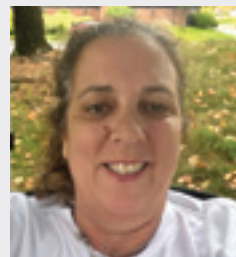
**On the Cover:** After a historic three-day strike, Kaiser Permanente health care workers — including thousands of OPEIU members — secured a new agreement that includes unprecedented wage increases and takes strong steps to address the staffing crisis at facilities throughout the country. Read more about the agreement in the cover story on page 10.



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**Since 1978 CEO Pay Has Soared 1,200 Percent**

While top CEO compensation skyrocketed a staggering 1,209 percent in the past four decades, typical workers' pay rose only 15.3 percent during that same time, a new report from the Economic Policy Institute (EPI) reveals.

The EPI's report, released in September, looks at the long-term rise of CEO pay relative to the pay of workers. EPI's key findings illustrate how the ultra-wealthy have worked together to increase their pay at the expense of working people.

These findings are important. A higher pay ratio could mean "companies suffer from a winner-take-all philosophy, where executives reap the lion's share of compensation. A lower pay ratio could indicate the companies dedicated to creating high-wage jobs and investing in their employees for the company's long-term health," said the AFL-CIO about the findings.

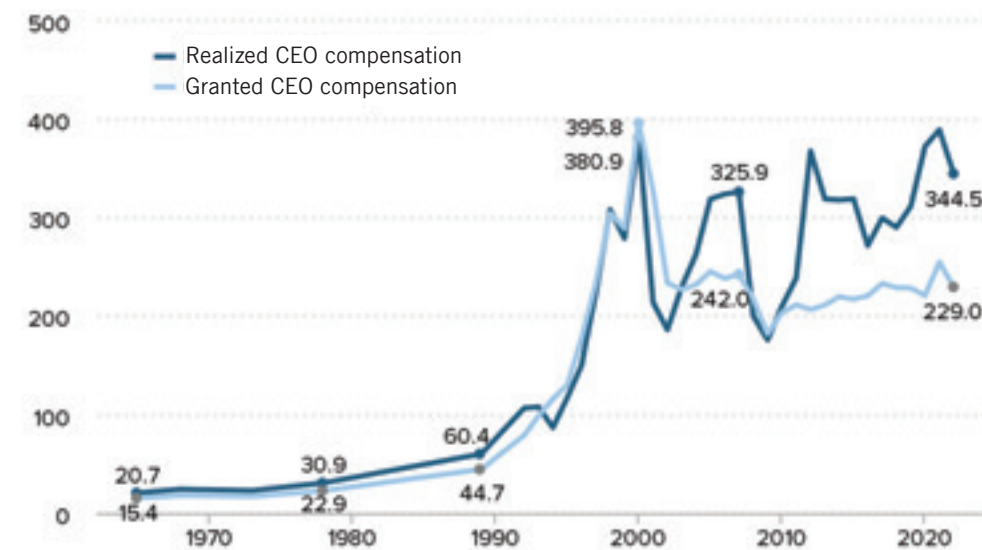
The report examined 1978 to 2022. CEO pay declined slightly in 2022, the report notes, because the bulk of CEOs are paid in stock. Despite market declines, however, the top 350 CEOs are still taking home 344 times what the average worker earns.

The AFL-CIO's annual CEO Paywatch report echoed the EPI's findings. Their research, which can be found at [aflcio.org/paywatch](https://aflcio.org/paywatch) or by scanning the QR code, showed hourly wages for workers fell behind inflation in 2022 for the second year in a row. The average S&P 500 CEO earned \$16.7 million in 2022, the second highest level ever recorded.

The report also highlighted how corporations are implementing artificial intelligence into their businesses, with the potential of huge job losses and an increase to the existing, significant income inequality. To protect our jobs, rights and futures, workers must lead the way. Unions help close the wage gap and can negotiate how artificial intelligence will be used.

**CEOs make 344 times as much as typical workers**

CEO-to-worker compensation ratio, 1965–2022



**Notes:** Average annual compensation for CEOs is 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 to read the AFL-CIO's annual CEO Paywatch report.

Adapted from Figure A in Josh Bivens and Jori Kandra, *CEO Pay Slightly Declined in 2022: But It Has Soared 1,209.2% Since 1978 Compared With a 15.3% Rise in Typical Workers' Pay*, Economic Policy Institute, September 2023.



# Congrats to OPEIU Scholarship Winners

Congratulations to recipients of the 2023 OPEIU Scholarships. OPEIU awards numerous scholarships annually to further the education of members and their families. All are encouraged to apply.

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

The John Kelly Labor Studies Scholarship awards up to eight scholarships of up to \$3,250 each to members pursuing a degree in labor studies, industrial relations or union leadership and administration.

## Howard Coughlin Memorial Scholarship: Full-Time Winners



**Ryan Milne**  
DAG 2007A  
Region I



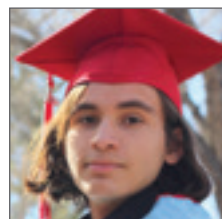
**Emylee Gellar**  
Local 6  
Region II



**Joseph Hayes**  
Local 153  
Region II



**Eliot Weizman**  
Local 100  
Region III



**Anthony Maestas**  
Local 251  
Region IV



**Samantha Ouk**  
Local 30  
Region V



**Benjamin Vu**  
Local 537  
Region V



**Jordan Sands**  
Local 11  
Region VI



**Hailey Rademacher**  
Local 39  
Region VII



**Hannah Hayes**  
Local 459  
Region VII



**Dyannah Vallesteros**  
Local 50  
Region VIII



Scan the QR code to learn more about all OPEIU scholarship opportunities, or visit [opeiu.org](https://opeiu.org) and click the Member Resources tab. Your OPEIU Membership Benefits information can also be found on the OPEIU app, available for free download for iPhones on the App Store and for Android devices on Google Play by searching **OPEIU**.

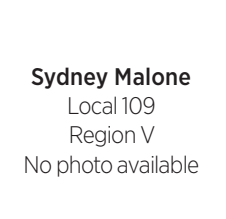
## Howard Coughlin Memorial Scholarship: Part-Time Winners



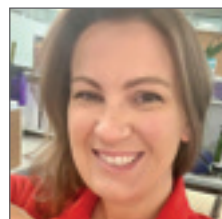
**Jennifer Grimes**  
Local 2  
Region II



**Juanice Johnson**  
Local 4873  
Region III



**Sydney Malone**  
Local 109  
Region V  
No photo available



**Rachel Dear**  
Local 512  
Region VII

## John Kelly Labor Studies Scholarship



**Ranjee Rajkumar**  
Local 153  
Region II



**Danielle Hirano**  
Local 8  
Region VI

Applications for 2024 scholarships will be posted in January at [opeiu.org](https://opeiu.org).

# OPEIU Family Members Win Union Plus Scholarships

Five OPEIU family members are among the 205 students representing 41 unions who were awarded \$200,000 in 2023 Union Plus Scholarships to attend university, college and trade or technical schools.

**Madeline Rose Baumann**, whose mother, Samantha Connolly, is a recently retired member of Local 2 (Region II), was awarded a \$2,000 scholarship. Baumann, of Silver Spring, Maryland, plans to major in kinesiology or exercise science at the University of Michigan, Penn State University or the University of South Carolina. She wants to become a physical therapist and hopes to work with underserved communities.



*Madeline Rose Baumann*

Baumann is a clinic instructor with Montgomery County Lacrosse, an organization that introduces the sport to lower-income communities through free clinics and equipment. She was especially thankful for the medical benefits afforded her family through her mother's OPEIU membership while her father overcame cancer. "My family will forever be grateful we had union-provided health care so we could be there for my dad without constantly worrying about finances," Baumann said.

Sisters **Hamel and Nuhamin Haile**, whose mother, Samrawit Tekle, is a member of Local 2, have each been awarded a \$525 scholarship.

Hamel is a political science and community health major at Tufts University and expects to graduate in May 2025. She is studying abroad for the 2023-24 academic year with the University College London political science department and, in the spring, with a

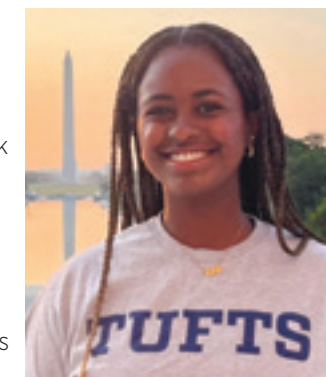
community health program in Buenos Aires, Argentina. She hopes to be accepted into the Tufts School of Medicine Juris Doctor/Master of Public Health dual degree program.

Nuhamin will major in neuroscience at Tufts and hopes to participate in the university's research programs. She volunteered at the Tikur Anbessa Specialized Hospital in conjunction with the Addis Ababa (Ethiopia) University



*Hamel Haile*

College of Health Sciences last summer. She learned the value of her pharmacist mother's OPEIU membership when a change in management led to a difficult work environment. "OPEIU negotiated with management on [my mother's] behalf and advocated for better working conditions," Nuhamin said. "Due to the ample resources OPEIU provided, she was able to adjust to a new boss in a different location where she now flourishes as a pharmacist."



*Nuhamin Haile*



*Jasmine Katherine Peck*



*Trinity Vang*

Also awarded \$500 scholarships were **Jasmine Katherine Peck**, whose mother, Cindy Passow, is a member of Local 9 (Region VII), and **Trinity Vang**, whose mother, Mai Yang, is a former member of Local 39 (Region VII).

The Union Plus Scholarship Program awards scholarships based on outstanding academic achievement, personal character, financial need and commitment to the values of organized labor. Union Plus scholarships are granted to students attending a two-year college, four-year college, graduate school or a recognized technical or trade school.



Applications for the 2024 Union Plus Scholarships are now available. The deadline to apply is Jan. 31, 2024. Visit [unionplus.org/scholarship](https://unionplus.org/scholarship) or scan the QR code for applications and benefit eligibility.



# Joe Biden’s Pro-Worker Record Earns Him OPEIU Endorsement for Re-Election

OPEIU has endorsed Joseph R. Biden Jr. for re-election as president of the United States. OPEIU conducted a union-wide survey of its members to democratically determine its endorsement with Biden receiving the most support.



OPEIU endorses Joe Biden for re-election. The endorsement process was guided by a survey of OPEIU members.

“Our member survey indicates OPEIU members know Joe Biden is the most pro-worker president in our lifetime,” said OPEIU President Richard Lanigan. “Biden’s record as president over the past three years clearly demonstrates he understands and prioritizes the needs of working families.

“Time and time again, Biden has delivered for working families, from making historic investment in good jobs and rebuilding the nation’s infrastructure, to launching initiatives at OSHA to improve workplace safety and strengthening the right to organize,” Lanigan continued.

OPEIU members have told us they want to continue the progress made by the Biden-Harris administration on behalf of working people.

OPEIU is committed to advancing the interests of our members by rebuilding the middle class, fighting for racial justice and equality and protecting working people’s right to join unions and collectively bargain. Together we can improve the economy and provide opportunities for everyone, not just the wealthy. The records of Biden and his presumptive opponent, Donald Trump, show Biden is the only candidate who shares those values and vision for America’s future.

Presidential endorsements are determined by a majority vote of the OPEIU Executive Board, which consists of vice presidents representing all regions throughout the U.S., after careful consideration of the candidates’ positions on key issues of importance to OPEIU members. Since 2020, OPEIU has used an open, member-driven process to guide presidential endorsements. This year, the largest group of respondents supported Biden over other declared candidates.

OPEIU endorsed Biden for election in 2020 believing he would put workers first. Biden’s first term proved the endorsement was well-placed.

**“Our member survey indicates OPEIU members know Joe Biden is the most pro-worker president in our lifetime.”**

– Richard Lanigan,  
OPEIU president

## The Record is Clear

On issues that matter to working people, the two presumptive nominees could not be further apart in terms of policy and administration.

ISSUES	BIDEN	TRUMP
<b>THE NATIONAL LABOR RELATIONS BOARD</b>	Appointees have strengthened workers’ rights, removed roadblocks <sup>1</sup> and made it easier for working people to form a union <sup>2</sup>	Appointees have made it easier for employers to make unilateral changes, <sup>3</sup> lessened employers’ duty to provide information <sup>4</sup> and limited workers’ rights to wear union insignia at work <sup>5</sup>
<b>RAISING THE MINIMUM WAGE</b>	Supports raising the federal minimum wage to \$15/hour <sup>6</sup> and has taken steps to implement a \$15/hour minimum wage for all federal contractors	Opposes increasing the federal minimum wage above \$7.25/hour
<b>THE PROTECTING THE RIGHT TO ORGANIZE (PRO) ACT</b>	Pledged to sign the PRO Act into law and has pressured Congress to send it to his desk	Pledged to veto the PRO Act if it reached his desk <sup>7</sup>
<b>MAKING THE WEALTHY PAY THEIR FAIR SHARE</b>	Supports higher taxes on the ultra-wealthy to fund essential programs, such as Medicare <sup>8</sup>	Signed a \$1.9 trillion tax bill favoring corporations and the ultra-wealthy, shifting the burden to working people <sup>9</sup>
<b>OSHA</b>	Launched initiatives at OSHA to improve workplace safety and protect millions of workers suffering from heat exhaustion <sup>10</sup>	Cut the number of federal workplace safety inspectors to their lowest level in history <sup>11</sup>

<sup>1</sup> National Labor Relations Board Issues Final Rule to Restore Fair and Efficient Procedures for Union Elections, National Labor Relations Board (nlrb.gov)

<sup>2</sup> Board Issues Decision Announcing New Framework for Union Representation Proceedings, National Labor Relations Board (nlrb.gov); NLRB Paves Way for Workers to Unionize without Formal Elections (reuters.com)

<sup>3</sup> MV Transportation Inc., 368 NLRB No. 66 (Sept. 10, 2019)

<sup>4</sup> Palace Station Hotel and Casino, 368 NLRB No. 148 (Dec. 16, 2019)

<sup>5</sup> Walmart Stores, Inc., 368 NLRB No. 146 (Dec. 16, 2019)

<sup>6</sup> FACT SHEET: Background on President Biden’s Remarks on the Economy During His First State of the Union Address (whitehouse.gov);

FACT SHEET: President Biden Announces New Actions to Protect Workers and Communities from Extreme Heat (whitehouse.gov)

<sup>7</sup> Trump is Trying to Bamboozle Union Workers; He Won’t Succeed (thehill.com)

<sup>8</sup> Biden Calls for Tax on the Wealthy to Extend Medicare Funding (cnbc.com)

<sup>9</sup> The TCJA 2 Years Later: Corporations, Not Workers, Are the Big Winners (americanprogress.org)

<sup>10</sup> FACT SHEET: President Biden Announces New Actions to Protect Workers and Communities from Extreme Heat (whitehouse.gov)

<sup>11</sup> How Trump Gutted OSHA and Workplace Safety Rules (theintercept.com)



# More Than 85,000 Kaiser Permanente Health Care Workers, Including Thousands of OPEIU Members, Win Landmark New Contract

On the heels of the largest health care workers strike in United States history, a contract was reached providing critical workforce investments that will bolster patient care.

More than 85,000 Kaiser Permanente health care workers reached a historic tentative agreement Oct. 13 for a new contract bolstering patient safety and making critical investments in the health care workforce at hundreds of Kaiser facilities across the country. OPEIU Locals 2 (Region II; Maryland/District of Columbia/Virginia), 8 (Region VI; Washington State), 29 (Region V; Oakland), 30 (Region V; San Diego) and 50 (Region VIII; Hawaii) represent approximately 12,000 Kaiser health care workers within the Coalition of Kaiser Permanente Unions (CKPU).

The agreement includes 21 percent across-the-board raises for all regions: 6 percent in October, and then 5 percent in each of the last three years of the contract—the largest raise package in the history of the Kaiser Labor/Management Partnership. There is also a \$1,500 ratification bonus for all workers.

Approximately 75,000 Kaiser health care workers held an unfair labor practice strike Oct. 4-7. The actions, led by workers across multiple states and in Washington, D.C., constituted the largest strike of health care workers in U.S. history. On Oct. 9, coalition unions issued a second 10-day notice for a strike that would have commenced Nov. 1 and included an additional 3,000 health care workers in Seattle.

Acting U.S. Labor Secretary Julie Su was instrumental in advancing the negotiations. “What the parties have achieved here in Oakland demonstrates, once again, that collective bargaining works. When workers have a voice and a seat at the table, it can result in historic gains for workers, their employer and our country,” Su said. “The president and I congratulate the parties on reaching a mutually beneficial deal that delivers important stability for this critical workforce, for Kaiser Permanente and for the patients in their collective care.”

The landmark deal follows months of tireless advocacy from thousands of front line health care workers, many of whom characterized the contract as life-changing for them and life-saving for their patients.

“Good news to hear positive developments in collective bargaining with Kaiser Permanente, especially when it involves addressing staffing shortfalls and concerns and protecting jobs,” said Tamara R. Rubyn, president/business manager of Local 29 and an International vice president. “Contracts like these not only ensure health care workers are well supported but also help maintain the quality of care for patients. Enhanced benefits will attract new workers and create a more stable and attractive environment for those considering a career in health care. It is truly a win-win situation!”

“The OPEIU Executive Board, Secretary-Treasurer Mary Mahoney and myself salute you for standing up and supporting your fellow members, your local unions and your local union leadership,” said OPEIU President Richard Lanigan. “Your courageous action when it mattered most proved to be of great impact on the final outcome of a contract that sets a new national standard for health care employees and will be referred to for years to come.”

CKPU represents 85,000 Kaiser health care workers in seven states and the District of Columbia. In April, the coalition began its national bargaining process ahead of the Sept. 30 contract expiration. The coalition and Kaiser Permanente had last negotiated a contract in 2019, before health care workers found themselves on the front lines of the Covid pandemic, which worsened working conditions and exacerbated a health care staffing crisis.

Kaiser members began voting to ratify the agreement Oct. 18.

## Details of the tentative agreement with Kaiser Permanente include:

- **Addressing the staffing crisis** by raising wages 21 percent over four years to better retain current health care workers
- **Establishing a new health care worker minimum wage** of \$25 per hour in California and \$23 per hour in other states where Kaiser Permanente operates
- **Protective terms around subcontracting and outsourcing**, which will keep experienced health care workers in jobs and provide strong continuity of care for patients
- **A variety of initiatives to invest in the workforce** and address the staffing crisis, including streamlining hiring practices, increased training and education funding, mass hiring events and a commitment to upskill existing workers and invest in the training of future health care workers



OPEIU Locals 2, 29 and 30 members on the strike line in early October. The largest health care worker strike in U.S. history resulted in a historic contract for more than 85,000 workers.





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## Steward Spotlight

# Stewardship in a ‘Right-to-Work’ State



By Katrina Schaez  
Union Liaison/  
Head Steward  
Kaiser Permanente  
Northern Virginia  
Local 2 (Region II)

Twenty-seven states currently have “right-to-work” laws in effect. So-called right-to-work laws are designed to weaken union power, lowering wages and making workers worse off in the process.

My state, Virginia, is one of them. As one of four head stewards covering 14 of Kaiser Permanente’s Northern Virginia facilities, I have seen firsthand how an engaged team of stewards can boost membership and help organize a stronger union in a right-to-work state. In my 17 years as a steward, I have learned some thoughtful strategies and processes that help us be the strongest union we can be.

Our union always ensures new employees receive a full copy of the current contract so they can reference it at any time and learn its ins and outs. During the new employee orientation process, our union has the right to meet with new employees. We provide summaries of benefits we have collectively bargained for, discuss attendance policies, provide union materials and offer an electronic membership card.

Importantly, as a shop with a 90-day probationary period, we make sure to touch base with new hires throughout that process, ensuring they know about their rights and the protections a union affords once they complete that period and become full members. The follow-up process is essential to our efforts and has helped our union continue to grow by attracting new members.

It is also critical to ensure non-members have the chance to join the union to make their voice heard on issues impacting the workplace. In 2019, a strike vote at our facility prompted a record number of new members to join. They signed a union card to have a say. Most have continued to stay members because they recognize the value and security stemming from a union card. A flashpoint moment like a strike vote is energizing and serves to engage members and non-members alike.

Stewards are a lifeline and resource for members and can also play a significant role in internal organizing. Especially in right-to-work states, it is crucial for stewards to develop strategies, methods and processes that work to better the workplace by strengthening their union.

## What is a ‘Right-to-Work’ Law?

Do not be fooled by the positive sounding name: “right-to-work” laws are just lies dressed up in a feel-good slogan.

Right-to-work does not give workers freedom; instead, it weakens our right to join together and bargain for better wages and working conditions. Its end goal is to destroy unions.

Numbers do not lie. **Workers in states with right-to-work laws have wages that are 12 percent lower.** That is because unions raise wages for all workers, not just our members.

Workers have a right to join unions, and our nation’s laws should strengthen, not weaken, those rights!



## Local 50 Strike at O'ahu Care Facility Leads to Contracts

Registered nurses and certified nursing assistants at O'ahu Care Facility fought for and ratified new contracts after months of bargaining with their employer, Pacific Skilled Healthcare.



Local 50-represented registered nurses and certified nursing assistants picket the O'ahu Care Facility.

Following years of wages falling far behind other nursing homes, O'ahu Care Facility (OCF) was extremely short staffed, said Hawai'i Nurses' Association/OPEIU Local 50 (Region VIII) President Dan Ross, RN. Workers saw contract negotiations as an opportunity to work with management to address stagnant wages and the growing staffing crisis endangering patient care.

Management was unwilling to meet the workers' demands at the bargaining table, however, pushing the nurses and certified nursing assistants to vote to authorize a strike. "They went on a week-long strike in July to show their bosses and our community something had to change at OCF," Ross said.

"The support received from the community was overwhelming," Ross continued. "The strike was covered in every major Hawai'i news outlet. Union siblings, legislators and community members bolstered the strike line every day. Hundreds signed a petition in support of workers' demands. After returning to the table, the members won their demands. The same wins were also carried over to sister facility Kulana Malama in Ewa Beach."

The contracts include nurse wage increases of 15-21 percent and certified nursing assistants wage increases of 21-29 percent during the life of the contracts, among many other significant wins.

"The victory shows when workers are organized, committed and willing to take action, they win," Ross said. "It is a victory for the dignity of health care workers, patient care and for working people in Hawai'i."

## Code for America Members Ratify First Contract

OPEIU Tech Workers Union Local 1010 members at Code for America (CfA) voted Oct. 27 to ratify their first union contract, effective through December 2025.

The agreement addresses many of CfA Workers United's priorities, including annual wage increases, just cause protections, additional family leave pay, grievance procedures and limits on subcontracting.

Workers at the civic tech nonprofit won recognition of their union with Local 1010 in August 2021. CfA, based in San Francisco, partners with state governments across the United States to create digital solutions that help administer government benefits in an accessible way.

The contract also allows CfA Workers United to engage new members as part of the new employee onboarding process, includes protections against intrusive monitoring and features a pathway for a reduced workweek if any of CfA's state partners pass legislation to that effect.

## Local 8 Holds Membership Assembly

Twice a year, members of Local 8 (Region VI) from around Washington State come together to conduct important union business at Membership Assemblies. This year, Local 8 reports they were glad to return to in-person meetings, where members nominated candidates for elected leadership positions on the executive board, nominated and elected delegates to labor bodies, such as central labor councils, and voted on updates to policies, resolutions and the constitution and bylaws.

In September, the assembly met in Yakima in central Washington to carry out the important work of a democratic union. The assembly adopted resolutions continuing support of member participation with the Washington State Labor Council's Race to Labor "Train the Trainer" program, and on Intentional Language for Intentional Action to Develop Diverse Leadership. The



Local 8's Membership Assembly in Yakima, Washington.

assembly also heard reports from members representing the union at important conventions this year, including the Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance (APALA), the Labor Council for Latin American Advancement (LCLAA) and the 29th OPEIU Convention. There was also fundraising to support Local 8's hardship fund and political action committee.

## Tufts Resident Assistants Overwhelmingly Ratify First Contract

Resident assistants (RAs) at Tufts University in Boston, represented by Local 153 (Region II), voted 95-4 to ratify their first contract in late September.

"This is a strong victory, and it shows the power organizing a union has," said David Whittingham, an RA and senior at the university. "Thanks to our collective effort we won a real voice over our jobs, and we will now be better able to pay for school and do the best job we can for our residents."

The contract addresses RAs' main priorities, including staffing issues, compensation and improving economic and food security for RAs, who are often first-generation college students. The agreement introduces a \$1,425 per semester stipend, full housing, 80 meals per semester and minimum staffing ratios.

"We have been grateful for the support of OPEIU throughout this process, and we are proud to have joined a wave of labor activism among young people that only continues to grow," Whittingham said. "We look forward to ensuring the contract is enforced effectively, and we hope other RA units across the country will meet, or even surpass, the standard we've set here."

On move-in day in late August, more than 100 RAs at the university went on a one-day strike to protest unfair labor practices, garnering substantial local news coverage and building leverage at the bargaining table by demonstrating how important RAs are to campus life. The strike proved successful, pressuring the university at the bargaining table.

"Without our collective actions, we would not have won this historic contract," said Anisha Uppal-Sullivan, an RA in her junior year. "Our ability to come together as a unit made it possible to win concessions from the university they were completely opposed to before. The strike made it possible for us to win economic stability, food safety and a better work-life balance for our unit."

The agreement is the second-ever of its kind for resident assistants at a private university. The first, at Wesleyan University in Connecticut, was ratified in December 2022 in a 40-0 vote. Both groups are represented by Local 153 in New York.



Tufts resident assistants conduct a successful one-day strike.

## University of Pennsylvania RAs Join Local 153



University of Pennsylvania resident advisors rally.

Undergraduate resident advisors at the University of Pennsylvania overwhelmingly voted 144-22 in support of joining Local 153 (Region II) in late September.

Resident advisors at the Philadelphia-based Ivy League university began organizing earlier this year to address low wages and understaffing. Student workers stayed united in their fight for a union despite repeated delay tactics by the university. An April rally on campus drew substantial support from local elected officials, student groups and community allies.

Bargaining is expected to begin soon.



## Food Service Workers at Eglin Air Force Base Join Local 4873

Lightning Dining Facility’s contract food service employees at Eglin Air Force Base in the western Florida Panhandle, represented by Industrial Technical Professional Employees Union (ITPEU)/OPEIU Local 4873 (Region III), have signed a first contract, which includes significant wage increases and the introduction of two ITPEU multiemployer plans.

“It took nearly a year from start to finish to reach a first contract,” said John Brenton IV, secretary-treasurer of Local 4873. “There were delays on the election, difficulties with the mail-in ballots, charges that hung on the NLRB docket for an inordinate period, among other delays.

“It was an emotional rollercoaster. Without a solid organizing committee maintaining contact and sharing information to give hope to the unit, this would not have been a success,” Brenton continued. “Executing an agreement that includes solid protections, grievance procedures, seniority rights, substantial wage increases and two new multiemployer plans was a day I felt might never come. But it is a day that changed the course of history for the 28 employees at Lightning.”

Local 4873 President Dennis R. Arrington, who also serves as an International vice president, said the group should be proud for standing together and fighting for their union and a fair contract.



*ITPEU/OPEIU Local 4873 members at the Lightning Dining Facility at Eglin Air Force Base.*

## VP Valles Addresses National Latina Equal Pay Summit

Lupe Valles, president and business manager of Local 174 (Region V), was among the union leaders addressing the National Latina Equal Pay Summit, held this fall in Los Angeles.

Valles, an International vice president, led a panel discussion on The Union Difference for Latinas: Amplifying Voices, Advancing Rights.

“The harsh reality is at every educational level and across all industries, Latinas earn less than their non-Latino male counterparts,” Valles said.

“It is important to organize. This is what unions do for us,” Valles continued. “As an International representative, organizer and vice president, I’m at the table fighting for equality for all of us.”

The event led up to Latina Equal Pay Day, held Oct. 5, and gave Latinas and Latine community members and allies across industries the opportunity to come together to demand equal pay for equal work for all people. Participants confronted the systems causing the pay gap and addressed how unions can help combat that gap and support Latinas in the workplace.

A demonstration was also held to push for better working conditions for Latinas and all working people at Warner Bros. Studios in Burbank. Local 174 represents employees at the studio.

Hispanic or Latina women earn 52 cents to every dollar paid to white, non-Hispanic men. The pay gap is often wider for immigrants, LGBTQIA+ Latinas and Afrolatinas. Oct. 5 was the symbolic day when a Hispanic or Latina woman’s earnings “caught up” to a man’s earnings from the previous year.

The event was hosted by Justice for Migrant Women, the Labor Council for Latin American Advancement (LCLAA), and Equal Pay Day, a project of Equal Rights Advocates. Valles serves as OPEIU’s representative to the LCLAA National Executive Board.



*International Vice President and Local 174 President and Business Manager Lupe Valles, far left, leads a panel discussion at the National Latina Equal Pay Summit. Also pictured are, left to right, Chelsea Rendon, an actor and SAG-AFTRA strike captain at Warner Bros.; Ana Bergeron, RN staff representative and member at the United Nurses Associations of California/Union of Health Care Professionals; and Lucero Ramirez, a housekeeper at the Waldorf Astoria and member of UNITE HERE Local 11.*

## OPEIU Members are Unsung Heroes of the UAW Strike

OPEIU members working for United Auto Workers (UAW) Local 900 are support staff heroes, ensuring the autoworkers’ strike at the Ford Michigan Assembly Plant in Wayne ran as smoothly as possible. As UAW members vote on the tentative agreement with Ford, we recognize the OPEIU support staff — represented by OPEIU Local 42 (Region VII) — who played a crucial role in sustaining the strike and ensuring its success.

“These dedicated individuals have been the backbone of this historic strike, working tirelessly to organize, communicate and provide critical and essential services to the striking workers,” said Local 42 President Lisa Blake, who also serves as an International vice president. “They are proud of their UAW union family who have fought for a fair contract and are impressed by the solidarity they have witnessed.”

Throughout the strike, the support staff were responsible for bookkeeping and communication, ensuring striking workers were well-informed and connected and their message was conveyed to the world. They also managed logistics and coordination, no small feat for such a large-scale strike. From arranging picket assignments to ordering supplies for striking workers, support staff ensured the strike ran smoothly and workers were well taken care of.

“When UAW President Shawn Fain announced the first UAW locals to hit the streets and stand up for their UAW brothers and sisters, UAW Local 900 was one of the first to be selected,” Blake said. “Two OPEIU sisters, Carmen Duda and Leah Shawanibin, have been key to the success at UAW Local 900. These two OPEIU members have more than 50 years of experience combined, and they deserve recognition for the hard work they do day in and day out for their employer.

“Throughout the strike, they worked closely with UAW local union leadership to help craft strategies, type proposals and find common threads,” Blake continued. “Their expertise was invaluable during critical moments.”

Duda and Shawanibin have been Local 42 members for several decades. “We are here to support the workers, to make sure their voices are heard, and to help them



*Local 42 members Leah Shawanibin, left, and Carmen Duda.*

achieve fair and just conditions,” Duda said, who has worked for UAW Locals 900 and 735 for 44 years.

“Our role may not be as visible as that of the striking autoworkers, but we are equally dedicated to the cause,” Shawanibin added, who has worked for UAW Local 900 for 22 years.

The UAW strike, which began Oct. 14, resulted in a tentative agreement that will mean significant wage increases, improved working conditions and job security.

“The tireless efforts of the OPEIU support staff remind us there are often unsung heroes working behind the scenes to bring about change and ensure the voices of workers are heard. Their dedication and hard work are a testament to the strength of the labor movement in America,” Blake said.

## Local 251 Holds Steward Training at Florence Project



*Local 251 officers with new stewards at the Florence Immigrant & Refugee Rights Project are, front row, left to right, Anthony Trujillo, Yesenia Ramales-Ferguson, Laura Belous, Lex Salas-Villa, back row, Local 251 Vice President Phyllis Rutka, Natalie Cadwalader-Schultheis (alternate), Teresa Flores, Judy Flanagan, Cindy Flores, Alvaro Perez-Gonzalez (alternate) and Local 251 President Kelley Allen.*

Employees at the Florence Immigrant & Refugee Rights Project (FIRRP), represented by Local 251 (Region IV), elected seven stewards and two alternate stewards through a fair and democratic process. The team then held a two-day training with 100 percent participation for the new stewards at FIRRP’s office in Phoenix. The new stewards represent more than 100 employees at FIRRP.

“We spent the first day of training discussing the importance of new employee orientation and the next discussing the roles and duties of shop stewards,” said Kelley Allen, Local 251 president. “The group did amazing work creating shareable folders and a new grievance log, and learning how to interview members and investigate grievances. It was a terrific experience!”

FIRRP employees organized in November 2021, securing their first contract in May 2023.



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## Local 106's Gemma Moran Spent Her Long Life Feeding Those in Need



Local 106 retired member Gemma Moran, who passed away in May, dedicated her life to feeding those in need.

Longtime Local 106 (Region II) member and activist Gemma Moran spent her long life ensuring those in her community never went hungry.

Moran, founder of the Gemma E. Moran United Way/Labor Food Center in New London, Connecticut, passed away at the age of 99 in May. A member of Local 106 from 1991 until her retirement from the United Way in 2008, Moran "almost single-handedly changed the way food is distributed to the needy in southeastern Connecticut," remarked *The Day*, a newspaper based in New London, in a tribute.

"Help those in need," Moran once told the publication. "Don't sit back and do nothing... the key to living is giving."

"Since 1988, the Gemma E. Moran United Way/Labor Food Center has played a key role in providing one of the building blocks to a good quality of life by feeding families and individuals facing hunger and food insecurity all across our community," reported the United Way of Southeastern Connecticut.

Moran was the youngest of 14 children whose parents emigrated from Naples, Italy to Massachusetts in the late 1800s. After graduating high school, Moran worked at Eastern Gas and Fuel Associates Coal and Coke plant. The conditions she experienced there helped shape her future as a labor leader and advocate for workers' rights.

In the 1940s, Moran became a labor liaison with the United Way in Boston and worked on the first campaign to elect John F. Kennedy to the United States Senate. From 1973 until 1991, she worked at the United Way of Southeastern Connecticut, serving as a vital link between its programs and the working people of her community.

"Through her work as a labor liaison and referral agent, Gemma saw the needs in the community firsthand," reported the United Way. "Gemma applied for a venture grant and received \$5,000 in a one-time start-up fund to establish a food center for the region, to support displaced or financially distressed workers. In 1988, the Gemma E. Moran United Way/Labor Food Center became a reality in partnership with the AFL-CIO local unions and with the help of numerous volunteers."

What began with just a few member pantries has now grown to 68 member agencies that are part of the local emergency food system to feed those in need. It is the largest food center in the region, servicing 20,000 people a month and distributing 1.8 million meals annually.

"[We are] devastated over the recent passing of the beloved Gemma Moran. Gemma was truly an inspiration for our community," said Dina Sears-Graves, president and CEO of the United Way of Southeastern Connecticut, and "a reminder that one person can inspire others to act and make lasting community change."

## Guild 45 President Mattiacci Receives Equity, Inclusion Award



John Mattiacci, DPM, right, with APMA Trustee William Long, DPM.

John Mattiacci, DPM, president of the First National Guild for Healthcare Providers of the Lower Extremity/OPEIU Guild 45 (Region II), was awarded the "Equity and Inclusion Hero Award" for outstanding contribution to the field of podiatry by the American Podiatric Medical Association (APMA).

"We must cultivate a climate that promotes diversity, equity and inclusion," Dr. Mattiacci said when accepting the award. "We must begin to equally evaluate the diverse perspectives and ideas shared by all people from different culture and life experiences."

"We must, as leaders, place sufficient emphasis on hiring diverse faculty and staff," continued Mattiacci, who serves as dean of the Temple University School of Podiatric Medicine in Philadelphia. He is also an International vice president.

"At every level of leadership, it should be the goal of leaders to reach out and afford the opportunity for advancement in the choice of their respective vocations," he said.



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from OPEIU**

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