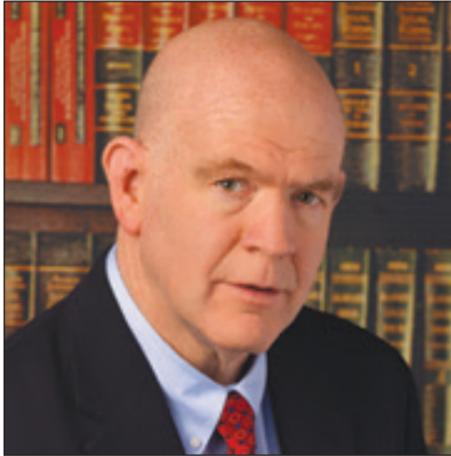


**ON  
THE  
MOVE!**

**Organizing and Building Power  
for All Working People**



## Striking to Level the Playing Field

By Richard Lanigan  
President

In the early 1980s, the federal government decertified the air traffic controllers' union, known as PATCO, after it went on strike. Unions, which for a long time led the way in improving living standards, saw the federal government tip the scales of power toward the employer. The same tactic became a model used by employers in private-sector collective bargaining for years.

Employers used the threat of striker replacement to increase their leverage at the bargaining table, resulting in driving labor costs down. As the number of strikes decreased, the quality of Americans' employer-provided health care, retirement plans and workplace security declined. Workers bargained givebacks and received little in return except the illusion of job security. Eventually, workers began to see themselves as replaceable.

In the last few years, the replacement threat has lessened due to very low unemployment, unfair labor practice strikes and an increase in American support for unions, which is now at its highest levels in history. This change has manifested itself in two key ways: first, more working people are joining unions at a rate not seen in recent decades. Second, more workers are recognizing they must be willing to, if necessary, vote yes in a strike vote and increase their involvement in the union if they hope to level the workplace playing field.

Never has the latter been more on display than during 2022 and 2023 when hundreds of thousands of workers voted to strike.

Writers and actors struck their Hollywood employers for job security concerns from the use of artificial intelligence and its potential to decimate their work and occupations. Workers at United Parcel Service voted to strike and took their employer to the brink before settling a contract. For the second time in five years, the United Auto Workers is striking car manufacturers. Workers in health care, retail, mining, manufacturing and many other industries have taken to the street or logged off their computers to make their workplace better. In 2022, strikes were up approximately 50 percent over 2021.

People can only work for diminishing compensation and deteriorating conditions for so long while CEOs divide up billions each year in profits. Many large American companies, such as Starbucks, Amazon, Ford and General Motors, have seen great increases in profit. Workers make a considerable contribution to companies' success, yet they frequently see top level executives share the profits while they do not benefit. Unions, therefore, are asking serious questions about the distribution of company earnings.

OPEIU is no exception. OPEIU bargaining units from Boston to Maui have voted to strike when intransigent employers would not improve working conditions or compensation or because the employer violated labor laws. In Michigan, OPEIU nurses struck after bargaining for many months with expired contracts as the hospital seemed to flaunt its many unfair labor practices. Members in Connecticut

working for General Dynamics and TruStage in Madison, Wisconsin, have overwhelmingly voted to strike. Thousands of OPEIU members who work for Kaiser Permanente also made the critical decision to walk off the job in the largest health care strike in United States' history. [See next page for more details.]

***Sometimes a strike vote may be the only way to improve the workplace or change the employer's position about givebacks.***

Sometimes a strike vote may be the only way to improve the workplace or change the employer's position about givebacks. The decision and responsibilities that go with it are great. Getting the best information possible may put the responsibilities in context.

We would never incite members to vote to strike. That is your decision, as it always should be. While it should be the very last alternative, sometimes it may be the only choice. For those members who face the ultimate work decision, OPEIU and its local unions support you.

## Kaiser Health Care Workers Strike in Response to Short-Staffing Crisis

More than 75,000 health care workers at Kaiser Permanente, including thousands of OPEIU members, went on strike Oct. 4 protesting Kaiser executives' bad faith bargaining over solutions to end the Kaiser short-staffing crisis. The negotiations are the largest single-employer labor negotiations occurring in the United States, and the strike is the largest health care strike in U.S. history.

OPEIU represents approximately 12,000 Kaiser employees in Locals 2 (District of Columbia/Maryland/Virginia; Region II), 8 (Washington State; Region VI), 29 (Oakland; Region V), 30 (San Diego; Region V) and 50 (Hawai'i; Region VIII) and is part of the Coalition of Kaiser Permanente Unions (CKPU). CKPU unites more than 85,000 health care workers at Kaiser facilities in California, Colorado, Oregon, D.C., Hawai'i, Maryland, Virginia and Washington. Of those, approximately 75,000 staged the three-day strike as a response to unfair labor practice charges; Virginia and D.C. workers conducted a one-day strike and held informational pickets before and after work the other two days.

Bargaining began in April, months ahead of the Sept. 30 contract expiration. As negotiations drag on, at issue are a series of unfair labor practices related to bargaining in bad faith, along with health care workers' long-held concerns related to unsafe staffing levels that can lead to dangerously long wait times, mistaken diagnosis and neglect. After years of the Covid pandemic and chronic understaffing, health care workers are calling on Kaiser management to address these staffing concerns now.

"Kaiser used to be an industry leader, but now they are failing to work together with frontline health care workers to solve a growing staffing crisis. And we are all paying for it — our patients, their families and the workers who provide their care," said Tamara R. Rubyn, president/business manager of Local 29 and an International vice president. "Kaiser can and must do better."

Kaiser has reported \$3 billion in profits in just the first six months of this year. Despite being a non-profit organization — which means it pays no income taxes on its earnings and extremely limited property taxes — Kaiser has reported more than \$24 billion in profit over the last five years. Kaiser's CEO was compensated more than \$16 million in 2021, and 49 Kaiser executives are compensated more than \$1 million annually. The company has investments of \$113 billion in the U.S. and abroad, including in fossil fuels, casinos, for-profit prisons, alcohol companies, military weapons and more.

"Kaiser used to hold itself out as the best place to get care and the best place to work, but it is now failing at both. Kaiser can and must do better," said Linda Bridges, president/business manager of Local 2 and an International vice president.

*This is a developing story. Updates will be provided in future issues of OPEIU Connect and at [opeiu.org](https://opeiu.org).*



Local 2 members picket at the Kaiser Permanente Springfield Medical Center in Virginia.



Local 30 members march at Kaiser's Zion Medical Center in San Diego.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

**OPEIU EDUCATION BENEFITS  
'SIMPLY THE BEST'**

OPEIU and the family of late president John Kelly created the John Kelly Labor Studies Scholarship to honor his legacy and commitment to education, social justice and the labor movement. The labor studies scholarship piqued my interest because I have always had a deep-rooted attachment to learning about the labor movement.

Armed with my passion for the labor movement, the John Kelly Labor Studies Scholarship helped me to move forward in my labor union career. I began serving on standing committees: social, education and community services. I have served as recording secretary, vice president and president of Local 494. As a recipient of the labor studies scholarship, I earned a Master of Arts in Communication: Dispute and Conflict Resolution and a Master of Arts in Employment and Labor Relations from Wayne State University in Detroit. I am happy to share that as a Master of Law-Human Resources candidate, Wayne State University Law School, I am a recipient of two scholarship awards: the Winsten Award in Trial Advocacy and Wayne State University Law School Merit Scholar.

**I challenge each of you to embrace the mindset of education is power.** Take advantage of the many scholarship opportunities available to union members.

Knowledge is built layer by layer!

Jacqueline M. Lacey  
President  
Local 494 (Region VII)  
Detroit, Michigan

*Editor's Note: Jackee is right! Education is power, and OPEIU is pleased to offer members and their families several opportunities to pursue their goals of higher education, including OPEIU scholarships and the recently introduced OPEIU Discount College Benefit. Visit [opeiu.org](http://opeiu.org) and click the Member Resources tab or scan the QR code for more information.*



**OPEIU CONNECT**

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**MARY MAHONEY**  
Secretary-Treasurer

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**INSIDE THIS ISSUE**



**Cover Story:** Delegates to the 29th OPEIU Convention, held this summer in Philadelphia, made a strong commitment to organizing the unorganized and passed a bold agenda dedicated to diversity, equity, inclusion and justice for all working people.

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**Announcing OPEIU's New Discount College Benefit**

OPEIU is pleased to introduce an exciting new educational opportunity for union members and their families, the **OPEIU Discount College Benefit**.

Our new union college benefit option offers up to 50 percent discounted tuition rates and applies to your federal grant awards to reduce your out-of-pocket costs even further.

The benefit offers flexibility and numerous options for union members and their families to further their education. The program's extensive network of colleges and universities is comprised of accredited institutions committed to providing discounted tuition rates to our union members and their families, ensuring accessibility and affordability for higher education.

Whether you are interested in pursuing an associate, bachelor's or master's degree, or are seeking to enhance your professional skills with undergraduate or graduate certificates, the program has a comprehensive range of more than 50 online degree programs and certificate offerings.

Education is a lifelong journey, and OPEIU aims to make that journey both accessible and rewarding. We are committed to providing opportunities that empower our union members and their families to reach their full potential.



To explore the available programs and learn more about the discounts offered, visit [opeiu.org](http://opeiu.org) and click the Member Resources tab or scan the QR code. You can complete an inquiry form to be matched to a school and program you are interested in. You will then be connected to support services, which will answer questions and help guide you through the application and enrollment process.



**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.*

# ON THE MOVE!



***Delegates to the 29th OPEIU Convention, held this summer in Philadelphia, made a strong commitment to organizing the unorganized and passed a bold agenda dedicated to diversity, equity, inclusion and justice for all working people.***

# Organizing and Building Power for All Working People

Delegates to the 29th OPEIU Convention spent a week in Philadelphia affirming our union's continued commitment to organizing and building a strong, progressive and diverse union. President Richard Lanigan and Secretary-Treasurer Mary Mahoney were reelected and a new executive board was elected to lead our union's mission for the next four years.

Throughout the week, members and local leaders from across the United States and Canada passed a broad, bold slate of policies positioning OPEIU as a leader in organizing the next generation of union members.

## Strengthening OPEIU Organizing

Delegates passed a resolution in support of a National Organizing Plan, which aims to substantially grow our union's membership in the next decade. OPEIU and its local unions have won more than 100 new organizing campaigns since our last convention in 2019, bringing new energy to local unions.

By using coordinated and comprehensive campaigns, and implementation of initiatives such as the OPEIU Apprentice Organizer Program, OPEIU and its unions have helped thousands of workers realize their own power at work.

"The shift to a best practices model has grown OPEIU's power and membership in strategic sectors, including, but not limited to, nonprofits, higher education, technology and health care," the adopted resolution read. "Building union density throughout and across industries is necessary to win economic justice for working people at scale within a system that benefits employers at the expense of hundreds of millions of working people."

In doubling down on this effective growth strategy, convention delegates voiced widespread support for a coordinated, nationwide campaign to build our union's power and membership through aggressive new organizing.

## Racial and Social Justice Unionism

Recognizing the need for a diverse, equitable and inclusive union, delegates approved a resolution to commit resources to educational programs and working groups to answer the call for a fully representative union. The resolution recognized the interconnectedness of economic, racial and social justice as a core tenet of OPEIU's organizational philosophy.

"As unionists, it is our obligation to call attention to injustice and oppression while working to abolish it," the unanimously adopted resolution read. "Solidarity amongst workers translates into growth, strength and

bargaining power that advances the interests of all workers.

"While acknowledging the common interests all working people share, it is critical for unions to fight the injustices inflicted upon the most marginalized in order to truly build a powerful, unified and inclusive labor movement," the resolution continued. "OPEIU supports Black, Indigenous, people of color, individuals with disabilities, the LGBTQIA+ community, women and all underrepresented social identity groups in becoming more empowered."



**OPEIU has built a digital hub to centralize and democratize information**

**about the 29th OPEIU Convention. To read the bold slate of resolutions and new policies implemented in Philadelphia, visit [opeiu.org](https://opeiu.org) or scan the QR code.**



President Richard Lanigan and Secretary-Treasurer Mary Mahoney win re-election for four more years.



## New Executive Board Elected

The newly elected OPEIU Executive Board members are, left to right, Cara Madarese (executive board member, Local 6, Region II); Linda Bridges (president/business manager, Local 2, Region II); John Mattiacci, DPM (president, Guild 45, Region II); Tamara R. Rubyn (president/business manager, Local 29, Region V); Peter Neu (labor representative/counsel, MAGE/OPEIU Local 2002, Region VII); Marianne Giordano (executive director/CFO, Local 30, Region V); Fredricka Green (president, GSAF/OPEIU Local 100, Region III); Lisa Blake (president, Local 42, vice president for diversity); Dina Carlisle, RN (president, Local 40, Region VII); Rose Agas-Yuu, RN (vice president, HNA/OPEIU Local 50, Region VIII); Mary Mahoney, OPEIU secretary-treasurer; Richard Lanigan, OPEIU president; Mary Short (president, Local 32, Region II); Tyler Turner (president/business manager, Local 277, Region IV); Steve Pettie (vice president, DAG 110s, Region I); Lupe Valles (president/business manager, Local 174, vice president for diversity); Nick Galipeau (secretary-treasurer, Local 153, Region II); Suzanne Mode (business manager, Local 8, Region VI). Not pictured is Dennis R. Arrington (president, ITPEU/OPEIU Local 4873, Region III).

## OPEIU's Crucial Role in 9 to 5 Movement

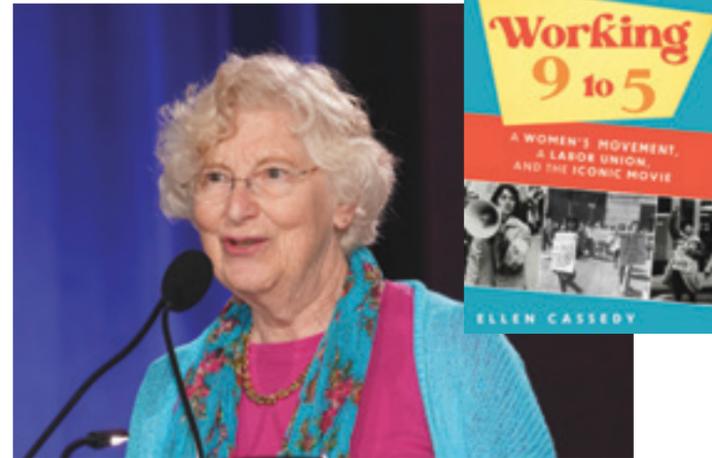
In 2021, OPEIU hosted multiple virtual screenings of the documentary, "9 to 5: The Story of a Movement," including a discussion with the film's Oscar-winning directors Steven Bognar and the late Julia Reichert. The film recounts the history of women office workers in 1970s Boston—including many OPEIU members—who inspired change as they entered the workforce in record numbers.

This summer, OPEIU convention delegates heard from author Ellen Cassedy on the movement and its demands for better pay, more opportunities and an end to sexual harassment. Cassedy wrote "Working 9 to 5: A Women's Movement, a Labor Union, and the Iconic Movie," which tells the movement's story.

"Women all over the country still have the same problems of harassment, low pay, lack of promotion opportunities and respect at work," Cassedy told delegates. But things have changed since the '70s and especially since the film "9 to 5," starring Jane Fonda, Lily Tomlin and Dolly Parton, was released in 1980.

"It can be harder to be a worker today than 50 years ago," Cassedy said, noting there was still much progress to be made. "Some people are working two or three jobs to put food on the table.

"The gender pay gap is stuck at 82 percent and it's much worse for women of color," Cassedy continued. She noted the work OPEIU is doing to close that gap: "Your union is doing great work around the country."



Ellen Cassedy, author of "Working 9 to 5: A Women's Movement, a Labor Union, and the Iconic Movie."

Women office workers in the 1970s inspired change as they entered the workforce in record numbers.



Photos courtesy of: 1 and 2, Walter P. Reuther Library, Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, Wayne State University; 3, Steve Cagan; 4, Karen Nussbaum; 5, Nancy Farrell; 6, 7 and 8, Ellen Cassedy.

## Local 30-Represented Staff at Guide Dogs of America Change Lives

Local 30 (Region V) members at Guide Dogs of America raise, train and care for service dogs who, after graduating, play a pivotal role in the lives of visually impaired people, veterans and children with autism. Staff provide personalized instruction for people paired with a service dog and an array of services to hospitals, courtrooms and classrooms.

At the convention, Cassandra Hernandez spoke about the difference her service dog, Tag, has made in her life.

"I feel like I can navigate the world with a lot of ease. I feel safer, and I feel more secure," said Hernandez, who is visually impaired. "I couldn't have any of this ... without all the work that goes into these dogs."

Last year, workers at the nonprofit organization—from clerical and administrative staff to trainers and kennel staff—affiliated with Local 30 in San Diego. Sean Chiles, a guide dog mobility instructor, has worked at the organization for nearly 20 years. The job is both rewarding and challenging, he said, but ultimately made better by being a union member.

"There's a lot of little differences and little nuances between job roles," he said, but "OPEIU was able to mold around that and get us a great contract."

Russell Gittlen, president of Guide Dogs of America, spoke to convention delegates about the work the organization does in hospitals, schools and courtrooms, as well as with individuals—including our nation's veterans.



Cassandra Hernandez says her guide dog, Tag, who was trained by Guide Dogs of America, helps her feel more confident navigating the world around her.

"We owe it to our veterans, when they come back to the United States, to take care of them," Gittlen said, thanking Local 30 for its role in making the organization stronger. "Every day, your members work hard with these dogs." To learn more about Guide Dogs of America and how to support the organization, visit their website at [guidedogsofamerica.org](https://www.guidedogsofamerica.org) or scan the QR code.



## Everyday savings just for you

Looking for new ways to save? **Union Plus** makes everyday life more affordable with wireless savings, cash back shopping, discounts at restaurants and on movie tickets and live events and much more.

Exclusive discounts for union families



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



## Steward Spotlight

# Prioritizing New Member Orientation



By Emily Citraro  
Steward  
Local 29

New member orientation is a critical part of a steward's work. My shop, the San Francisco-Marín Food Bank, organized for and won our union with Local 29 (Region V) in October 2019.

Our union is always looking to improve engagement, and our workplace-specific orientation complements the new member packet provided by our local. New member orientation helps our union continually improve our outreach. Meeting all of our new members face-to-face soon after they are hired helps emphasize the history of our union and allows us to start engaging our members immediately.

During each new member's first day at the Food Bank, our union offers a 15-minute new member orientation during work hours. In the case of fully remote new hires, we conduct this orientation virtually, taking it just as seriously as we do in-person orientation.

We cover a variety of topics but, given time constraints, must decide which topics to emphasize. First and foremost, we talk about the protections afforded to them as a new union member, including their **Weingarten Rights** and how and when to ask for representation. As nonprofit workers, we also take time to connect how our union enables mission-based workers like us to better serve the communities we care deeply about. We also provide a copy of Michael Mauer's affordable "Welcome to the Union" pamphlet.

Taking time to discuss a brief history of contract negotiations helps us to demonstrate their role in their new union, provides context on our rights as union members and helps new members familiarize themselves with the process well before we collectively renegotiate it.

Finally, as part of our overall ongoing member engagement efforts, we make sure to invite all members to monthly meet-and-greet happy hours at a restaurant near work. Not only does it help engage our members, but it presents an opportunity to follow up in a casual setting after they have had time to digest the information we provide at orientation.

Many of our members work in different locations: some at home, some on site, and some in the office. As a steward, the orientation process has helped me connect with new co-workers immediately, which has helped us build a union full of members who know their rights and how their union can help them on their very first day.

## Know Your Weingarten Rights

You have the right to union representation any time you face a meeting or discussion with management that could lead to discipline. Your employer usually has no obligation to inform you of your right to have a union representative present.

You must ask for your rights! Your employer must give you time to contact a union representative and allow the representative to be present at the meeting.

✂ Clip and carry in your wallet

### To invoke your Weingarten Rights, you can say:

"If this discussion could in any way lead to my being disciplined or terminated, or affect my personal working condition, I respectfully request that my union representative, officer or steward be present at the meeting. Without representation, I choose not to answer any questions."

## Kahi Mohala Nurses Vote Union Yes

Registered nurses (RNs) at Kahi Mohala, a not-for-profit behavioral health center in Ewa Beach, Hawai'i, voted overwhelmingly to form a union with Hawai'i Nurses' Association (HNA)/OPEIU Local 50 (Region VIII). The unit includes 41 RNs at the facility.



Local 50 registered nurses at Kahi Mohala are, left to right, Laura Blue, Mark Hayhurst, Tami Ichimasa (holding petition), Dwayne Fedalizo, Dwight Marquez and Frenchie Pelaez.

The RNs voted with an 89 percent majority to certify their union. An array of reasons, including wages, safe staffing, vacation time, transparency and just cause protections, drove many nurses to vote yes.

"I voted yes to join the union because we want to be heard," said Francheska "Frenchie" Pelaez, an RN with children and adolescents as patients. "Nurses deserve to be taken care of too. Quality care for nurses means quality care for our patients."

## Two Contracts Ratified at Ornge

OPEIU members at Ornge, a Canadian company that provides paramedical services by land and air, overwhelmingly ratified two new contracts at the company earlier this year. RotorWing pilots and aircraft maintenance engineers both ratified contracts addressing their respective bargaining priorities.

### RotorWing

The three-year contract makes RotorWing pilots represented by Local 2007A (Region I) the highest-paid emergency medical service pilots in Canada, according to International Senior Representative Patt Gibbs. "This was achieved without concessions, and included many improvements beyond the wage increases," she said.

As part of the deal, the company settled more than 30 accumulated grievances. "We told the company we are not going to agree to a contract unless it resolves every outstanding grievance," Gibbs said.

Approximately 130 pilots are covered by the terms of the agreement, which addresses major concerns, such as pay and scheduling, as many pilots are often stationed for weeks in remote locations in the Canadian wilderness.

Wage increases were sought and achieved in the contract to increase retention and attract new hires amid a pilot shortage.

### Aircraft Maintenance Engineers

Aircraft maintenance engineers (AMEs) at Ornge, represented by DAG 9002

(Region I), also voted overwhelmingly to approve a contract with no concessions. The three-year contract covers approximately 60 AMEs and addresses their bargaining priorities, including higher pay and more predictable vacation time and scheduling.

"The schedule comes down to their quality of work-life balance," Gibbs said. The AMEs are highly skilled engineers proficient in the maintenance of critical aircraft used for emergency medical services and with this deal, Gibbs said, they are compensated as such.

## Local 40 Registered Nurses and Radiology Technicians Strike Ascension Hospital

Registered nurses and radiology technicians at Ascension Providence Rochester in the Detroit area are in the middle of tough contract negotiations. The RNs and radiology technicians, members of Local 40 (Region VII), voted to authorize a strike after bargaining for months with expired contracts and dealing with the hospital's many unfair labor practices and union-busting activity.

In September, the members conducted a four-day strike. Local 40 also requested the Michigan attorney general and Oakland County prosecutor investigate the hospital.

"It is our hope this situation serves as a wake-up call to the administration, urging them to reevaluate their priorities and actively address the concerns raised by those advocating for patients' safety and protections. The well-being of the patients



Local 40 registered nurses and radiology technicians on the strike line.

should always be at the forefront of any health care institution, and it is high time that the administration aligns their actions with this essential principle and core Catholic values," said Dina Carlisle, president of Local 40 and an International vice president. Ascension is a Catholic health care facility.

## Local 39 Strikes TruStage

More than 450 members at TruStage (formerly CUNA Mutual) went on strike in May. Represented by Local 39 (Region VII) in Madison, Wisconsin, workers at the financial services company continue to demand a fair contract.

Earlier this year, CUNA Mutual Group—a company providing services to credit unions nationwide—rebranded its business as TruStage. Soon after, more than 450 workers at the company went on strike.

It was the first strike in the company's 78-year history with Local 39, prompted by TruStage's unwillingness to offer a contract reflecting the contributions of its staff, who spearheaded the company's record profits. For four months, the company refused to bargain, said Chief Steward Joe Evica.

"The energy was something people do not understand until they are on the picket line as workers themselves," Evica said. "The feeling was extremely confident, excited and happy. Actually, they felt empowered being out there."

Picket lines streamed down the sidewalks in front of the company's new Madison-based headquarters. Remote workers across the country simultaneously held a virtual picket



Chief Steward Joe Evica rallies the striking members at TruStage.

in support of the strike. Displays of community support were widespread. The Dane County Board and the Madison City Council both passed a resolution in support of Local 39, and Rep. Mark Pocan wrote a letter in support at the federal level.

Local 39 members are fighting for wages that keep up with inflation, keeping their pension plan for new hires, remote work provisions, job security in the wake of outsourcing and good health care.

After sensing movement at the table, Local 39 paused the strike. Unfortunately, management quickly returned to the bad-faith tactics that prompted the strike. Local 39 recently held a rally and march in downtown Madison to continue their fight for a fair contract.

## OPEIU Members Stand in Solidarity with Striking Workers

OPEIU members and local leaders throughout the country are marching in solidarity and showing support for striking members of other unions as they fight for improved standards and fair compensation for the work they do. These members know we are all stronger together!



Local 174 (Region V) members support the Writers Guild of America (WGA) striking workers at Universal Studios in Hollywood, California. The 148-day strike led to an agreement, now being voted on by WGA members.



While in California for Coalition of Kaiser Permanente Unions bargaining, leaders from Locals 2, 29 and 30 joined Local 174 at the WGA strike at Universal Studios. Left to right are Local 174 President/Business Manager and International Vice President Lupe Valles; Local 30 Director of Member Services Annette Baxter; Local 2 President/Business Manager and International Vice President Linda Bridges; Local 30 Executive Director/CFO and International Vice President Marianne Giordano; Local 29 President/Business Manager and International Vice President Tamara R. Rubyn; Local 2 Secretary-Treasurer Sarah Levesque; and Local 29 Secretary-Treasurer/Business Representative Kelly Gschwend.



Dave Scalisi, a member of Local 277 (Region IV), supports 1199 SEIU members' strike at Comprehensive Rehabilitation and Nursing in Western New York.



Local 6 (Region II) Secretary-Treasurer Patti Pelletier, Benefits Coordinator Louise Mahoney-Scullari, President Mary Mahoney (who also serves as OPEIU secretary-treasurer) and Executive Board member and International Vice President Cara Madarese march in solidarity with resident advisors (RAs) at Tufts University. The RAs, represented by Local 153 (Region II) in New York, conducted a one-day strike on student move-in day, August 29.



OPEIU California Locals 29, 30, 174 and 537 stood together in solidarity by dressing in **Unionize California** t-shirts on the last day of the 29th OPEIU Convention in Philadelphia.

## Local 459 Celebrates 50 Years

Local 459 (Region VII) members and their families celebrated the local's 50th anniversary this year. Chartered in April 1973, Local 459 has grown to be the largest OPEIU local in Michigan.

Members include many essential workers in the public sector, health care, human services, credit unions, nonprofits, labor unions, insurance and more.



Local 459 members and their families celebrate 50 years at a fun picnic, themed "Cheers to 50 Years!"

## Local 30 Member Saves a Life



Local 30 (Region V) member Luis Mejia Sr. was recognized with an award from Kaiser Permanente's "I Saved a Life" program for his actions urging a patient to get her overdue mammogram.

Mejia, a medical record clerk III at a Kaiser facility in San Diego, discovered the patient was overdue for her mammogram and insisted she get one that day. While initially hesitant, the patient followed Mejia's advice. After receiving an advanced breast cancer diagnosis, she underwent surgery and began treatment right away. Now, six years later, the patient is cancer free and very grateful to Mejia for his lifesaving help.

The "I Saved a Life" program celebrates Kaiser staff whose actions result in the early detection of breast, cervical or colon cancer.

**October is Breast Cancer Awareness month. Make time and schedule your mammogram.**

Local 30 member Luis Mejia Sr., right, celebrates his award with the patient whose life he saved.

## Remembering Dedicated OPEIU Local Labor Leaders

OPEIU pays tribute to dedicated labor leaders and activists we have recently lost, remembering their many contributions on behalf of OPEIU members.

### George Noel, Always Above and Beyond for His Members

George Noel, business manager and executive board member of Local 6 (Region II) in Braintree, Massachusetts, is being remembered as a kind and dedicated trade unionist who went above and beyond for the members of his union. Noel died in June at the age of 65.

"George dedicated his life to the union and to the service of others," said Local 6 President Mary Mahoney, who also serves as OPEIU secretary-treasurer. "He was an invaluable part of Local 6, and we will greatly miss his experience and wise counsel. The members, stewards, officers and staff will always be grateful to George and work to honor his memory."

Born in Boston and a longtime resident of Billerica, Massachusetts, Noel worked for one year at Raytheon after high school before enlisting in the United States Army. He served in the military police for three years until his discharge. Years later, he went

back to school and in 2012 earned his bachelor's degree from the University of Massachusetts at Boston in labor studies.

Upon leaving the service, Noel returned to Raytheon and during the next 34 years would serve in various roles in the labor movement advocating for workers' rights.

He served as a business manager of IBEW Local 1505 and was appointed by then-Governor Deval Patrick in 2007 to serve as director of labor. In addition to his role at Local 6, he was also the vice president of the Massachusetts AFL-CIO and served on the executive board of the Greater Boston Labor Council.

Noel's family and friends report he was extremely social by nature and always strove to make everyone feel welcome and at home. He enjoyed being a mentor to the next generation of labor activists. Most of all, he loved spending time with his family, especially happy in the role of husband, father and grandfather.

### Linda Smith, Held Close to Our Hearts

Linda Smith was a member of Local 381 (Region IV) in Oklahoma City for more than 40 years, making invaluable contributions to the local while serving as financial secretary and trustee. Smith died in June at the age of 74.

Smith was a graduate of Capitol Hill High School. She worked for the United Auto Workers Local 1999 for many years and then the Central Oklahoma Labor Federation and was the corresponding secretary of the Greater Oklahoma City Chapter of the Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW).

Smith served as Local 381 financial secretary for many years before stepping down to make way for the next generation of labor leaders and activists.

She remained on the local's executive board as a trustee and stayed very involved in the union until her death.

Local 381 President Debra Graumann said Smith was known for her giving nature and love of animals. She spent countless hours volunteering for worker-friendly candidates for public office, and received the Central Oklahoma Labor Federation Legends of Labor Award in April. She is fondly remembered as a kind and generous person who loved and cared deeply for her family and friends, including her large union family. "She will be held close to our hearts each and every day. She will be missed by all her union family," Graumann said.



Linda Smith



George Noel

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## A Solution to Meet the Retirement Crisis

By Richard Lanigan

While conducting research for recent negotiations, I came across several articles about a coming “retirement crisis” and how Americans are underprepared for retirement. One article detailed how a high percentage of Americans have no retirement savings whatsoever! Another article explained a quarter of Americans postpone their retirements due to insufficient funds and another one-third of all working Americans feel insecure about retirement. There are retirees now facing the choice of using their limited income for prescriptions or living costs.

Articles like these reminded me unions have always stood for the idea that adequate compensation for work should be the foundation for retirement security. And, as we all should know, pensions for working people started with unions.

Unfortunately, experience has shown many OPEIU members participating in employer-sponsored 401(k) plans did not understand how their plan worked, were paying fees for services they were not using, made few if any of the decisions about their retirement plan, and had investment managers who did not place the members’ interests above their own interest in collecting commissions. They also grappled with other issues, such as where to roll over assets when they retired. Some who were eligible and not contributing were not aware the plan required them to contribute to receive the employer’s matching contribution. They were unaware they were not participating in the retirement plan.

About 15 years ago, when 401(k) plans had become the most popular retirement option in the country, nearly half of those eligible for a matching contribution did not participate!

These experiences led our union to ask how OPEIU can help members get a better outcome from these plans. OPEIU took the first step toward a solution in 2016 when delegates to the OPEIU convention resolved to build our own low-cost, user-friendly 401(k) plan that puts members’ retirement interests first. The second step is to create a first-rate education program to raise our members’ understanding of these plans.

Since 2016, OPEIU has built the OPEIU National Retirement Savings Plan (NRSP), a very competitive plan, which now has

nearly \$100 million in assets and more than 1,000 participants. It has been the subject of very favorable articles in trade journals, with one referring to it as “the ideal plan for union members.” After being compared by plan professionals to employer-sponsored plans, these articles rated our plan superior because it saves members money on fees, has an optional annuity-like feature, offers members great flexibility to invest on their own, has a patented target date plan and provides participant education. It is administered by professionals who have experience running a large, established 401(k) program. We also have the staff to help bargain participation in the plan into contracts. OPEIU local unions of all sizes and resources are now participating.

We are now ready to take the second step. We have partnered with the International Foundation of Employee Benefit Plans to conduct training on the nuances of 401(k) plans and help OPEIU leaders get a better understanding of the OPEIU plan. This multifaceted training was introduced this summer at the 29th OPEIU Convention. This fall, we will begin training on retirement security for OPEIU bargaining committees, shop stewards, union officers and interested members. We hope you will be able to join us.

While the OPEIU plan has great attributes and is better than most, if not all, employer plans, we regret to say that **many of you do not participate**. This is a reminder we built a great plan to help provide retirement security for you and your family. Feel free to raise the issue in your next proposals meeting, and make sure your bargaining committee knows you are interested.

To find out more, contact OPEIU and ask for a presentation at your workplace. Ask for a comparison between the OPEIU National Retirement Savings Plan and your employer plan. Attend the OPEIU 401(k) training (scan the QR code for more information about the plan). We are certain our plan will meet or beat any employer-sponsored plan. In fact, by joining our plan you may save significantly on fees, affording you extra money you can use for your retirement. Do not forget the 401(k) is one of the best tools available to working people to lower tax liability.



## ‘A Model for What a 401(k) Plan Should Be’

OPEIU’s National Retirement Savings Plan (NRSP), otherwise known as a 401(k), was launched in 2017 and is designed to provide efficient management of retirement assets for local bargaining units and employer plans. It currently has almost \$100 million in assets with more than 1,000 participants.

“I believe it is a model for what a 401(k) should be,” said retirement savings expert Ron Surz, in the online publication “401(k) Specialist.” “The OPEIU NRSP is one of my poster children for doing what is right for plan participants because it truly encourages savings (at a very low cost) and provides protection of those savings — the best formula for retirement with dignity.”

Surz, author of the book “Baby Boomer Investing in the Perilous Decade of the 2020s,” points out “surveys report that fiduciaries and participants want to protect people nearing retirement, but most target date funds do not provide this protection. The OPEIU NRSP is a notable exception.”

OPEIU has built the NRSP in the best interests of members, Surz said. “Based upon their collective decisions, OPEIU bargaining units should be given the opportunity to stay in their existing employers’ 401(k) plan or ‘spin off’ into the NRSP.

“The NRSP is open to existing local OPEIU-sponsored plans, employer-sponsored plans with OPEIU bargaining units, selected unaffiliated plans and plans that are starting up,” he said.

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