

OFFICE & PROFESSIONAL EMPLOYEES
INTERNATIONAL UNION, AFL-CIO, CLC

POLICY STATEMENTS

OPEIU
on the move!

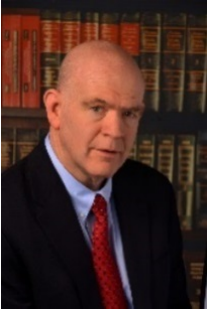
29TH OPEIU CONVENTION

JUNE 12-16, 2023 • PHILADELPHIA, PA

**OPEIU
POLICY STATEMENTS**

REVISED JUNE 2023

INTRODUCTION



The statements in this book are the official policies of the Office and Professional Employees International Union (OPEIU), AFL-CIO. They represent the union's position on a wide variety of subjects and set a specific course of action for organizations within the International Union to follow.

At each of the OPEIU's conventions, delegates evaluate and set policies on issues such as health care, climate change, education, Social Security and political action. At the 2023 Convention, delegates revised, amended and added new policies to reflect the changing times and needs of the union on issues such as reproductive rights, diversity and equity within our union, charter schools and more. Please review the contents of this book and share the policies with members of your local union, guild or directly affiliated group.

In recent years, working families have been hit especially hard by anti-union forces set on reversing the many gains made by the labor movement in the last century. The years ahead will be crucial for working families, as we fight to protect the progress that's been made on behalf of our members and to stop anti-union sentiment from spreading throughout the nation. We know it won't be easy, but we are sure that OPEIU and its members will join together and fight to protect the rights that all people who work deserve.

In solidarity,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Richard Lanigan". The ink is dark and the signature is fluid and legible.

Richard Lanigan, President

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ABOLISHING THE FILIBUSTER

Background:

The filibuster is, in short, a tool for senators to delay or block entirely a bill they do not support. While our government is ostensibly democratic, the rules of the U.S. Senate, via the filibuster, allow minority rule to hamstring progress. Under current rules, closing debate on a bill and moving to voting on the bill requires sixty senators — not a simple majority — to agree. This tactic has been used to block the passage of critical legislation and is a key contributor to the so-called “congressional gridlock” that has plagued the nation’s capital for decades.

Popular proposals to combat climate change, protect workers’ rights, provide COVID relief, and deliver results for working people are consistently, maliciously, and anti-democratically hobbled by the filibuster—despite majority support among the American people.

Policies:

OPEIU and its local unions will:

- Work in concert with its allies throughout the labor movement to pressure senators to support abolishing the filibuster.
- Support candidates for U.S. Senate who believe in and will fight for democratic decision making processes both within the Senate itself and throughout the economy at large.

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

Background:

African-Americans, Latin-Americans, women and other minorities for years put their trust in the courts and the Congress as institutions that would oppose discrimination and continue the nation's course toward true democracy for all Americans.

Nothing is more vital to the long struggle to achieve racial and sexual equality than ending discrimination in job and career opportunities. And affirmative action — a carefully developed program that evolved from legislation and court decisions — is essential to opening up opportunities for those groups that traditionally have been excluded from the mainstream of our economic life.

Despite some gains in income among women and minorities, the inequality that permeates the economy reinforces the need for affirmative action and other compensatory measures. America is not a color- or gender- blind society. Nor is it a strict meritocracy where jobs are distributed simply on skill, talent and merit. There are all types of preference programs in place around the nation.

Affirmative action is not a system of quotas. It is a system of policies, programs and procedures to correct the social and economic status of workers who have been, and who currently are, discriminated against. OPEIU remains as committed to affirmative action as it is opposed to quotas and will continue to support efforts to overcome any attempts at eliminating affirmative action.

One of the fundamental principles of American society is opportunity for all — a nation where honest, hard-working people can get a job for which they are qualified and provide for their families, without fear of being denied their livelihood or stymied because of race, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, national origin, disability, age and/or religious beliefs. OPEIU consistently has said affirmative action is essential to

winning equal opportunity for women, African-Americans, Latin-Americans and members of other minority groups.

Affirmative action works toward the goal that all groups in our society are represented at all levels in the workforce. This fact has helped make the American workplace more productive and fairer and should not be abandoned or gutted by those employers who would return to the dark ages before the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Policies:

- OPEIU, the AFL-CIO and AFL-CIO affiliated unions have been on record endorsing the concept of affirmative action as vital to the preservation of the gains of organized labor, as well as to advancing equality of opportunity for African-Americans, Latin-Americans, Asian-Americans, Native Americans, women, lesbians, gays, bisexual, transgender and other people suffering from discrimination.

- OPEIU and its local unions reaffirm our strong support for affirmative action. We pledge to work to protect affirmative action programs as they face challenge on the ballot, in the courts or in state legislatures, and to fully restore the civil rights and affirmative action provisions that have been eroded or abolished. OPEIU pledges to fight against any weakening of affirmative action laws everywhere.

- OPEIU pledges to continue pressing for the addition and strengthening of affirmative action language in all of our union contracts, with the objective to include, but not be limited to, the use of a goals and timetables program.

AIDS

Background:

Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) was identified as a potentially serious health care problem in 1981. Because HIV/AIDS started as a disease primarily of gay men and drug users, the disease among women has not received much attention either in the media or among health care professionals.

More than 1.1 million people in the United States are living with HIV infection, and almost one in seven are unaware of their infection. Women account for one in five (20 percent) new HIV infections in the U.S. Women of color, particularly black women, have been especially hard hit and represent the majority of women living with the disease and women newly infected.

While the statistics regarding women are shocking, those for young people are even more alarming. About one in five new HIV infections is among youth ages 13-24. Most don't know they are infected and aren't getting treatment. Among all gay and bisexual men diagnosed with HIV in the U.S. in 2017, African Americans accounted for the highest number (estimated 38 percent), followed by Hispanics/Latinos (estimated 29 percent) and whites (estimated 27 percent).

At the same time, with the advent of new, promising treatment, death rates among men have declined. Better medical therapies are prolonging the survival of HIV patients and increasing their productive life if they are allowed to continue to work. Therefore, the policies around HIV/AIDS must shift to deal with:

- The increased rate of infection among women and youth, particularly youth of color.
- The increased life span of men who are now living with AIDS and are seeking to return from long-term disability leave to work. These medical advances bring to the forefront the challenge to address both ongoing accommodation of HIV/AIDS- positive

employees and acceptance of those employees by management and their coworkers.

Policies:

- OPEIU supports a new legislative agenda that will address the needs of returning workers in the areas of non-discrimination, reasonable accommodations and the confidentiality of medical information. This agenda must move beyond the stigma of HIV/AIDS to one that embraces the concept of healing and living with HIV/AIDS.

- Provisions for a comprehensive public health policy and delivery system that addresses the problem of AIDS and other HIV-related conditions, the needs of those directly suffering from these conditions, their dependents and caregivers.

- Total prohibition against discrimination in any form and strict requirements for confidentiality in delivery of health services. Recognition that the primary use of HIV testing is a preventive tool and that such testing should be administered only with the individual’s knowledge and consent, and that it should not be used as a pre-employment screening device or to jeopardize current employment status.

- Providing that confidentiality is guaranteed, OPEIU will promote the “Know Your Status” efforts of LGBTQ, faith and community groups. Such programs help reduce the rate of new HIV infections and get early health care for those who do test positive.

- Adequate training for health care workers in the treatment of HIV-related diseases, support for “universal precautions,” as recommended by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), as protection for health care workers who are at risk for contact with infected blood, support for adequate staffing to implement CDC recommendations and benefits for these workers in the highly unlikely event they become infected while caring for a person with AIDS.

- Accurate and effective education programs. OPEIU adopts the following workplace guidelines as issued by the Citizens' Commission on AIDS:

1. People with AIDS or HIV are entitled to the same rights and opportunities as people with other serious or life-threatening illnesses.

2. Employment policies must, at a minimum comply with federal, state and local laws and regulations.

3. Employment policies should be based on the scientific and epidemiological evidence that people with AIDS or HIV infection do not pose a risk of transmission of the virus to co-workers through ordinary workplace contact.

4. The highest levels of management and union leadership should unequivocally endorse non-discriminatory employment policies and educational programs about AIDS.

5. Employers and unions should communicate their support of these policies to workers in simple, clear and unambiguous terms.

6. Employers should provide employees with sensitive, accurate, and up-to-date educational information about risk reduction in their personal lives.

7. Employers have a duty to protect the confidentiality of employees' medical information.

8. To prevent workplace disruption and rejection by co-workers of an employee with AIDS or HIV infection, employers and unions should undertake education for all employees before such an incident occurs.

9. Employers should not require HIV screening as part of pre-employment or general workplace physical examinations.

10. In those special occupational settings where there may be a potential risk of exposure to HIV (for example, in health care where workers may be exposed to blood or blood products), employers should provide specific, ongoing education, training, and pre-and post-test counseling, as well as the necessary

equipment, to reinforce appropriate infection-control procedures and ensure that they are implemented.

- OPEIU calls upon its local unions to develop contract language to protect the rights of HIV/AIDS employees who are able to return to work. This new language should mirror any existing language that deals with employees on long-term disability, Federal Family and Medical Leave Act and a military leave of absence.

- OPEIU must continue to educate the membership that HIV/AIDS is a union issue. Despite the virus being first identified nearly 40 years ago, stigma, discrimination and ignorance of basic information about the disease still exists. The union movement is in a unique position to carry out this education.

- OPEIU calls upon its local unions to work with employers who they have contracts with to implement these “ten employment principles,” thus providing leadership and direction on this complex and emotionally charged subject.

- OPEIU also urges universal compliance with the International Labor Organization’s “Code of Practices on HIV/AIDS in the World of Work,” which outlines practices for governments, employers, workers and their organizations.

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT

Background:

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 is a worker-protection law that has enabled many Americans to enter the workforce with dignity and respect. The ADA has given workers and their unions a new tool to assist members who may develop disabilities or have hidden disabilities retain their jobs. It has also been an effective tool in helping members who have suffered injuries on the job to return to the workforce.

Since its inception, the ADA has been severely weakened and often ignored by employers. OPEIU calls upon the federal government to adequately fund the agency responsible for enforcing the act, the Department of Justice.

Policies:

- OPEIU calls upon Congress to increase the staffs of both the Justice Department and Occupational Safety and Health Department so that investigation of barriers in older buildings and design/and construction errors in brand new facilities can be corrected.
- OPEIU will partner with the disabled community to reverse the current situation that puts almost the entire burden of enforcement on individual persons with disabilities. Most claims are ignored by the government because of staff shortages and the disabled person most often lacks the resources to hire an attorney and bring a civil suit.
- OPEIU calls upon Congress to reauthorize the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1973, which address employment opportunities for people, such as the more than 970,000 disabled vets returning from Iraq and Afghanistan.
- OPEIU calls upon Congress to adequately fund the Veterans Administration so that returning vets can get the care they need and deserve. Although the Veterans Administration has reduced

the backlog of pending disability compensation claims from its peak of more than 611,000, the remaining estimated 160,000 backlogged claims is unacceptable.

In the face of strong and systematic opposition to the civil rights gains we have fought so hard for, OPEIU joins with the disability community to embrace and articulate the goals of the ADA.

ANTI-SCAB

Background:

The fight to restore a fair balance between labor and management in the collective bargaining process is one of the highest priorities for the U.S. labor movement, including OPEIU. In 1935, the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) guaranteed workers the right to organize labor unions, to bargain collectively and, if necessary, to withhold their labor in support of demands for better wages, benefits and working conditions. Collective bargaining is a means of settling differences through compromise. When collective bargaining breaks down, the workers' last resort is to strike.

After the enactment of the NLRA, a strike was viewed as a temporary interruption of the labor-management relationship. When the strike ended and a settlement was reached, workers returned to their jobs and the company resumed production. Although companies could legally hire "permanent replacement workers," commonly known as "scabs," because of a 1938 Supreme Court ruling, over the years companies rarely used this tactic.

After the labor-management balance drastically changed in the 1980s, many companies began to hire high-priced consultants who were told to come up with effective union-busting strategies. The consultants advised companies to take advantage of the "permanent replacement" loophole in labor laws. As a result, workers have been provoked into striking and then permanently replaced by "scabs." Employers have used this tactic to undermine the collective bargaining process and bust long-established unions.

Policies:

- To fight this tactic, OPEIU must continue its campaign to enact legislation prohibiting employers from hiring scabs.
- In addition, OPEIU, together with the entire trade union movement, must continue the campaign to enact legislation to prohibit permanent striker replacement. We will continue to need the help of all of our active and retired members in all of our local unions to pass both anti-scab legislation and anti-permanent striker- replacement legislation.

CHARTER SCHOOLS

Background:

The growth of publicly funded, privately run charter schools is inextricably tied to the weakening of our nation's public school systems. Advocates of charter schools often cite the declining quality of public schools as rationale for the expansion of charter schools — using public money. This circular logic is one of the major underlying factors contributing to the crisis of public education in our country.

Rather than revitalizing our public school systems, those in power have laundered the future of public education to private actors with little oversight. The privatization of education has disastrous consequences. Like all forms of privatization, it reduces access to quality public education for those who need it most.

The charter school movement is, not coincidentally, anti-union. The move to bolster charter schools at the cost of public education runs concurrently with efforts to weaken teachers' unions across the country. At a time when teachers are overworked, underpaid and underappreciated, it is unconscionable that—rather than hiring new teachers and paying them a fair wage—public funds are being used to undermine worker protections fought for and won by teachers and other school staff throughout the decades.

Policies:

OPEIU and its local unions will:

- Support an immediate halt of public school money being sent to fund privately run charter schools;
- Believe every child is entitled to a quality education at public schools, and that the growth of charter schools is a direct impediment to that goal;

- Support efforts to ensure charter schools who have already received public money are transparent about their expenses, outcomes, and salaries, as public school teachers and administrators are required to do.

CHILD TAX CREDIT

Background:

Policymakers revealed in 2021 that widespread child poverty in the U.S. can be effectively combatted. The child tax credit played a critical role in reducing child poverty by more than half at a time when many families struggled to make ends meet.

Monthly payments to families with children reduced child poverty substantially, especially in communities of color, and stabilized family incomes with predictable payments amid economic turmoil. These payments helped pay for transportation, groceries, childcare and health care. By making these direct payments to parents, the federal government tackled, in the short-term, many of the major financial stressors that come with child rearing.

After the tax credits expired, pro-poverty politicians have been fighting tooth-and-nail to ensure they remain expired because they know the policy - incompatible with the austerity-for-all policies they promote - works as intended in a cost-effective way.

Policies:

OPEIU and its local unions call upon Congress to:

- Permanently expand the child tax credit as part of a commitment to eradicating child poverty entirely;
- Adopt policies that ease financial burdens for working parents and promote healthy childhood development;
- Continuously study the efficacy of direct payment programs and how they compare to other types of federal assistance.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Background:

The U.S. labor movement and, indeed, all Americans have a shared interest in slowing and ultimately reversing the disastrous impact of man-made climate change, both in the workplace and in communities across the nation. Workers, families, and communities — particularly low-income ones — will be deeply affected if national and state-level policymakers, governmental institutions, corporations and consumers do not take serious, tangible steps toward the decarbonization of our economy and environment.

We cannot, under any circumstances, fail to address the time-sensitive, multifaceted problems posed by global climate change. Our planet already faces challenges today due to climate change, and will continue to face challenges in ever-increasing intensity without bold, courageous action by our elected officials.

Without a broad coalition of working people, elected officials and corporations working in tandem toward our shared interests in protecting our planet, recent scientific data suggests our planet teeters on the brink of no return from the catastrophic impact of greenhouse gas emissions that have fueled our nation's economic growth since the Industrial Revolution.

It has become increasingly clear in recent years, however, that corporations have little interest in abandoning short-term profits for long-term ecological health. It is thus incumbent upon working people to pressure their elected officials into taking bold, targeted action at stopping the corporations who have driven, and continue to drive, the warming of the planet.

In the past few years, we have seen massive wildfires ravage homes and communities in Northern California and deadly hurricanes demolish large swaths of Puerto Rico, North Carolina, Florida and other U.S. states and territories. The annual number of

billion-dollar weather disasters in the U.S. has more than doubled from roughly six to more than twelve in the past five years.

In a market-based system, however, our national conscience tends to view the fight to preserve our environment, protect our communities and prioritize our collective future as a cost — not an investment. This is a fundamentally flawed line of reasoning that will undoubtedly lead to a costly cycle of fixing increasingly expensive disasters, in terms of both human lives and of dollars, rather than attempting to prevent them in the first place. Without question, we desperately need to take action on climate change.

The push to confront climate change has been resisted by both climate change deniers, despite overwhelming evidence that climate change is real and already having tangible impacts on our environment, and by those who believe in climate change but whose livelihoods would be impacted by the transition to a zero-emissions economy. OPEIU recognizes the latter concerns as legitimate, and we believe in passing policies to ease the transition and ensure every person who is at risk of losing their job due to the transition will be given priority treatment when new, “green” jobs inevitably emerge.

We unapologetically support efforts to create a sustainable, safe and healthy future for our children. For too long, we have allowed business interests to be prioritized over the existential interests of our planet. We do not believe that a healthy environment and a healthy economy are mutually exclusive. If we allow our environment to slide into irreversible degradation, there will be consequences far greater than we can imagine, and those consequences will undoubtedly be disproportionately borne by poor, working-class and middle-class people.

The stresses and challenges posed by the intensification of global climate change have brought about very real concerns about the rise of “eco-fascism,” a synthesis of far-right policies aimed at ensuring a livable planet — for whites only. We utterly reject this bigoted ideology and believe it is incumbent upon the

labor movement to work together with environmental groups to ensure an equitable future on a thriving planet.

The often-bipartisan apprehension about confronting climate change is not a question of our collective ability to do so; it is a question of our collective political courage. As a society, we have developed the technology to slow or even reverse climate change, but as the window of opportunity to do so gets smaller with each passing day of inaction, we are frozen in place by the corporate giants and elected officials who want the unjust status quo to continue onwards — no matter the human, environmental or economic costs of doing so.

There is no reason why the U.S. cannot become the global leader in green energy and set a standard for other nations around the world to adopt. We are under no illusions that the transition to a green economy will be easy. But we also recognize it is an existential necessity, and the U.S. is uniquely placed, with its scientific and productive capacities, to become the world's largest producer of sustainable green energy, which will benefit workers, communities, business owners and, most importantly, the planet we call home in the process.

Policies:

OPEIU and its local unions call upon the federal government to:

- Work in tandem with workers and industry to enact legislation that moves our nation toward a carbon-neutral, zero-emissions economy as soon as possible;
- Invest heavily in “green” public infrastructure projects to provide good-paying jobs to those who need them and to ensure all taxpayer-funded projects are not contributing to manmade climate change;
- Ensure workers in industries that would be disproportionately impacted by the shift to a green economy — particularly those in the energy sector, like coal miners and oil rig workers — are

able to be retrained at no cost to them to transition to work in the emerging green sector;

- Direct public investments to diversify local and regional economies dependent on industries that further deepen the climate crisis, and prioritize the creation of high-quality jobs by mandating that all beneficiaries of public investment pay employees a living wage;
- Fund research that will help confront the climate crisis by providing data, new technologies and more efficient energy production methods;
- Join 28 other developed nations in making substantial investments in a nationwide high-speed rail system and other public transportation options as sustainable alternatives to our overdependence on greenhouse gas-emitting vehicles and airplanes;
- Coordinate efforts across state lines to maintain the availability of clean, pollution-free water sources for every person in the United States;
- Reject the construction of new oil and gas pipelines, especially on protected indigenous lands, and heavily fine the owners of existing pipelines that leak and cause further environmental degradation while still enriching those who own such pipelines at the taxpayer's expense;
- Affirm its commitment to the well-being of our natural environment, understanding that our health is intimately tied to the health of our planet;
- Recognize our historic national prioritization of private profits over the well-being of our people and our planet is both immoral and unjust, and should be reversed immediately;
- Clean up existing hazardous waste sites and promote carbon-neutral economic development on such lands;
- Prevent private developers from using eminent domain to build on public lands at the expense of our protected natural environment;

- Pass legislation strengthening the rights of workers in green industries to organize, unionize and collectively bargain without fear of employer retaliation, thereby ensuring working people can reap the economic benefits of the transition to a modern, green economy.
- Promote incentives for consumers to purchase electric vehicles to reduce carbon emissions;
- Rapidly increase investments and research into publicly owned desalination plants to ensure continuous freshwater access;
- Go beyond a simple carbon tax and directly target with sanctions the individuals at corporations who are responsible for the intensification of the crisis;
- Expand nuclear energy production safely, creating both good-paying union jobs and sustainable energy in the process.

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR

Background:

Millions of federal employees are denied the legal right to bargain collectively over salaries and other economic conditions. Large numbers of public sector workers are struggling to win the basic rights and protections gained by private sector workers under the National Labor Relations Act.

The constitutional basis for the enactment of federal collective bargaining legislation, which would afford state and local government employees the basic rights already enjoyed by private sector workers, has been firmly established by the U.S. Supreme Court.

Across the nation collective bargaining rights are under attack – and in Wisconsin declared illegal in the public sector – working families are being blamed for the economic disaster manufactured on Wall Street, and the assault on collective bargaining threatens the foundation of our middle class.

The U.S. has long lagged behind other industrialized nations in terms of collective bargaining. In fact, millions of federal employees are denied the right to bargain collectively over wages and other economic conditions. It has never been more apparent that the right to bargain collectively is directly tied to wage growth and the decline of the middle class as the attacks on this fundamental right continue to grow, the 1 percent get richer while the living standards of the remaining 99 percent continue to decline.

In fact, in study after study, governments and taxpayers, and not just union members, have benefitted from collective bargaining – a point lost in the wave of attacks on public sector employees. As circumstances and workplaces change over time, the expectations and needs of employers and workforces shift, which also inevitably results in disputes. Collective bargaining provides a means of resolving disputes and adjusting to changing

conditions. Legislation creating modern collective bargaining was, in fact, drafted in order to serve this purpose.

Policies:

- OPEIU affirms its support for and commitment to work toward enactment of federal legislation to establish a rational framework extending full collective bargaining rights to all state and local government employees.
- Until such legislation is enacted, OPEIU will work in individual state and local jurisdictions to achieve legislation giving public sector workers full rights and protection to organize and bargain collectively.
- OPEIU affirms its support for and commitment to work toward enactment of federal legislation to extend the right to bargain collectively over salaries and other economic conditions of employment to all federal employees.
- OPEIU will join the historic movement sweeping across the U.S. to restore collective bargaining rights and to protect them where they still exist.

DISCRIMINATION AGAINST THE TRANSGENDER COMMUNITY

Background:

In 2015, a national transgender discrimination survey by the U.S. Trans Survey (USTS) found that the transgender community is the most discriminated segment of the LGBTQIA+Q community. More than twenty-five (25) percent of trans people were fired because they were transgender; fifty (50) percent were harassed on the job; twenty (20) percent were evicted or denied housing because of their identity; and seventy-eight (78) percent of all trans students (from secondary, high school and college) were harassed or assaulted. Trans people of color face discrimination at disproportionately high rates.

Discrimination in the workplace is not simply limited to the employment process. Transgender workers are routinely forced to use restrooms that do not coincide with their gender identity. Employers often permit, or refuse to investigate, harassment by co-workers.

There are no federal laws prohibiting discrimination based on gender identity or expression. And discrimination is not limited to simply hiring or firing a trans employee; the corrosiveness of trans discrimination crosses all spheres of public and private life. We can and must defend against efforts to restrict the rights of transgender people further, and must affirmatively fight to ensure transgender rights are codified into law.

Currently, twenty-three (23) states and the District of Columbia prohibit discrimination in employment based on gender identity. Also, trans people who work for the federal government or a federal contractor are protected under an Executive Order signed in 2014. In 2021, the Biden administration overturned the previous administration's restrictions on transgender individuals serving in the military.

OPEIU and its local unions recognize transgender rights are human rights, and that the fight for transgender rights can and should coincide with the broader movement for workers' rights.

Policies:

OPEIU and its local unions will:

- Educate its members and the labor movement as a whole to understand that transgender people are individuals of any age or sex whose appearance, personal characteristics or behaviors differ from stereotypes about how men and women are “supposed” to be.
- Ensure that new collective bargaining agreements include language to prohibit discrimination based on gender identity and expression, and will use gender-neutral language (i.e. “worker,” “employee”) when negotiating collective bargaining agreements.
- Support membership and staff education on the subject of trans rights, as well as gender-inclusive language and framing in communications and bargaining to support current and future transgender OPEIU members;
- Support all state legislation prohibiting transgender discrimination in employment, housing and public accommodations.
- Fight for health care for its transgender members and will work to ensure that union contracts fully cover the health needs of transgender people. OPEIU will also work to ensure this includes ensuring all transgender people have access to mental health services to help address the despairingly high rates of suicide among the transgender community.
- We will support all legislation that ensures transgender individuals have access to their identity documents, and the legal right to change their name and gender classification in accordance with their self-determined identity. This must also

encompass their ability to apply for, or adjust their visas, passports and all identification paperwork pertaining to their immigration status.

- Believe transgender individuals must not be held to a different legal standard pertaining to their right to self-defense when their lives are in danger. Bigotry and discrimination must not be allowed in any court of law.
- Call for legislation to ensure public schools provide prejudice-free and accurate information in their sexual health classes regarding gender identity and sexuality, to protect the quality of life for transgender youth.

ELECTORAL SECURITY

Background:

The insurrection of January 6, 2021 — instigated by a sitting president and intended to overturn the results of the 2020 election — revealed, on a national scale, how well-organized anti-democratic activists are. It is more critical now than at any time in modern history to build faith in our democratic institutions through meaningful reforms that provide confidence in our electoral system.

Policies:

OPEIU and its local unions call upon state-level lawmakers and the U.S. Congress to:

- Within the confines of our state-run federal electoral system, expand access to early voting in every state to ensure working people are always able to exercise their right to vote;
- Expand mail-in voting, increase the number polling locations and lengthen hours and prioritize making it easier for citizens to vote;
- Impose serious penalties on those who undermine the fair and free electoral process, which includes the attack on the U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2021;
- Take steps to ensure the integrity of elections, including encouraging nonpartisan poll watchers and ensuring polling places are free of intimidation or politicking;
- Reject wholeheartedly the rise of bad faith attacks by election deniers — a strategy pioneered by former President Trump — to overturn the results of elections.

ELECTRONIC MONITORING

Background:

Millions working with electronic data equipment are being monitored. Employers in such diverse industries as hotels, insurance companies, trucking and public utilities are using this equipment for electronic surveillance.

Many employers monitor employee phone calls, computer monitors, through email and voicemail, and when employees are online. Hidden cameras are used for surveillance. Work functions are audited and tallies kept in many instances unbeknownst to the workers involved. Programs have been developed that even go beyond this to the world of the subliminal. Messages are flashed on screens urging increased productivity.

Employers typically claim that electronic monitoring is necessary to maintain quality of service and productivity. However, there is no evidence to support these claims. In fact, the quality of customer service often suffers as a result of arbitrary “performance” standards enforced by electronic monitoring.

Such monitoring invades workers’ privacy and erodes the dignity of their jobs. In addition, numerous studies have shown that all of this creates levels of stress that result in such adverse health conditions as digestive ailments, high blood pressure and heart disease.

The Covid-19 pandemic has led to a significant increase in remote work—and a rise in electronic monitoring of workers. From tech companies to warehouses to retail, management is monitoring employees at record levels, often to stifle union organizing campaigns among employees. Corporations are texting workers anti-union messages, monitoring video calls, using keystroke tracking software, and tracking workers’ social media posts to stifle workers’ rights.

Policies:

OPEIU and its local unions:

- Call for the elimination of monitoring abuses. We call on employers to confine electronic monitoring to employees' work, and not to monitor personal telephone calls, electronic mail, or other personal communications. We also urge employers not to monitor break rooms, cafeterias and other areas in which work is not ordinarily performed, except in areas where monitoring is needed to protect workers' safety, such as stairwells and parking lots. Video monitoring of locker rooms, bathrooms or similar private areas should not be conducted under any circumstances.
- Also, personal employee information should be kept confidential. If the employer is legally compelled to release information about an employee to a third party, the employee should be informed.
- Above all, support the use of the collective bargaining process as the best means of preventing the punitive or oppressive uses of electronic monitoring and surveillance.

EMPLOYMENT NON-DISCRIMINATION AND THE EQUALITY ACT

Background:

Today, in the United States, it is legal for same-sex couples to marry. However, in twenty-six (26) states, lesbian, gay and bisexual workers can be fired simply because of their sexual orientation. A welcome 2020 Supreme Court decision held people in all states can seek recourse for employment discrimination based sexual orientation and gender identity through the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and federal courts.

Despite this ostensible protection from employment discrimination, LGBTQIA+ workers across the United States — qualified, hardworking people — are denied job opportunities, fired or otherwise discriminated against for reasons that have nothing to do with their performance and abilities.

Twenty-three (23) states and the District of Columbia have passed laws prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, and ten (10) more explicitly interpret existing law to protect LGBTQIA+ people from discrimination in employment, housing, and public services. Non-discrimination laws help ensure that lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, asexual, and gender non-conforming people have equal access to the same opportunities, benefits and protections granted to everyone else such as the ability to work in an environment where people are judged by job performance, not their sexual orientation or gender identity.

OPEIU is proud of our past work with Congress, the civil rights community and the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community to develop the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA). We are equally proud to support passage of the Equality Act, which would codify protections for LGBTQIA+ people, barring discrimination in employment, housing, medical care, jury service, in public spaces and public services.

Along with marriage-equality advancements and state-based employment protection, the Act would have mandated that federal contractors and subcontractors that do more than \$10,000 a year of business may not discriminate in employment practices against LGBTQIA+employees.

Policies:

OPEIU and its local unions will:

- Promote the passage of the Equality Act through our educational conferences, our website and OPEIU Connect, and political advocacy. We will explain it was critical to replace ENDA because of its broad religious exemptions, which would continue to bar LGBTQIA+ employment.
- Oppose the expansion of the Supreme Court’s ruling in Hobby Lobby, which broadened the religious exemption against the implementation of the Affordable Care Act in places of employment where the owners claim that it violates their religious beliefs. Recently, some states have attempted to use this case to enact anti-LGBTQIA+ employment laws.
- Support Pride at Work’s advocacy within the labor movement to urge the AFL-CIO and all its affiliated unions to support passage of the Equality Act.
- Urge all of its members to email, write and call their local representatives to ensure basic fairness in the workplace is guaranteed for all. Each worker must be guaranteed the right to do his or her job and contribute to society, buy a home, and be accepted in all places of public accommodation without the fear of discrimination.
- Believe organized labor will only be successful in its fight for economic and social justice if we speak out against ignorance, bigotry, intolerance, prejudice, hatred and fear.
- Join the fight to see legislation is enacted to prohibit such discrimination, to provide basic protection and ensure fairness in the workplace for all people.

ENERGY

Background:

Everyone deserves clean air, clean water and safe energy sources and the preservation of our natural resources. The decisions made today about adapting to climate change and the ways we generate energy will impact the economy, environment and infrastructure in the U.S. for decades to come.

Climate change is now an indisputable fact that is thoroughly changing our environment, our economy, our labor markets and all aspects of our daily lives. It can only be addressed through a comprehensive energy program that focuses on investing in our planet's future, creates good-paying green jobs and funds job training in new energy technologies to provide jobs for those workers displaced from the traditional jobs in the carbon-producing energy production sources, such as coal mining. To confront the challenge of climate change, the U.S. must move rapidly to newer sources of energy such as wind and solar, and continue to develop safe publicly- owned nuclear energy technologies.

Since the transition to clean energy sources is a long-term project, however, for the foreseeable future the U.S. will continue to use a wide range of energy sources, including traditional sources like coal, oil and natural gas. We must use a range of tools, including policy incentives, to make our economy more efficient and to minimize greenhouse emissions in the interim.

Such legislation must ensure that this sustainable development requires a commitment to decent working conditions, a safe work environment and access to prevailing wages. It is simply not enough to create "green jobs." These jobs must not only provide good wages, but must provide benefits – including retirement plans – clear career pathways for promotion, and the right of workers to have a voice on the job. In other words, the right to organize into unions.

OPEIU and its local unions support the concept of a “just transition” so that during the period of transition no worker should suffer economic hardship or insecurity as a result of the changes required to address the climate crisis. Provisions must be made for education, re-employment in comparably good jobs, or bridges to retirement. Working families in the poorest communities of the nation, who have shouldered much of the burden of our carbon-based economy in terms of poor air quality, health hazards, lower wages and longer commute times, must be among the first included in job-creation programs, community development and pollution-mitigation efforts.

A key part in tackling climate change relates to the systems by which we transport energy. Transmission lines, pipelines, freight rail and waterways are vital parts of the nation’s infrastructure. Just like the roads and bridges, these systems have been allowed to decay, to become outmoded, and to be outpaced by demand. As new sources of energy come about from wind, solar, natural gas (as well as existing sources of oil and coal), new properly-designed and safe infrastructure must be built to transport that energy to market.

Policies:

OPEIU and its local unions support:

- The repair and maintenance of existing pipelines, which, when properly designed, manufactured, installed and maintained by skilled workers are a low carbon emissions method of transporting oil and natural gas. In addition, the existing pipelines lower the cost of the fuel they carry compared to other forms of transportation.

When our energy infrastructure is allowed to decay, it becomes a threat to public safety and to the lives of workers, as shown by the natural gas explosions in California and Kansas City. This criminal neglect also poses a powerful environmental threat both in terms of toxic leaks and the release of methane, and an

economic threat because the efficiency of our domestic energy production is diminished.

- Taking immediate steps by the Pipeline and Hazardous Material Safety Administration. Under the most recent pipeline safety law passed by Congress, the Pipeline Safety, Regulatory Certainty and Job Creation Act – which included spending authorizations that expired in 2015 — immediate steps can be taken to accelerate repairing our nation’s energy infrastructure.

- The principles of the national BlueGreen Alliance, a project of International Unions, environmentalists and community organizations dedicated to focusing public and private investments on good job creation in renewable energy technologies. The BlueGreen Alliance seeks to develop energy policy and investment initiatives that will create jobs, and help pave the way toward energy independence in the U.S.

- We call upon the Congress to enact a comprehensive jobs and energy policy.

ENVIRONMENT

Background:

The labor movement has a vital interest in the quality of the environment in our communities and around the globe. Workers and their families are deeply affected at home and at the workplace by decisions made on the environment. In the interests of our collective future, we cannot lose sight of the fact that the market assigns no value to sound ecological principles. Our environment is external to corporate accounting.

Only people acting through public policy can assign a value to a good life-sustaining and life-enhancing environment. The environment should be protected by stringent legislation and regulation. Our governments should be backed by the power to levy a sanction for the breaches of regulation at least equal to the profit that has been made by not complying with the regulations.

We are witnessing the results of the cutbacks in infrastructure in communities being literally poisoned by lead and other contaminants. The decade-long crisis in Flint, Michigan, is just the tip of the iceberg. Throughout the country, water systems are testing positive for lead. The result of the failure to invest in publicly run utilities and schools has now led to a huge public health crisis.

It is no coincidence that communities of color are currently, and continue to be projected to be, the hardest hit by changes to the environment. The United States has a long history of environmental racism, systemically putting oppressed peoples on the frontlines of man-made environmental crises.

It is fundamental to our position workers have rights to jobs and a healthy, safe environment. Blackmail in terms of jobs versus the environment is not acceptable or justifiable. We do not accept there must be a trade-off of one against the other.

The “right-to-know” what toxic and unsafe substances with which one works is basic. In the absence of adequate and accurate

information there is no possibility for action. Worse yet, there will be misdirected action. There is no right to withhold information when that information affects our livelihood, lifestyles or life itself.

Workers have never had a right to refuse work. Such actions have generally meant discipline or even discharge. It is essential that, just as workers are coming to have the right to refuse work that is unsafe or unhealthy, they should equally have the right to refuse work that will pollute their environment or jeopardize the longer-term availability of natural resources.

A stark example of what occurs when workers, unknowingly, must work with toxins is sweeping through the American Southwest. Thousands of workers who worked in uranium mines have experienced a tremendous increase in cancer, lung and kidney diseases, birth defects and suicide as a result of these diseases. These diseases are not just limited to those who actually work in the mines. Spouses too have suffered health effects from miscarriages, stillbirths and having children born with birth defects.

Workers and their unions must have the right to participate in the policy process, both in the community and in the workplace. They are learning that very few, if any, policies of substance can be based purely on technical considerations or “management’s prerogative.” Participation in community and workplace decisions is an important feature of our democratic system. The right to participate in workplace decisions necessarily puts limits on “management’s prerogative,” but it is now beginning to be recognized this is both a democratic right and leads to a sounder industrial system.

Finally, there is the right to participate in public decision-making. It is only through full participation of the interested parties — union, workers, management, the community and the government — that environmental measures can meet the needs of the stakeholders. It is the only way we can trust our

governments to be both responsive and effective in their environmental policies.

In many ways, trust in government is going to be the hardest to attain. For example, the whole process by which hazardous wastes are generated and regulated is heavily weighed against the public in general and labor in particular. Not only does business have more money and more information at its disposal, but also the very values and political judgments that determine which issues get priority and how far that concern is pursued are set largely if not entirely by business.

Substantive reform of environmental law must start not with the laws themselves but with the process by which the decisions about the nature and content of the laws are made. Only with attention to matters of process can individual workers and the labor movement contribute to the development of sound environmental policies in Canada and the United States and also gain what they deserve from those policies.

Policies:

OPEIU and its local unions call upon the federal government to:

- Step up the battle against acid deposition, known commonly as acid rain and still a large problem in India and much of Asia, by spelling out the targets and the timetable for the clean-up of the sources and to take sanctions against polluters, should they fail to do so.
- Produce, in conjunction with the provincial and state authorities, a concrete plan and timetable for the total clean-up of the sources of Great Lakes pollution: further pollution of our water supplies is intolerable;
- Coordinate efforts to produce national plans for the safe disposal of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs); to coordinate efforts to ensure a safer substitute is manufactured to ensure plastic bottles are manufactured without any dangerous chemicals, including biphenyl-A and phthalates.

- Ensure safe and fully effective nuclear waste disposal;
- Coordinate efforts to ensure the nation enjoys effective and comprehensive water treatment and sewage disposal systems;
- Step up the implementation of laws to reduce our carbon footprint by making renewable, sustainable energy sources the law of the land.
- Ensure protection of the Arctic National Wildlife Reserve (ANWR), and prevent oil drilling that would endanger the region's wildlife. OPEIU urges its local unions to educate their members about these goals and to work together and with other organizations for their achievement.
- Take every measure possible to stymie and ultimately eliminate the spread of hazardous manmade PFAS chemicals, which are already detectable in most Americans' bodies.

EQUAL PAY FOR EQUAL WORK

Background:

As of 2018, women who work full time only earn eighty (80) cents for every dollar men earn in jobs that are comparable. The statistics for women of color are even worse: African-American women only earn approximately sixty-one (61) cents and Latinas only fifty-three (53) cents for every dollar earned by the average white man.

One decade ago, the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act became law. Although this law did restore the rights of employees to sue in court over ongoing wage discrimination, it did not give women the tools necessary to combat the wage gap itself at a structural level.

More than fifty years ago, Congress passed the Equal Pay Act (1963). This was supposed to prohibit gender-based wage discrimination between men and women in the same workplace who performed jobs that require substantially equal skill, effort and responsibility. The law was never enforced by the Department of Labor, however, and now the gender pay gap is still 2.5 times the size of other industrialized countries.

Equal pay is a family issue. Women make up almost half of the workforce, and in countless families women are the major or sole breadwinners. More women are also increasingly working in fields that have been traditionally occupied by men. When women do not receive equal pay, not only do they suffer, but their families do as well. Recently the AFL-CIO conducted a national survey of working women and found that the number one issue for both union and non-union women workers is equal pay for equal work. In order to enforce equal pay, it is also necessary to support paycheck transparency to unmask the existing wage gaps in workplaces.

It is time to make equal pay a reality. During this unprecedented time of growing income inequality, nothing can be

more important than ensuring that all workers receive equal pay for equal work.

Policies:

- OPEIU will campaign together with the AFL-CIO to pass the Paycheck Fairness Act of 2019, introduced by U.S. Rep. Rosa DeLauro (D-Conn.) and U.S. Sen. Patty Murray (D-Wash). First introduced in 2013, the Act would add procedural and enforcement mechanisms to the 1963 Equal Pay Act. The Act would also require all employers to demonstrate that wage differentials are based on factors other than gender and strengthen penalties for equal pay violations.

- OPEIU, through our local unions, will work with state federations of labor and community-based groups to pass laws at the state level that will guarantee equal pay.

- OPEIU will work to ensure that all its collective bargaining agreements contain equal pay for comparable work provisions.

ERGONOMICS AND OSHA REFORM

Background:

Cumulative trauma diseases (CTD) are a leading cause of reported occupational illness in the nation. Millions of workers are at risk of injuries from repeated trauma. This hazard clearly poses a grave danger. Workers with cumulative trauma injuries suffer pain and lost time on the job.

What is most astounding is how minor — and economical — changes can greatly decrease the risk. Specially shaped keyboards and wrist rests can vastly decrease the chance for a computer user to develop a CTD — and for only a few dollars more than a standard keyboard. Short, regular breaks, variations in activity, and careful design of a work area can help protect everyone from secretaries to poultry workers to dentists from CTDs.

The growing problem of occupationally related musculoskeletal disorders requires immediate action by OSHA to prevent this workplace epidemic from reaching even greater proportions.

A standard on ergonomics hazards must address a wide range of musculoskeletal disorders. These include: musculoskeletal disorders involving damage to the tendons; tendon sheaths; synovial lubrication of the tendon sheaths; and the related bones, muscles and nerves of the hands, wrists, elbows, shoulders, neck and back. The more frequently occurring occupationally induced disorders in this class include: carpal tunnel syndrome; epicondylitis (tennis elbow); tendonitis; ganglion cysts; tenosynovitis; synovitis; stenosing tenosynovitis of the finger; DeQuervain's Disease; and low back pain. These disorders arise from repeated biomechanical stress due to ergonomic hazards. Other terms that have been used for such disorders include: repetitive motion injury; occupational overuse syndrome; and repetitive strain injury.

Policies:

- OPEIU and its local unions support OSHA's ergonomic guidelines designed to address musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) in the workplace. This four pronged approach includes guidelines for a number of industries based on current incident rates; calls for OSHA to conduct inspections for ergonomic hazards and issue citations; provides assistance to businesses, particularly small businesses, and helps them proactively address ergonomic issues in the workplace; and the chartering of an advisory committee that is authorized to, among other things, identify gaps in research to the application of ergonomics and ergonomic principles in the workplace.
- While OPEIU pushes for even more stringent OSHA regulations, it supports legislative proposals to provide adequate funds to research the effects of computer keyboards and monitors on workers. OPEIU further supports efforts to assure the safe use of computers through our OPEIU contract language, legislation or regulation setting basic minimum standards that require ergonomic design of workstations, periodic equipment testing and maintenance, regular eye exams, regular work breaks, transfer rights for pregnant employees, and measures to reduce radiation emissions, and prohibit machine pacing or computer monitoring.

FOOD ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

Background:

Federal food assistance programs, such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), school lunch and Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program are facing a crisis. In recent years, inadequate steps have been taken to ensure that families in need receive food assistance. Government statistics indicate that more than 25 percent don't receive SNAP. It should be noted you must be a citizen or a legal immigrant to be eligible for any food assistance programs. Despite their solid achievement of ending mass hunger and malnutrition in the United States, efforts are underway to cripple these programs.

A few of the results would be:

- A sharp increase in hunger and malnutrition among Americans;
- State authority to change programs as they see fit, so that anti-hunger efforts vary from state-to-state; and
- The shredding of the food safety net during recessions and times of increased unemployment, since eligible recipients would be aided only to the extent that Congress provides appropriations.

SNAP has aided in preventing hunger among family members of hard-working Americans whose wages are so low that they are unable to provide adequate nutrition. Food stamps provide a temporary, but needed, safety net. The WIC program has helped improve the health of poverty-stricken mothers and children. The current food assistance programs have proved their worth in protecting the most vulnerable Americans against hunger and starvation.

Policies:

OPEIU and its local unions pledge to fight to prevent the dismantling of the food assistance programs and the hunger and malnutrition that would result.

FREE TRADE

Background:

The so-called “free trade” policies of multinational corporations backed by the government’s trade deals (NAFTA, CAFTA, USMCA, etc.) have led to the decimation of manufacturing jobs and in a relatively short time span have turned the U.S. into an almost exclusively service-based economy with massive trade deficits, an ever-declining standard of living for U.S. workers, declining environmental standards, a growth of unemployment and an ever-increasing wage gap between the rich and the poor.

The advocacy of free trade and adherence to global capital markets, regardless of consequences, has brought rampant unemployment. Especially hit hard are youth, with few prospects of finding a job of any kind. Meanwhile, attacks on public programs have meant that the social safety net, built by workers, is becoming increasingly incapable of preventing the reemergence of levels of social misery that inspired such programs in the first place.

In the U.S., Canada and Europe, the gap between the rich and the poor has been steadily growing, creating even more sharply defined social inequalities. Growth in the U.S. goods trade deficit with China between 2001 and 2013 eliminated or displaced 3.2 million U.S. jobs, 2.4 million of which were in manufacturing, about two-thirds of all U.S. manufacturing jobs lost or displaced in the time period. Before NAFTA, the U.S. had a \$1.7 billion trade surplus with Mexico. Today, that deficit is more than \$80 billion.

Furthermore, job exporting is no longer confined to the manufacturing sector of the U.S. economy. Call centers are now being established, in increasing frequency, in India and Pakistan and throughout the world. X-rays are being read by technicians in low-wage countries and high-tech jobs have been outsourced together with jobs in the financial sector and in virtually every

segment of the U.S. economy. The U.S. is now a net exporter of service jobs.

The practice of global free trade has been to provide multinational corporations with the unfettered ability to force workers to compete against one another for the lowest wages and working conditions, while corporations reap enormous profits and control technological development. This situation is directly comparable to conditions at the end of the last century and again in the 1930s.

Workers' rights clauses are a key to progressive trade, aid and investment policies. Far from "protectionist," such measures can act to encourage the global economic growth and development denied through markets dominated and controlled exclusively by the interests of giant multinational corporations. Workers' rights clauses require trading partners to respect freedom of association and free collective bargaining, prohibit forced labor and child labor, eliminate discrimination in employment and provide for remuneration and basic health and safety protection.

The role of the U.S. Congress in regulating trade policy has basically been replaced by the World Trade Organization, which continues to ignore workers' rights and threaten any existing U.S. trade laws. U.S. representatives to the WTO have in the past proposed eliminating all tariffs in the next decade with no effort to strengthen or include any protections of workers' rights. America's workers do not need more flawed trade deals.

Policies:

OPEIU and its local unions will:

- Work in coalition with environmental groups, health care advocates, the LGBTQIA+Q community and the AFL-CIO to stop all pernicious trade deals.
- Work through the AFL-CIO to insist that Congress reclaim its constitutional role in trade policy. The Trade Act of 2002 should

be overturned as well as both the North American Free Trade Act and the Central American Free Trade Act.

- Call for the implementation of measures for sustainable economic and social development to close the gap between countries with different levels of development.
- Demand provisions for the protection of our public services, notably in education and health care, within trade agreements.
- Together with the CLC and the AFL-CIO, demand the Canadian and U.S. governments create a Labor Forum of the Americas.
- Together with the CLC and the AFL-CIO, demand the Canadian and U.S. governments refrain from signing any trade agreements that do not contain provisions for basic labor and human rights.
- Together with the CLC and the AFL-CIO, will step up mobilization to strengthen the Trade Union Confederation of the Americas (TUCA-CSA) to make sure these objectives will be met.
- Support and will fully participate in any actions and commitments that are directed along these lines. The stakes are high. In view of the implications for our culture, our society and our political and economic structure, we need an informed and sustained participation from every group of our society. The result of this debate will greatly affect our future.
- Support any strategy built on real cooperation of economic, social and labor forces of nations, promoting equal distribution of wealth and resources, harmonization of higher labor and environmental standards, higher average standards of living, social justice, human rights and respect of national identities.
- Support trade policies that raise standards for all working people, no matter where they are from. Policies that raise wages and improve working conditions help all workers and counteract the disastrous race-to-the-bottom policies that continue to impact communities across the globe for the enrichment of the few.

HEALTH CARE

Background:

America has some of the best medical facilities, technologies, physicians and researchers in the world. The Affordable Care Act (ACA), otherwise known as Obamacare, has gone a long way toward ensuring all Americans have adequate health care coverage. Despite this historic milestone in 2010, we still have a long way to go as access to health care is still not available for twenty-nine (29) million working families. The cost of health care in the U.S. in 2017 was nearly \$4 trillion. The U.S. is the only industrialized nation that does not provide universal, federally funded coverage. Health care costs represent almost eighteen (18) percent of the nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), and they continue to skyrocket. The ACA does represent a historical step in the fight for a more equitable and cost-effective health care system. The provisions of the law require:

- Beginning 2014, if an employer doesn't provide paid coverage, workers must still pay for coverage and are able to purchase insurance directly in an Affordable Insurance Exchange.

The exchange is an insurance marketplace where individuals and small businesses can buy health plans that meet benefits and cost standards.

- Almost everyone to obtain insurance or pay a fee to help offset the costs of caring for the uninsured Americans.
- Tax credits for small businesses to cover their employees.
- A \$250 rebate to seniors who reach the Medicare prescription drug "donut hole" when costs are no longer covered by the federal government. (Currently, prescriptions are covered under Medicare Part D for those seniors for a monthly premium of between \$11 and \$66, depending on the insured's income. Seniors are responsible for the costs over that up to \$5,000, when Part D kicks in again.) Seniors in the donut hole will now be able to get half-priced prescriptions.

- The allowing of children to stay on their parents' policies until age twenty-six (26).

- The placing of new rules on premium increases; however, the cost of these premiums is still borne by the individual.

- Insurance companies to spend 80 to 85 percent of premiums on actual medical care.

- The providing of free preventative care (i.e., wellness examinations) under Medicare.

- The expansion of preventive care to states that agree to new funding (from the federal government) for their Medicaid programs. This provision covers preventive services for patients at little or no cost.

- As Medicaid programs have expanded, the Act required states to pay primary care physicians at least the full Medicare payment rates for primary care.

In addition, the law prohibits:

- The exclusion of people who have pre-existing conditions by insurance companies, including children.

- Insurance companies from dropping coverage for people who get sick.

- Insurance companies from placing lifetime limits on coverage.

OPEIU and its local unions recognize the ACA is a step toward universal access and universal benefits and must not be repealed but only expanded.

It does provide for comprehensive benefits, and it does begin to address effective cost containment, public accountability for insurance companies, and individual choice of provider. However, the ACA does not recognize the importance of unionism and collective bargaining. Union-supported multiemployer (Taft-Hartley) plans, which provide the gold standard of health care for working Americans, will be severely threatened and many will cease to exist as employers use the Affordable Care Act to shift costs directly to employees. Despite efforts from many unions to

provide that union Taft-Hartley Funds be allowed to purchase insurance from the Exchanges, such efforts failed.

In addition, the law does not cover the more than 11 million undocumented working families in this country. Thus, costs to cover the totally uninsured continue to rise, and as they do, Congress continues to seek to reduce benefits under Medicare.

Policies:

OPEIU and its local unions will:

- Continue to support and fight attacks against the Affordable Care Act and will provide education to all members on its provisions.
- Join with the AFL-CIO to defend the union-sponsored Taft-Hartley Trust Funds and will support any legislation that would provide that such funds could purchase coverage through the Affordable Exchanges.
- Work to ensure the provisions of the ACA that expand access to Medicaid to cover low-wage and unemployed workers are enforced.
- Join with the AFL-CIO to ensure the provision of the ACA that will provide tax credits for working families is enforced.
- Continue to support the right of medical professionals to act in an independent manner to develop and administer the treatment modality that best meets the needs of their patients. We deplore and condemn the practice of corporate medicine whereby treatment standards and access to the best available specialists is controlled by non-medical personnel whose decisions are focused solely on cost containment.
- Continue to advocate for a Patients' Bill of Rights that includes holding HMOs responsible and accountable for their policies and decisions affecting the quality and availability of medical services.
- Recognize the current system of health care is unsustainable and reaffirms its support of the AFL-CIO's Convention Resolution

adopted at the 2009 convention that recognized the need to establish health care as a right, not a privilege, such as is proposed by the Medicare for All Act of 2019. The measure is more expansive than past proposed legislation, and would move every American onto a single public insurance provider within two years, leaving only a small role for private insurance. Employers would be banned from offering their own private plans to compete with Medicare.

- Support the State-Based Universal Health Care Act of 2015 (HR3241). This bill would allow states to establish state-based universal health care systems for all of its residents. This bill would be superseded by a federal Medicare For All Act.

- Actively support the AFL-CIO Executive Council Policy adopted in 2012 titled Building on the Affordable Care Act. The AFL-CIO's statement makes clear the labor movement will fight all attempts to change Medicare or eliminate it through a voucher system. OPEIU will oppose all proposals to shift the costs to Medicare beneficiaries – whether by increasing their premiums, charging higher co-pays, or raising the Medicare eligibility age. The AFL-CIO's policy statement acknowledges that Medicare has proven to be more cost effective than private health insurance plans over the past four decades. As the experience of every other industrial country shows, Medicare for All would be the most effective way to contain soaring health care costs and achieve quality care for everyone.

- Together with the AFL-CIO, support the social insurance model for health care (Medicare for All) as the ultimate goal. We will not take our eyes off the price, but we will keep moving forward until the right to a single high standard of health care is a reality for everyone in America.

IMMIGRATION

Background:

Comprehensive immigration reform is a key component of the labor movement's agenda and a prerequisite to achieving racial and economic justice. OPEIU and its local unions support the framework for immigration reform put forward by faith, immigrant rights groups and many other diverse community groups that reflect our shared values: dignity, fairness, opportunity, voice and justice. In addition, immigration reform must include a clear path to citizenship; must advocate for keeping families together and halting the race to the bottom in wages and worker standards by employers who take advantage of the failures in immigration policy.

Immigration reform must fully protect U.S. workers regardless of immigration status, reduce the exploitation of immigrant workers, and reduce employers' incentive to hire undocumented workers rather than U.S. workers.

To do so, all workers, undocumented and U.S. citizens alike, must have the full protection of labor, health and safety and other laws. Comprehensive immigration reform must go hand-in-hand with strong, well-resourced and effective labor standards-enforcement initiatives that prioritizes workers' rights and workplace protections. OPEIU and its local unions support such an approach to ensure fair wages and safe working conditions.

Efforts to limit immigration from non-white countries in recent years are part of a broader ethnonationalist movement. We reject any proposals intended to ensure free movement for white people and restricted immigration for people of color.

Ultimately, the long-term solution to uncontrolled immigration is to stop promoting failed globalization policies and encourage just and human economic integration, which will eliminate the enormous social and economic inequalities at both the national and international levels. Most of the last decade's increase in

immigration from Mexico is the direct result of the disruption caused by NAFTA, which displaced millions of Mexicans from subsistence agriculture and enterprises that could not compete in a global market. Thus, any long-term solution is a fair-trade and globalization policy that uplifts all workers, promotes the creation of free trade unions around the world, ensures enforcement of labor rights, and guarantees all workers core labor protections.

Policies:

OPEIU and its local unions will:

- Support immigration reform and will fight together with the union movement and our allies in the immigrant-rights community for a clear, fair and timely path to citizenship for the 11 million undocumented immigrants in the U.S.
- Work to bring workers out of the shadows and to support a broad-based, robust and sustainable economic recovery. The current “enforcement only” approach to immigration is not the solution.
- Work to ensure immigration reform contains a strong plank to ensure family reunification. Not to do so creates strong pressures for unauthorized immigration as witnessed under the prior Immigration Reform and Control Act amnesty provisions.

In addition, families are the most basic learning institutions, teaching children values as well as skills to succeed in school, society and at work. Lastly, families are important economic units, and any reform must recognize that employment and family integration are interconnected. Family members work and workers have families.

- Join with our allies in the LGBTQIA+Q community to support the Uniting American Families Act (UAFSA), which would allow U.S. citizens and legal permanent residents in binational same-sex relationships to sponsor their foreign-born partner for immigration benefits.

- Support the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) Program initiated by President Barack Obama, which temporarily suspends the deportation of young people who were brought to the U.S. as children and who meet certain education requirements and other requirements outlined in the Development Relief and Education for all Minors Act (DREAM Act), which has never passed Congress in spite of the fact it has been introduced in every legislative session since 2001. We support and will work to see that the DREAM Act becomes the law. Currently an estimated 65,000 undocumented students (who were born in the U.S.) graduate from high school each year but live in constant fear of deportation despite their talent and potential to contribute to the nation and to its economy. Without legal status, they cannot drive or work; those who do find jobs are forced to take dead-end jobs and cannot qualify for most college scholarships and loans. The DREAM Act would provide a path to citizenship to high school graduates by allowing them to become permanent residents.
- Join with our allies in the immigrant-rights community to oppose the free-trade agreements like NAFTA, which have historically caused the massive migration to the U.S. by workers throughout Latin America. We support the renegotiation of such agreements or for their repeal if labor and environmental standards are not included.
- Support policies that protect undocumented workers from deportation and ensure employers are not able to threaten deportation in response to workers' organizing efforts.
- Recent reports have shown rampant abuse by tech employers of the H1-B visa program, which underpays immigrant workers and citizens alike. We support a structural rewrite of the program to ensure tech companies, who often owe their success to taxpayer-funded subsidies, pay workers what they are worth, regardless of country-of-origin.

- Affirm and support the right of anyone, anywhere to seek asylum in the United States.

J.B. MOSS VOICE OF THE ELECTORATE FUND AND POLITICAL ACTION

Background:

OPEIU and the labor movement have a responsibility to protect and advance the rights of members in the political arena as well as at the bargaining table. The importance of this political responsibility has never been greater.

Every two and four years, respectively, we face a contest in the United States that will determine not only which individuals sit in the Congress and the White House, but what set of ideas will shape the course of the nation.

Only through effective political action will we achieve programs that end the terrible human tragedy and inexcusable national waste of high unemployment; that rebuild our industrial base; that establish a trade policy that functions as much to the advantage of our nation and our people as to the advantage of our trading partners and their people; that help every young American who needs such help as far up the education ladder as his or her talents and capacity permit; that guarantee equal rights for women and minorities in all aspects of our political and economic life; that rejuvenate America's infrastructure; that extend and modernize our transportation systems; that protect our environment and rebuild our cities; that allow every elderly American to retire in dignity and security; that protect the rights of every working American to organize and bargain collectively; and that establish all the other policies outlined in these statements.

We also know those who oppose this agenda can generate many millions of dollars for their political candidates. Citizens United virtually guarantees that wealthy mega-donors can literally buy elections. The best means of raising competitive political dollars is through the J.B. Moss VOTE (Voice of the Electorate) Fund check-off.

The check-off has a number of advantages over other means of collecting contributions. Just a few are: 1) it will substantially increase OPEIU's political action fund; 2) it will help offset the huge amounts still being generated by wealthy individuals and corporate funds; 3) it will relieve much of the burden of annual J.B. Moss VOTE collections, usually borne by a few people willing to shoulder the responsibility, and free them for other J.B. Moss VOTE activities in registration, education and get-out-the-vote; and 4) it will compel the individual members to be more aware of the J.B. Moss VOTE Fund and OPEIU's political program, provide a better understanding for its necessity and very likely to be more supportive of it. It provides a sense of continuing participation that is both good for the members and for the union's political program.

An additional option developed over the years is the J.B. Moss VOTE Fund President's Club. Each member, officer or staff member that contributes at least \$200 annually to VOTE, either in a lump sum payment or through check-off, automatically becomes a member of the President's Club. These are the members who care deeply about political action and its effects on the union and its members.

Policies:

At stake are the policies, programs and laws needed to rebuild and maintain the nation's economy and social well-being. At stake are the rights and benefits won by OPEIU for its members through collective bargaining. Therefore, OPEIU urges all of its local unions, working with the International Union, to:

- Make each election year the year of labor's greatest registration and get-out-the-vote drive.
 - Expand participation in J.B. Moss VOTE political check-off.
- Great strides have been made in bargaining the right to check-off political contributions. Now the job of those local unions is to sign up more of the members. For those without check-off, it is time to

negotiate it. Politics is not all money, but without it, pro-labor candidates have little chance against big business and right-wing political action committees.

- Establish J.B. Moss VOTE Committees in every local union — not only to raise VOTE monies, but to organize for political action — to locate and educate activists and to mobilize the members behind OPEIU’s political program. Also, these committees should lobby and educate political candidates and legislators, making them aware of OPEIU’s political agenda.

Effective political action, including financial contributions to labor-friendly candidates, is the only way working people can have a positive impact on the legislative process. It is the responsibility of all OPEIU members to get involved in the political process by supporting the J.B. Moss Voice of the Electorate Fund through check-off and/or participation in the President’s Club.

JOBS AND TRAINING

Background:

Full employment is a moral, social, political and economic imperative. Economic efficiency and productivity improve at higher levels of employment and output. A healthy, full-employment economy contributes to strong, stable family life. The commitment to full employment must be fulfilled.

To move faster toward full employment and balanced economic growth, jobs must be created in the private sector and the public sector for the millions of men and women who cannot find jobs. The economy needs these workers who are able and willing to work in jobs that produce useful goods and services, generate tax revenues and stimulate the economy, particularly in communities with especially high unemployment.

Throughout history, organized labor has been in the forefront of promoting policies and programs to meet the needs of and raise the quality of life for workers and their families. Labor support will continue for economic and social programs to improve conditions for the family.

Direct, targeted and adequately funded public job programs are needed to make up for the private sector failure to create enough jobs, expand needed community services, construct planned community facilities, build and rehabilitate low- and moderate-income housing.

Hours of work need to be reduced and overtime penalties revised to provide more job opportunities. The standard 40-hour workweek of the 1930s should be brought in line with the historic downward trend in hours of work, and in line with the historic uptick in productivity U.S. workers have driven.

To help women, African-Americans, Latin-Americans and other minorities, anti-discrimination protections must be vigorously enforced. Day care opportunities should be expanded for working parents.

Jobless workers should have the opportunity for training in skills that lead directly to jobs. There should be better job placement through the Employment Service and better matching of workers and jobs. Any job training measures with lack of income support during training, a business-dominated structure and low funding, are totally inadequate to employment and training needs.

Job and training programs for displaced workers and youths should be greatly expanded. There should be more targeted job training opportunities for adult workers, including women and minorities, and other groups with special needs. Private and public sector training, including on-the-job training and upgrading apprenticeship programs, need to be broadened and strengthened.

Training allowances and income support should be available for workers in training programs. It should be required that unions be allowed to review and comment on all dislocated worker programs before decisions are made on which projects will be funded.

Human resource and productivity development should be achieved through better education, training, retraining, upgrading, and upward mobility opportunities for all workers, both employed and unemployed. To prepare displaced workers and young people for jobs, national job training programs and other youth employment and training programs should be improved and strengthened. Wage subsidies to private employers — direct payments of public funds, backdoor tax credits or voucher systems — are the wrong way to produce jobs and training for jobless workers. Such subsidies open an exploiting, revolving door to layoffs when the subsidy runs out.

To protect jobless workers and their families, government should enact a permanent unemployment insurance program for long-term unemployed workers. In addition, government should enact special legislation to provide unemployed workers with

health care protection and mortgage and rent relief. Furthermore, cuts in safety-net programs like Medicare and Medicaid, low-income housing, food stamps, and child nutrition should be reversed.

Policies:

- All OPEIU local unions should work to achieve the legislative proposals outlined above – the creation of training opportunities for employed and unemployed workers, training allowances and income support, the provision of day care, a permanent unemployment program and unemployed health care protection, etc.
- All OPEIU local unions should work to gain in their collective bargaining agreements, wherever possible, a reduced workweek and harsher overtime penalties to provide greater job opportunities.

LABOR LAW REFORM

Background:

The failure of the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) to include medical professionals and protect the right of American workers to join and organize a union, to strike and to bargain collectively, coupled with the combined assault by the courts, the National Labor Relations Board and employers, has resulted in the steady decline in the size and strength of the labor movement. This has contributed heavily to the reduction of wages for workers in every sector of the economy.

Facing at most a slap on the wrist, which often comes years after the NLRA violation, employers bust unions, defeat organizing drives, force wages down and drastically cut or eliminate benefits. The resulting anti-union climate has impacted all working people in the United States.

The legally guaranteed right of American workers to organize and bargain collectively must be restored through labor law reform.

While many promising reforms have been introduced in the Congress, most notably the Employee Free Choice Act and the Richard L. Trumka Protecting the Right to Organize (PRO) Act, none have been passed.

The PRO Act represents the most meaningful opportunity in more than a decade to reform labor relations in the U.S. It would, if signed into law, introduce significant, enforceable penalties for companies and individual executives who violate workers' rights; allow secondary strikes; protect a workers' right to abstain from captive audience meetings; and facilitate first contract negotiations by requiring mediation and arbitration to settle disputes. This final aspect is especially important considering nearly half of newly formed unions never reach a contract with their employer.

Policies:

OPEIU and its local unions join the growing movement in the United States to reform U.S. labor law to guarantee:

1. All workers and medical professionals have the right to organize into unions and bargain collectively;
2. Union certification with majority card check;
3. The right to go to binding arbitration on a first contract after certification;
4. The repeal of “right-to-work” laws;
5. The right to organize and engage in sympathy strikes and secondary boycotts;
6. Employers be prohibited from any involvement in an individual’s decision whether or not to join a union;
7. Meaningful employer penalties for violation of labor laws;
8. The continued prohibition of company unions and employer domination of unions in the NLRA.

OPEIU and its local unions pledge to work to repeal or abolish any existing legislation, which interferes with our ability to achieve these goals. Our union also is engaged, along with our allies in the labor movement, in a coalition to pass the PRO Act as soon as possible.

A LIVING WAGE AND RAISING WAGES

Background:

For millions of working people across the country, working 40 hours or more a week is not enough to make ends meet. In fact, one in nine U.S. workers are paid wages that leave them in poverty, even when working full-time and year-round.

With the buying power of the federal minimum wage plummeting and with the massive privatization of city, state and federal jobs, unions and community activists have banded together to pass more than 140 municipal living wage ordinances nationwide.

A living wage is designed to ensure that low-wage workers and their families can live above the poverty level. The living wage laws have also been designed to ensure that, where taxpayer money is used in any state, city or county job, a living wage based on local economic and political circumstances must be paid. The basic principle behind all living wage proposals is that taxpayer dollars should not be used to fund poverty-level jobs.

In many of the living wage ordinances, the laws have mandated those cities give priority to developers who don't violate labor laws. They also give access to unions to visit the workplace and they protect workers from retaliation if they talk about living wages or rights on the job and, most importantly, the laws often get workers their jobs back if they are fired on the job for union-organizing activity.

Policies:

OPEIU and its local unions will:

- Support the AFL-CIO's Raising Wages campaign, which includes support for the Raise the Wage Act of 2019 that will gradually raise the federal minimum wage from \$7.25 to \$15. This is an easy and necessary way to lift millions of working people out of poverty and stimulate local economies and create an economy that works for everyone, not just a wealthy few. We will fight against the growing inequality between the 1 percent versus the 99 percent that currently exists. Part and parcel of this campaign is a real government investment to fix the decaying infrastructure and a full-court press to stop corporate-backed trade deals that lead to massive off-shoring of jobs. We nonetheless recognize even a \$15 minimum wage is woefully insufficient. In just two cities in the U.S., Tucson and Buffalo, can a minimum wage worker afford a one-bedroom apartment while working less than fifty hours per week. Support and join coalitions with community groups to ensure that living wage laws are passed.
- Work with living wage coalitions to ensure that, once living wage ordinances exist, the laws are enforced.
- Support incentives in the law that provide for employers to offer employer-paid health coverage.
- Fight all attempts to overturn living wage ordinances.
- Believe the minimum wage should be a living wage and will support any and all efforts to ensure every working person can afford the basic necessities they need to survive.

MENTAL HEALTH AND SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER

Background:

Mental health illnesses and substance abuse disorders affect people in all classes, all age groups, races and ethnic groups. Mental health disorders can occur once, recur intermittently, or be chronic in nature. Many occur beginning in childhood while others do not appear until adulthood.

In 2022, an estimated one-in-five American adults live with a mental illness, including incapacitating depression, schizophrenia, and bipolar disorder. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates the number of children with mental health disorders ranges from 13 to 20 percent. These statistics do not include Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Excluding veterans, it is estimated that almost 8 million people suffer from PTSD.

In 2018, about 20.2 million adults suffered from a substance use disorder defined as the recurrent use of alcohol and/or drugs that cause significant functional impairment.

All these illnesses are treatable, but far too often they are not treated because insurance companies will not provide adequate coverage. Unfortunately, one major area the ACA did not address is equal benefits for mental health and addiction treatment. In 1996, Congress passed the Mental Health Parity Act (MHPA), which was signed into law and stated large group insurance plans cannot impose annual or lifetime caps on mental health benefits that are less favorable to mental health than any caps put on medical/surgical benefits. The Act did not mandate that insurance companies (or self-funded plans) must actually provide such benefits. It is important to note this 1996 legislation was the first time federally-mandated parity for mental health, not substance abuse, was ever addressed. In addition, companies with less than 25 employees were totally exempt from the Act. Further, parity only applied to annual and lifetime dollar limits on coverage.

Throughout the legislative history to provide equity for mental health and substance abuse treatment, opponents (both legislators and insurance companies) have insisted that mental illnesses cannot be treated and substance abuse is not a disease. Research shows this simply is not true. Of course, insurance companies have also fought treatment as far too costly, thereby cutting into their enormous profits.

Because of the limitations of the MHPA, subsequent legislation was introduced in 2008 titled the Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act of 2008 (MHPAEA), which extended former legislation to cover substance abuse disorder treatment as well. Unfortunately, the Act did not mandate coverage, but again only covered group health plans and was limited to lifetime coverage caps. Also, it did not apply to small group health plans defined as covering 1-25 employees.

Nevertheless, for the first time, the financial requirements extended to deductibles, co-pays and treatment limitations and stated these could not be more restrictive than the financial requirements or treatment for all medical/surgical benefits.

The MHPAEA does not apply to self-insured plans, and it grants many other exemptions. It also does not apply to federal government plans such as Medicare.

Studies have shown the integral connection between transgender rights and mental health. Transgender people who are routinely misgendered, denied the affirmative care they need, and/or are otherwise discriminated against are at higher risk of struggling with a mental illness or substance abuse. A robust mental health support network in the U.S. would recognize the unique challenges faced by transgender people and take steps to ensure competent affirmative care.

Policies:

OPEIU and its local unions:

- Support the expansion of the Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act of 2008 to include all plans including self-insured and Medicare.
- Support education to end the discrimination surrounding mental illnesses and substance abuse disorders. Any stigma must be eliminated.
- Recognize the unique mental health challenges faced by various groups, and rejects a one-size-fits-all approach to mental health care. Any and all efforts to improve mental health care in the U.S. should be attuned to the specific needs of marginalized groups.

MERGERS

Background:

At the 1983 Constitutional Convention, the OPEIU Executive Board by resolution proposed that since mergers between local unions are desirable that the International Union and its staff play an active role in aiding these mergers. The resolution was passed by convention by acclamation.

Later, the OPEIU Executive Board established an administrative procedure providing formal guidelines for how mergers between OPEIU local unions are to be accomplished.

This procedure was adopted by the delegates to the 2001 OPEIU Convention.

In recent years, several OPEIU local unions in overlapping jurisdictions have merged together into stronger, more financially sound unions. These mergers have reduced redundancies, bolstered new organizing, lowered administrative costs, made our union more efficient and better positioned local unions to conduct new organizing campaigns.

Policies:

Now with employers becoming increasingly hostile, with union busters more active and costs of local unions to fight back pyramiding, OPEIU must reaffirm its support of local union mergers by:

- actively encouraging mergers of local unions;
- educating local unions of positive aspects of mergers at educational conferences; and
- providing staff and legal assistance to local unions interested in merging.

OPEIU supports and encourages the merger of local unions to:

- increase self-sufficiency;
- provide better service to members;

- enhance future organizing opportunities;
- increase benefits to members;
- reduce duplication of functions;
- reduce costs;
- increase union solidarity; and
- generally, further the interests of OPEIU.

MINIMUM WAGE

Background:

The historic role of the federal minimum wage program has been to set a floor that establishes the level of wages an employer must pay. The value of the work performed far exceeded the minimum wage level; but at the least, this national standard has served to guarantee a basic compensation to all covered workers. It is also one that organized labor has repeatedly struggled to raise as inflation reduces the dollar's buying power to unacceptable levels.

The federal minimum wage has not increased since 2009. It stands at \$7.25 an hour. The current minimum wage's buying power is at the lowest level in 40 years. For a full-time worker, that wage translates to a poverty-level annual salary of \$15,080. Minimum-wage workers are hard-working adults (approximately 75 percent of minimum-wage earners are adults twenty (20) years or older), many of whose families depend on their earnings. They work hard to earn a subsistence living. Further, the largest group of minimum-wage earners are women, often single mothers.

Because of the failure of minimum wages to keep people out of poverty, and because of the lack of real living wages in community after community, the FIGHT FOR \$15 has become a rallying cry. Fast-food employees, car-wash workers, retail workers – especially at the largest employer, Walmart – have banded together through one-day strikes, informational pickets, Black Fridays and petition campaigns to demand \$15 an hour. To date, several large cities and counties across the country have passed \$15 an hour-living wage laws.

Policies:

- OPEIU strongly supports a legislated yearly cost-of-living adjustment of the minimum wage, keyed to the consumer price index.

- OPEIU remains committed to furthering the efforts to get state and local governments to enact so-called living wage ordinances. These laws require government contractors to pay their workers more than the minimum wage as a condition of contracts. Such laws raise the floor for all workers and help workers to raise their families out of poverty.

- OPEIU will join with communities, workers and other unions to advance the Fight for \$15 and beyond throughout the country.

- OPEIU also supports raising the minimum wage for contractors covered by the Service Contract Act (SCA) beyond the current \$10.10 an hour, which is insufficient for employees to maintain a minimum standard of living, to \$15 an hour.

NEEDS OF WORKING FAMILIES

Background:

Working families are in crisis. More family members are working more hours as wages remain stagnant year after year. Married couples with children find it necessary for both parents to work to maintain a decent living. Single parents must work. While parents work, they need good childcare. Yet, the childcare industry has failed to meet the crisis. Infant care is almost nonexistent. Childcare providers are leaving the industry at alarming rates because of low wages, little or no benefits and low status. Quality care is often unaffordable for most parents, forcing them to leave their children in dangerous or unhealthy care or at home caring for themselves.

Many employers have not caught up with the realities of the workplace, preferring to keep in place outdated policies designed only for a minority of today's families. Thus, instead of considering changes to help caregiving employees do their jobs better, managers complain about employers' excessive phone use, absenteeism, lateness and unscheduled time off from work.

Outside of work, the societal and developmental benefits of children having more regular parental contact are immense. Most nations of similar size to the U.S. offer paid parental leave for both parents. It is an international embarrassment that the U.S. guarantees no such leave.

OPEIU and our local unions have fought and won family leave benefits and child care through collective bargaining and continue to do so.

Policies:

OPEIU and its local unions will:

- Continue to promote family-oriented programs, including permanent expansion of the child tax credit of 2021, and to share information among local unions about successful programs.
- Continue to participate in the debate on these issues and vigorously advocate strong, sound measures to produce a decent life for our families today and a bright tomorrow for our children.
- Pledge to lobby for progressive changes in policies affecting working families at the state and local levels.

OPPOSITION TO CHILD LABOR

Background:

From its inception, one of the labor movement's top priorities has been a campaign against the scandal of child labor. Strange as it may seem, we met with strong opposition in our efforts to secure the human rights of children. Today, it is necessary to mount a new crusade both at home and abroad.

Many states have or are trying to weaken the protections that we won in the first part of the 20th century. Maine has enacted a law rolling back restrictions on the employment of minors. It allows children under the age of 18 to work additional hours and as late as 10:15 p.m. on school nights. This law replaced a law enacted in 1991 when teachers mounted a struggle because students were falling asleep in their classrooms. In addition, several bills are in the legislature to lower the child minimum wage to a "training wage" of \$5.25 an hour. Several other states have already done so.

Tragically, the growth of foreign trade and investment—hailed as a source of progress — has had a retrogressive effect on children, drawing them into workplaces even as their parents remain unemployed or underemployed.

Unless checked, such greed will accelerate in a rapidly expanding global economy. One answer is for consumers to boycott the goods produced by child labor. But far more than consumer action is needed.

Hundreds of thousands of young children work in the nation's agriculture industry, under conditions that threaten their health, safety and well-being. Under current federal law, children working in agriculture receive less protection than children working in any other industry. The few legal protections that are supposed to shield these children in the fields from harm are sparsely enforced, and the educational opportunities that could help them better their lives are sadly inadequate.

The U.S. apparel industry is facing keen competition from imports including goods made by Asian children. But the answer to such competition is not for us to emulate inhuman anti-child practices of other countries. The answer to such foreign competition is to fight against the exploitation of children by foreign producers.

Uncounted millions of child workers, the overwhelming majority of them non-white and female, are the weakest victims of exploitation. In 2019, there are more than 200 million children worldwide trapped in child labor. An estimated 120 million are engaged in hazardous work. Seventy-three million of these children under the age of 10. Surely, no bureaucratic excuses, no hunger for profit, nor theories of free trade can justify a prolongation of this scandal. It is time to renew our campaign against the practice.

Policies:

- OPEIU and its local unions pledge to urge the U.S. government to pressure such organizations as UNICEF to oppose child labor throughout the world as one of its main priorities.
- OPEIU and its local unions pledge to lobby the Canadian and U.S. government to remove trade privileges from all countries engaged in the exploitation of children through child labor.

ORGANIZING

Background:

The founding principle of the labor movement echoed throughout history has been to organize the unorganized.

Organizing is a continuing obligation and challenge of the highest priority. Over the coming years, organizing success or failure will determine whether workers will have a real voice in basic decisions affecting their lives on the job and in public arenas.

As changes occur in the marketplace, workforces change. Whole companies experience reorganization and downsizing. Technology and changing work culture – such as the new “gig or on-demand economy” – affect entire industries. Workers now find themselves classified as temporary workers, independent contractors, and “gig” workers at companies such as Uber and Lyft.

Work is transferred between locations. Job security is affected as a result. Many unions experience a decline in membership. Most workers feel helpless in dealing with their employment situations. Organizing now becomes a viable and necessary alternative, and unions must respond to this challenge or face continued decline or, in some cases, extinction. Just as workers recognize the need to organize so, too, must unions.

Shifting from a “servicing” model of unionism — whereby the union provides a service — to an “organizing” model of unionism has been a guiding principle of our union in recent years. Comprehensive campaigning, aggressive external organizing and improved internal organizing procedures have, together, bolstered our union’s strength.

Policies:

- Campaigns need not be geared to procedures laid out by various laws or regulations. When feasible, other more effective alternatives should be pursued. Local unions are encouraged to work on building membership through the process of seeking recognition through neutrality and demonstrations of majority status.

- Campaigns should be undertaken primarily where there is a realistic chance for employees to demonstrate majority desire for union representation and to obtain a bargaining agreement. Thus, careful targeting and research must be done well in advance of the campaigns. The OPEIU Targeting and Campaign Assessment Guidelines should be utilized.

- OPEIU and its local unions must adopt more strategies for applying pressures on employers to assume a neutral stance in our organizing campaigns.

- OPEIU and its local unions' participation in cooperative campaigns with other unions should be considered. Organizing is most effective with strong support of other organizations.

- OPEIU and its local unions will embrace the AFL-CIO's new models of worker representation. This is imperative if the labor movement is to survive. Not even seven percent of the private workforce has the benefit of the security and stability of a union contract.

Now unionized public sector workers are under attack in state after state. It started in Wisconsin with former Governor Scott Walker's initiative to ban dues check-off from all contracts. State after state is passing right-to-work (for less) laws. In 2019, there are twenty-seven (27) right-to-work states. The 2018 Janus V. AFSCME decision dealt a further blow to public employee unions, aiming to take away the freedom of and opportunity for working people to join together in strong unions to speak up for themselves and their communities. Despite these anti-union efforts, OPEIU and organized labor have fought back, shoring up

its membership, and proving we will not be defeated by efforts to eliminate the rights of working people.

- As union density has been falling for years, so has the standard of living and the very way of life of America's middle class. As union-representation has fallen and workers have less voice, their productivity has become separated from their income.

The gap between the rich and working people is greater than it ever has been.

- OPEIU and its local unions will continue to open up union membership as we have done with our guild and associate member structure for groups that align with our membership.

- We will be part of the AFL-CIO's drive to build other new forms of membership such as partnership agreements like the National Domestic Workers Alliance.

- OPEIU will continue to support the new form of organizing created by the AFL-CIO's membership group Working America, which brings people into the labor movement who don't have the benefit of a union on their job.

- We recognize that even the largest unions cannot organize large groups of workers alone. In fact, in many cases global cooperation is necessary. OPEIU will continue to expand our reach globally as we have done on an international scale with the helicopter pilots.

- OPEIU local unions are encouraged to prepare current bargaining units to fight attrition and reclassification and work toward expansion in the currently represented units as well as currently represented employees and industries.

- We will continue to develop its internal capacities in support of comprehensive campaigning, believing organizing, research, and strategic communication should work in concert toward the same ends: strong union contracts.

- We will continue our Membership Benefit Programs. It has been another successful way to organize new workers. Membership growth can be effectively promoted through the use

of the membership benefits that strengthen current membership groups and encourage other employees to seek OPEIU representation.

- We will continue to direct resources to build organizing capacity in those local unions that can demonstrate a commitment to organize new members and fully engage current members, including expending resources into the OPEIU Apprentice Organizer Program.

OUTSOURCING OF JOBS, LEVERAGED BUYOUTS AND TAX SUBSIDIES

Background:

For more than 30 years, we have watched manufacturers export jobs to low-wage countries and then import the products into the United States or Canada. We now see the same trend developing in the service sector. Studies indicate that up to 14 million white collar jobs will move overseas in the next few years, and those jobs will not be coming back. From data entry operations in Barbados and China, to computer programming and customer service clearinghouses in India and engineering design in Korea, office jobs are leaving the U.S. and Canada. The products of this work are intangible but enormously valuable, and they enter our countries freely. They may come in as electronic signals via satellites, or as data stored on tapes or disks. There are no restrictions on entry. As the technology improves and costs drop even further, the potential job loss can run into the millions. The losses will occur both in relatively unskilled entry-level positions as well as on professional levels.

Modern computer and telecommunications technologies are having a profound effect on all kinds of jobs. As the work becomes more electronic, the location at which the work is performed becomes less important.

The outsourcing of all jobs to low-wage developing countries has led to an unparalleled trade deficit in manufacturing and textile jobs. According to the AFL-CIO's Transportation Trades Department, if taxpayer subsidized offshoring continues, it will be only a matter of time before all our service industries follow manufacturing and fall victim to the greedy trade policies that put corporate profits above the needs of working families. When jobs are offshored, those who become unemployed as a result become tax users, not tax contributors.

Leveraged buyouts go hand-in-hand with outsourcing. The 2012 presidential campaign revealed the destructive nature of this practice by spotlighting Bain Capital owned by Candidate Mitt Romney. The company's practice was to borrow money to buy companies, then cut costs and investments to pay back the debt. Then the corporate tax code provides that the interest on the debt is deductible from corporate tax returns. This is one of the great hidden subsidies in our corporate tax system. Of course, when the debt is not able to be paid, these companies simply lay off workers, close shop, and yet the investors are paid huge dividends. Romney's Bain Capital joined the LBOs (leveraged buyout) to purchase Warner Music Group for \$2.6 billion (half of that money was borrowed). They then laid off 20 percent of the workforce, discounted contracts with 30 percent of its artists, and paid themselves more than \$1 billion in dividends and fees. In countless leveraged buyouts, companies close plants and then contract production to low-wage factories in other countries. Then these corporate profiteers deposit their money in offshore accounts. It is estimated that each year the U.S. loses \$100 billion in tax revenue because of this.

Policies:

OPEIU and its local unions will:

- Monitor developments in this area and take appropriate action to reduce the flow of office jobs from American and Canadian companies to overseas locations through the process of collective bargaining and/or political action.
- Support a ban on all outsourcing of the U.S. service industry, and demands U.S. tax dollars not be used to subsidize the export of American jobs.
- Pledge to work through the AFL-CIO and the CLC, as well as state/provincial federations and central labor bodies, to achieve these objectives — to protect the jobs of U.S. and Canadian workers.

- Call for an end to the incentives for outsourcing in our tax code and trade agreements that have devastated our communities. We stand with working people from Maine to San Diego who have demanded our elected officials take a stand against tax breaks for companies that move jobs overseas.
- Call for Congress to end the tax deferral of offshore corporate profits and all subsidies. By doing so, there would be no need to continue to enact massive cutbacks in all the social-safety-net programs.
- Educate its membership on the devastating effects of leveraged buyouts and will work with the AFL-CIO to see federal legislation is passed to regulate the vulture capitalists who engage in such practices.
- We have, since its 2022 introduction by Sen. Bob Casey of Pennsylvania, supported the No Tax Breaks for Union Busting Act. The act would classify businesses' interference with employee rights as political speech and therefore not tax-deductible. Though this bill is targeted narrowly, we believe it is an excellent first step toward holding corporations accountable.

OVERTIME PAY

Background:

The Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) established the basic federal law on overtime in 1938. It held that hourly workers (who fit into certain classifications of income based on job specifications and average annual salary) who are “nonexempt” (broadly defined as those workers who earn less than \$23,800 a year) are due time and one half for all hours worked over 40 in a workweek (defined as seven consecutive 24-hour day periods).

Since the FLSA’s establishment the categories of exempt employees has been greatly expanded taking overtime pay away from hundreds of thousands of workers. Furthermore, because of weak enforcement, millions of workers have been forced to work over 40 hours in a week or eight hours in a day, without collecting overtime pay. This wage theft has become widespread through all sectors of the U.S. economy. In addition, the wage threshold level for overtime (\$23,660) has not been raised in decades.

State legislatures and local city governing councils are proposing overtime pay take-aways that threaten to take overtime pay protection away from 8 million workers. Without overtime pay, many workers and their families would not have the money they need to make ends meet. The overtime pay rules form the basis of the 40-hour week and the weekend. Without these protections – without having to pay extra for extra-long work weeks – employers could and would demand longer and longer work hours from employees. This means more time away from their families.

Policies:

OPEIU and its local unions will:

- Support overtime provisions to extend the law to cover employees who earn above the current threshold level to at least \$50,440 a year. By doing so, 13.5 million workers who do not receive overtime will be eligible. Extending these protections will benefit the economy and provide workers who are currently forced to work beyond a 40-hour work week with a shorter work week and thus more time to spend with their families.

- Support the AFL-CIO's campaign to ensure that workers earning more than \$50,440 a year but who spend more than fifty (50) percent of their work time performing non-exempt duties will not be exempted from overtime protection.

- Support the public education and mobilization campaign of the AFL-CIO to emphasize the importance of overtime and to link this campaign to the Raising Wages and Income Inequality campaign.

- Recognize the labor movement's battle for a 40-hour workweek and will always fight measures that threaten this hard-won right. Ultimately, we believe in a reduction of working hours as a response to technological advances and the world-leading productivity of workers in the U.S.

PAID FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE

Background:

At some point, almost everyone needs time off work either to recover from a serious illness or to take care of a family member or a new child. Most workers (not covered by collective bargaining agreements) risk losing their jobs if they take the time they need. Currently, only four states (California, New Jersey, New York and Rhode Island) offer paid leave to bond with a new child or to care for a seriously ill family member. And only Rhode Island guarantees reinstatement to a worker's job with no workplace retaliation. The United States is the only industrialized country to offer no paid family or sick leave.

Universal guaranteed paid family and sick leave policies would help build a healthier, more prosperous society for all. It is a moral and international embarrassment that newborns and their parents are not guaranteed stability at a critical developmental stage. It is especially heinous given that, in many states, abortion access is restricted heavily. Women who are or might become pregnant face adverse employment discrimination on a structural level. Guaranteeing family and medical leave, no matter the employer, would make a significant impact in stopping this.

Policies:

OPEIU and its local unions call for the passage of the Family Leave Act, which would provide a national policy to address these pressing concerns. The Act would be funded by creating a trust fund within the Social Security Administration. Employers and employees would both contribute a very small percentage of their wages to fund this leave. This is similar to how the leave is funded in the four states.

PART-TIME WORK

Background:

We reject the increasing use made of part-time work and the false argument put forward to justify its implementation, namely that it is a means of reducing unemployment – as well as a means to avoid providing paid health coverage, as required by the Affordable Care Act. Most forms of part-time work currently being introduced are discriminatory in nature, are not covered by collective bargaining agreements, and do not provide full Social Security benefits. Women are the group hardest hit, especially by capacity-oriented variable working time and job-sharing. Another argument put forward to justify these working time systems is women actually desire such “flexible” working hours because they have to reconcile family and professional responsibilities. In reality, such practices merely reinforce the traditional distribution of roles in the family.

The extension of part-time work and the introduction of individual flex-time do not represent a suitable way of counteracting unemployment, but, on the contrary, they bring great disadvantage to all workers. In addition, attempts by the trade unions to incorporate a working time policy into collective bargaining agreements are undermined, and their policies threatened in the long term.

The extension of part-time work — especially where it replaces full-time jobs or takes the form of capacity-oriented variable working time or job-sharing — leads to increased rationalization with no social provisions made, with the outcome that jobs are eliminated and the workload intensified. From the company’s point of view, part-time positions are often seen as a means of reducing salary costs and avoiding ACA-mandated health-care coverage. Such forms of part-time work increase the work stress of all employees. Moreover, part-time workers are virtually

excluded from promotion and access to higher positions within the company, and have reduced salaries.

Policies:

In order to tackle the problem of uncontrolled extension of part-time work, OPEIU and its local unions demand that part-time workers be:

1. Protected from the social point of view through an overall inclusion into Social Security schemes;

2. Guaranteed all benefits accruing from company and collective bargaining agreements;

3. Covered by the provisions laid down in the collective bargaining agreements also when they work on a capacity-oriented working time basis;

4. Eligible for promotion, further training and retraining in the same way as full-time workers; and

5. Protected against the introduction of job-sharing. OPEIU and its local unions must work to assure that all employees:

- Granted a reduction in working time with no loss of salary or wages, taking into account women give priority to the daily shortening of working hours;

- Provided with more social facilities such as day nurseries and day schools; and

- Granted parental leave to look after young children (both fathers and mothers).

PAY DISCRIMINATION

Background:

Despite the rapid growth of the workforce in recent years and federal laws prohibiting discrimination, women and minorities are still concentrated in certain occupations and still earn, on average, substantially less than white males. In fact, women currently make only 80 percent of the earnings of men for the same job. Women of color make even less. African-American women make 61 cents, and Hispanic women make only 53 cents for every dollar earned by white men.

The root causes of the low wages of women and minorities in the labor market are discrimination and undervaluation of the jobs they perform. Studies made of wages of public employees have repeatedly shown much of the differential among the earnings of workers results from discrimination, job segregation or the denial of equal pay for work of comparable skill, effort, responsibility and working conditions. For example, the EEOC-commissioned study, completed by the National Academy of Sciences, confirms enormous wage differentials result from discrimination against women.

The wage disparity, over a working lifetime, costs the average American woman and her family anywhere from \$700,000 to \$2 million in lost wages. This also impacts Social Security benefits and pensions.

The Supreme Court ruling in 2011 in *Walmart v. Duke* upheld gender discrimination and blocked the biggest potential class-action lawsuit in history. The ruling denied 1.5 million women from filing suit together. This ruling only serves to highlight the importance of the fight for the Paycheck Fairness Act (also known as the Paycheck Protection Act), last submitted in January 2019.

This bill would deter wage discrimination by updating the 1963 Equal Pay Act, in part by barring retaliation against workers who disclose their own wages. No federal law broadly prohibits

employers from penalizing and even firing employees just for talking about their salaries. This Act would broaden the Lily Ledbetter Fair Pay Act (LLFPA) of 2009. The LLFPA amended Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to clarify that a discriminatory wage practice is unlawful under the Act each time compensation is paid, thus eliminating the time bar that the Supreme Court had upheld in the Ledbetter case. The new Act states the 180-day statute of limitations for filing an equal-pay lawsuit regarding pay discrimination resets with each new paycheck affected by that discriminatory action.

OPEIU has consistently fought against all forms of discrimination in order to achieve pay equity for working people through pay equity lawsuits, by making pay equity a demand during negotiations, through political action at all levels of government and, most importantly, through the organizing of working people. By contrast, industry has reaped the harvest of payment of discriminatory wages to such workers.

Policies:

OPEIU urges its local unions to take the following steps to eliminate pay discrimination and achieve pay equity:

- Support strong federal laws and a commitment to enforce those laws. For example, Title VII of the U.S. Civil Rights Act of 1964 forbids wage discrimination among jobs that are the same as well as those that are different but comparable, as reaffirmed by the Supreme Court decision, *Gunther v. County of Washington*. Without adequate enforcement of these laws, however, workers and those organizations that represent them find themselves mired in costly, time-consuming legal battles that serve only to postpone the right to equitable treatment guaranteed by such legislation.
- Call upon the Congress to reaffirm their commitment to strong enforcement of existing federal law against pay discrimination and pass the Paycheck Fairness Act.

- Fight for pay equity on other fronts. Collective bargaining, political and legislative action, career development and training are all necessary components of an effective strategy to implement pay equity for all workers in the public and private sectors.

- Take the lead in promoting equity at the bargaining table. All over the U.S., effective strategies have been developed to close the wage gap between men and women while, at the same time, raising wages for all workers. We have participated in job evaluation studies to ensure the workers have input into the study. And, we have required that the results of any study be subject to collective bargaining.

- Achieve pay equity through elimination of sex or race biased job titles, elimination of entry barriers, prohibitions against sex-biased or race-biased assignment of jobs and the reform of job classification procedures. We also believe education and career development are other activities essential for promoting pay equity.

- Support the Lily Ledbetter Fair Pay Act and ensure it is never overturned.

- Take all other appropriate action to bring about equality of pay for work performed and to remove all other barriers to equal opportunity for women and minorities.

OPEIU urges its local unions to work to attain equality for jobs of comparable worth in all bargaining units by:

- Working through contract negotiations to upgrade undervalued job classifications, regardless of whether they are typically considered “male” or “female” jobs.

- Initiating joint union-employer pay equity studies to identify and correct internal inequities between predominantly female and predominantly male job classes, such studies to specifically exclude reliance on market rates that reflect societal discrimination, and not the value of the job.

- OPEIU will continue to inform and sensitize its membership and all women and men so they will fully understand the impact of discriminatory wage rates on both sexes, particularly that low rates for women tend to bring down the wage rates for men as well as women.

- OPEIU will encourage all efforts to reevaluate women's jobs according to their "real worth" without regard to sex so the wage rates paid will truly reflect skill, effort, responsibility and working conditions.

- OPEIU urges its local unions to recognize fully their obligations to treat job inequities resulting from sex and race discrimination like all other inequities that must be corrected, and to adopt the concept of "equal pay for comparable work" in all contract negotiations.

- OPEIU urges its local unions to demand wages paid to women and minority members whose work is undervalued due to discrimination be raised and that no one suffer a reduction of wages to bring about equality; and where necessary they seek legal remedies to assert the rights of women and minority members to pay equity.

- OPEIU will take all other appropriate action to bring about true equality in pay for work performed and to remove all barriers to equal opportunity for women and urges the AFL-CIO and CLC to do the same.

PRIVATIZATION

Background:

Public ownership was first developed to guarantee social services like education could not be provided on a “for-profit” basis, and monopoly services like utility companies would have to provide quality service to all consumers at a reasonable cost. Services provided include educating children, guarding prisoners, counseling, providing public utilities insurance, clerical assistance, and so forth. The cost of these services has been shared by society – by those of us who pay taxes. Now private sector delivery of public services is occurring at an alarming rate.

Cash-strapped state and local governments are privatizing core public assets, which has already resulted in the loss of tens of thousands of jobs. They have signed contracts to sell off many types of facilities and infrastructure, including landfills, government office buildings, transit systems, roads, parking structures, zoos, convention centers and other assets that could, in fact, generate substantial funds for the municipalities and state governments to use.

In most of these asset sale agreements, the public has been on the losing side – loss of control, increased user fees, loss of jobs, lower quality infrastructure, and future budget deficits are just a few of the problems communities have realized as a result of this asset privatization. In the current economic crisis, cities and states have actually been conducting “fire sales” and in desperation are letting private companies buy the assets in amounts far below the asset’s true market value.

Nowhere is the rush to privatize public services more prevalent than in the conversion of public schools into so-called charter schools run by for-profit companies. One need look no further than Wisconsin, which not only has outlawed collective bargaining in the public sector, but has embraced the corporate control and

commercialization of public schools. Of course, this rush to establish charter schools and voucher systems and countless other schemes are all cloaked in the principle of education reform. The private companies behind charter schools are not really interested in improving or providing quality education for children. Rather, the opportunist owners of the charters look at the nearly \$700 billion that the U.S. spends on education, and they want some of those dollars. This movement weakens the entire public-school education system and is also an all-out union-busting scheme to decimate the teachers' unions. In most cases, the companies behind privatized schools can hire and fire employees at will and never have to answer to the unions.

Nothing is more basic to the role of the labor movement than the defense of workers' jobs and the guarantee of equal protection of working conditions. For both public and private sector employees, this protection is now jeopardized by the increased contracting out of their work to outside business contractors. Employees are told, in effect, if they bargain for increased wages and fringe benefits and insist on a decent standard of living, the employer will contract out the work. They are told it can be done cheaper by contractors. Standards of workplace decency, that have taken years to establish, are threatened with overnight extinction when the employer decides to contract out work, often to nonunion companies.

Business contractors are willing accomplices in these efforts. They stand ready to take the work that has historically been performed by the employees of the company or the government agency by exploiting non-union labor or foreign labor with substandard wages.

The underlying motive of privatization and contracting-out is more dangerous to the labor movement than the mere greed of corporations and businesses; it is intended to bust the unity of organized labor. Driven by wrong-minded public officials and corporate greed, contracts for public services are doled out

without regard to cost-effectiveness or quality. Time and again, the public pays more and receives lower quality of services while public workers are laid off.

Policies:

- OPEIU supports the principle that social, education, health care services and monopoly services that have traditionally been performed by public employees should continue to be performed by public employees.
- OPEIU urges all of its local unions to continue to negotiate appropriate safeguards and protections against privatization and contracting out, and to use other tactics, such as cost comparison studies, publicity, campaigns, lobbying, education activities, community coalitions and legislation to prevent the contracting out of the public services to private companies.
- OPEIU urges all of its local unions to continue to demand public accountability and oversight of these taxpayer funded services.
- OPEIU and its local unions will commit to ensuring the proper role of government be maintained and government meet its responsibility of serving the common good.

RACIAL JUSTICE AND END MASS INCARCERATION

Background:

Two critical themes dominate all American political life: the growing economic inequality between the 1 percent of the population and the 99 percent and the lack of racial justice that has occurred as a result of poor (especially African-American) communities devastated by mass unemployment, economic abandonment and intense police surveillance.

Since the 1980s and continuing through the present, black America has witnessed the massive use of the criminal justice system under the guise of the “War on Drugs” and the “War on Crime” to incarcerate hundreds of thousands of poor black male (as well as increasingly female) young people.

During this same period, many of the social safety-net policies that had been put in place as a result of the New Deal and expanded because of the Civil Rights Movement and the Great Society programs were dismantled. During this same period not only was welfare dismantled, but Wall Street was deregulated and free trade was expanded. Both of these policies led to a further great explosion of jobs lost and affordable housing disappearing, which hit hardest in the African-American community.

The dismantling of the social safety net, together with an explosion of new sentencing laws for so-called drug crimes, caused arrests and convictions for often minor drug offenses to skyrocket, especially among people of color. In less than thirty (30) years, the prison population increased from approximately 300,000 to more than two (2) million with drug convictions accounting for the majority of the increase. The U.S. now has the highest rate of incarceration in the world. While the U.S. only makes up five (5) percent of the world’s population, its prisons house almost twenty-five (25) percent of the world’s population. In fact, from the 1980s to 2014, the U.S. prison population has risen 408 percent.

The racial dimension of this mass incarceration is one of the its most striking features. African-American men are six times more likely to be in prison than a Caucasian man who committed the same crime, and Hispanic men are 2.4 times more likely. An even more shocking figure is that in 2015, one in 37 people — 2.7 percent of the adult population — were under U.S. corrections custody either through parole, probation or incarceration.

These criminal-justice policies lead to an extraordinary percentage of African-American men who are barred from voting, subject to legalized discrimination in employment, housing, education and jury services.

More African-American men are disenfranchised today than at any moment in the nation’s history. Because of imprisonment, more African-Americans today cannot vote than in 1870, the year the Fifteenth Amendment was ratified prohibiting laws that explicitly deny the right to vote on the basis of race.

Today, the system of mass incarceration not only governs the person who has gone to jail, but affects the entire family and ultimately entire communities of color. The system serves to redefine the terms of the relationship of poor people of color to the “mainstream” (white) society, ensuring their subordinate and marginal status. Because of this status, a policing system has been allowed to develop that operates unconstrained by constitutional rules of procedure that once were considered inviolate.

In city after city, laws were passed that allow police to stop, interrogate and search anyone for alleged drug violations. For far too long these policing practices have been concentrated in communities of color. Cities themselves are often rewarded, in cash through drug forfeiture laws and federal grant programs, for rounding up as many people as possible. These rewards are not only limited to drug arrests. Traffic-violation arrests (often for “driving while black”) and the fines that go along with these traffic stops often are used to keep city revenues from being depleted. A prominent case that shed light on this practice occurred in

Ferguson, Missouri, with the Federal Justice Department filing a civil rights lawsuit accusing the city of routinely violating residents' rights and misusing law enforcement to generate revenue. This practice is ongoing and pervasive, and it is not simply limited to the city of Ferguson but occurs in communities of color across the U.S.

Policing practices have rendered the practice of the cop on the beat and many other citizen-police initiatives obsolete. As the police response to the shooting of Michael Brown revealed in the days of demonstrations that occurred afterwards, local police forces have become militarized. The images on the news of police wearing helmets and masks, armed with assault rifles and riding around in mine-resistant armored vehicles are now common in countless communities.

Perhaps one of the greatest examples of racial injustice occurred during and after Hurricane Katrina in 2005. Police armed vehicles were nowhere to be seen as an entire city flooded.

Hundreds of thousands of people (the majority who were African-American) were displaced from their homes, all schools in the African-American community were flooded – most beyond repair – and neighborhoods that were predominately African-American were wiped out and thousands of people died. The City of New Orleans was almost 70 percent African-American before the hurricane. Most have never been able to return. Equally disturbing is the rise in incarceration of African-American men in the decade that followed the storm.

The last few years have seen a rise (or perhaps just greater visibility due to cell-phone videos) in murders of African-American youth, both male and female, often at the hands of the police. From Trayvon Martin (killed by a racist neighborhood watchdog who was acquitted because of Florida law) to Michael Brown to Tamir Rice to Freddie Gray to Eric Garner to Sandra Bland (whose big crime was failing to use her turn signal). In 2017, thirty (30)

percent of African-Americans killed were unarmed, compared with twenty-one (21) percent of Caucasian victims.

Policies:

- OPEIU joins with the AFL-CIO in shedding a light on the fact that those who fill our prisons are disproportionately people of color. This is not a problem for other people; it is our problem. Many union members' lives have been profoundly and permanently damaged by senseless killings. Thousands more are affected by having their sons and daughters imprisoned, often for minor crimes.

- OPEIU acknowledges the pervasiveness of racism in the U.S. and supports the labor movement's efforts to educate all of our members about the danger it poses to society as well as to our own unions. (After all, who plays the divide and conquer game better than employers in trying to keep unions out of the workplace and to keep unions from winning good contracts?)

- OPEIU applauds the AFL-CIO for acknowledging the tragic role racism played in our own labor movement. Unions must take responsibility for the past. At the same time, we must also honor those labor leaders such as A. Philip Randolph and Walter Reuther and look at what they did to fight racism while organizing the labor movement.

- OPEIU opposes the militarization of the police. A free society must be policed by a civilian police force accountable to the community it protects.

- OPEIU supports the labor movement's call that once a person has done their time, they should be allowed to vote in their communities, and applauds the 2018 passage of Florida's ballot initiative to restore voting rights to more than 1.5 million citizens convicted of certain felonies after they have served their sentences, including prison terms, parole and probationary periods.

- OPEIU supports new Voting Rights laws to roll back the barriers that right-wing politicians have put into place to bar people of color, young people, and many seniors from voting. Expand all methods for making voting more accessible for all.

- OPEIU hails the 2019 AFL-CIO Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Civil and Human Rights Conference of the AFL-CIO and will work to implement its goals of reforming the criminal-justice system, such as eliminating the Three Strikes laws and changing the policy of onerous sentences for drug offenses carrying mandatory minimum sentences.

- OPEIU supports the call to create jobs, dismantle prisons and build schools, not jails.

- OPEIU supports the end of all racial profiling and calls for the use of police body cameras to rebuild trust between law enforcement and the communities.

- OPEIU strongly supports the principle that Black Lives Matter.

- OPEIU will support any and all creative reforms to end mass incarceration, including prioritizing treatment and rehabilitation for nonviolent drug offenders.

- OPEIU supports the end of the privatization of prisons.

- OPEIU supports “ban the box” legislation and executive action for federal employers and contractors to give applicants an opportunity to demonstrate their job qualifications before being asked about their criminal records.

RAISING WAGES CAMPAIGN AND RIGHT-TO-WORK

Background:

Over the last 35 years, people in the U.S. have seen the greatest growth of income inequality since the 1920s. Real wages, in fact, have not increased since the 1970s. The disparity in income has been so great that America's top 10 percent average nine times as much income as the entire 90 percent of the population. Even more startling is the fact that the top 1 percent average more than thirty-eight (38) times more income than the bottom 90 percent, and the top 0.1 percent make one-hundred-eighty-four (184) times the amount of the bottom 90 percent.

One of the biggest reasons for the vast gap is the decline of union membership brought about by anti-worker trade deals hitting the unionized manufacturing sector the hardest (but also increasingly in the service sector) and by the anti-union, anti-public sector strategies employed by business, special interests and anti-worker politicians. Since the Supreme Court decision, *Citizens United*, allowing corporations to spend unlimited amounts of money in elections, anti-union politicians have emerged to totally take over the state legislatures around the country.

Once this has happened, often the first piece of legislation to emerge is the right-to-work (for less) bills.

When unions no longer represent the majority of the workers in a workplace, their bargaining power becomes much weaker. In addition, these laws do not simply affect unionized workers; evidence has shown that they affect not only the wages of union members but of all workers as well. The average worker in right-to-work states makes \$6,000 a year less than in states that do not have such statutes. Currently, twenty-seven (27) states have right-to-work laws. with four (4) new states added after the 2012 presidential election: Indiana, Michigan, Wisconsin, and West

Virginia. In these states more than one-quarter of all jobs are in low-wage occupations.

Policies:

- OPEIU supports the AFL-CIO Raising Wages Campaign. We will fight against the growing inequity between the 99 percent and the 1 percent. Part of the campaign to increase income requires an investment to fix our crumbling infrastructure and an all-out effort to stop corporate-backed trade deals that lead to the massive offshoring of jobs.

- OPEIU will fight to turn back the clock on these legislative fiats that have created right-to-work laws. We will join with unions and community groups to restore worker rights in these states. Proof these laws can be overturned occurred in Ohio where the State Federation of Labor mobilized voters to overturn bills that would have done away with the most progressive minimum-wage law in the country and at the same time, working families turned back a Wisconsin-type ballot measure that would have eliminated collective bargaining for public employees. Missouri also fought back, striking down the state's so-called right-to-work law in 2018.

REMOTE WORK

Background:

The COVID-19 pandemic brought about a precipitous rise in remote work, which has produced a number of benefits for workers. Time spent commuting without pay is reduced (also reducing carbon emissions at-scale), leisure time is increased, and worker productivity is significantly improved by the rise of remote work. The flexibility of remote work also helps meet the challenges posed to working parents.

The benefits to employers extend beyond improved productivity. Employers can save significant sums of money on lowering their real estate footprints, reduce lost time from office-borne illnesses, and improve employee morale at next to zero cost.

Policies:

OPEIU and its local unions:

- Oppose employer efforts to enact geographic-based pay rates, which pay workers different rates for the same remote work, depending upon where the worker logs in from;
- Believe work is work, no matter where it is performed, and will, where appropriate, negotiate into collective bargaining agreements provisions to clarify remote work options, especially for workers whose work can be completed entirely remotely.

REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

Background:

In 2022, the Supreme Court of the United States overturned *Roe v Wade*, eviscerating the right to bodily autonomy in a broader effort to roll back the rights of women, LGBTQIA+ people, and workers of all identities. The right to an abortion is about the right to have decision-making power about one's own body and life. In enacting the *Dobbs* decision, the Supreme Court is, in effect, forcing people across the U.S. to give birth. In stripping the American people of this right, the Supreme Court has placed into jeopardy the lives and livelihoods of countless Americans.

Reproductive health care is a human right, and that includes the right to an abortion. Decisions about reproductive health should be made between a patient and their doctor; the *Dobbs* decision rejects this right, instead allowing the state to restrict personal freedoms. The forced birth decision in *Dobbs* is especially nefarious considering the U.S. has no national parental leave, no guaranteed health care, and some of the highest child care rates in the world.

The consequences of this reactionary judicialism are widespread, impacting all areas of life, including the workplace. Workers' rights and reproductive rights are intimately interlinked. Worker autonomy is severely limited by this decision, and the burden will disproportionately fall on the working poor, particularly workers of color. The right to an abortion is thus a right that must be safeguarded at all costs, at every level of government.

Policies:

OPEIU and its local unions will:

- Support candidates who champion the right to an abortion as a fundamental human right, and will vote to codify abortion rights as national law;

- Commit to training members and staff on the issue of reproductive rights and, wherever possible, shall negotiate contract language that safeguards members' reproductive rights;
- Work alongside its AFL-CIO affiliates to develop messaging, strategies and tactics to assist in the effort to codify reproductive rights;
- Defend medical workers from criminal prosecution for providing abortion care and will, through its OPEIU Nurses Council, provide union-sponsored training on reproductive rights and racial discrepancies in reproductive health care.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Background:

It is now acknowledged that the vast majority of women will, during the course of their working lives, be the victims of varying degrees of sexual harassment. Today, women's groups and trade unions, such as OPEIU, are concretely and on a daily basis fighting to put a stop to these perverse and devastating practices. The #MeToo and #TimesUp movements have done much to forward the conversation, but a great deal of progress is yet to be made. Labor unions, whose purpose is to protect and further workers' rights on the job, have a unique role to play in helping to end this pernicious abuse of power.

Whenever it occurs, sexual harassment generates fear, controversy and emotional violence. Victims who go public with sexual harassment live in fear of losing their jobs. Therefore, when unions seek to devise educational programs or strategies of intervention to counter the problem, they must proceed with tact.

Sexual harassment is based on an abuse of power. It constitutes an emotional threat and represents a violation of the personal integrity of the victim. Often repetitive but always humiliating, sexual harassment affects the physical and mental well-being of the person subjected to it. The fundamental principle that differentiates it from romantic advances, flirting, or simply joking around is that it is not desired, or reciprocated.

Employers, supervisors, and co-workers will sometimes indulge in sexual harassment that, very often, finds its source in the power relations that have characterized the social working relations between men and women.

OPEIU's objective is to prevent under any circumstances, sexual harassment in the workplace. We believe that through education of employers, workers and union representatives, an environment can be created that is free of sexual harassment and that effective strategies to counter harassment will occur.

Policies:

- Our local unions, to act vigorously against sexual harassment, should include in their collective agreements a clause defining sexual harassment, together with swift and efficient measures to redress the situation, not by disadvantaging the victim but by neutralizing the harasser once and for all. The clause should put the employer under the obligation to ensure a workplace devoid of harassment and the union should be associated with any major awareness and prevention campaign to educate the company's staff.

- OPEIU believes all employers should take steps to prevent sexual harassment. Sexual harassment training should be mandatory for management and employees of all levels. Taking a strong stand against harassment does make a difference.

- OPEIU will continue to wage a ruthless battle against sexual harassment, by making its members aware of its devastating effects; by providing its local unions with the appropriate support to help them develop strategies of action; by demanding more stringent legislation so as to protect the emotional and mental health and the dignity of the workers; by training officers, staff and members on what constitutes harassment as well as how to prevent it.

This struggle against sexual harassment is but one aspect of the more general battle OPEIU intends to continue so that all people can live in complete economic and social equality, in a society free of the threats and dangers of sexual harassment, free of all forms of subjugation.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Background:

Social Security is the foundation of retirement income for working Americans. Increasingly, with employers terminating or simply never providing defined benefit or defined contribution plans, Social Security is the only income retirees will receive.

Half of working Americans have no retirement plan at all at work. Most of the workers who have retirement plans such as 401(k) accounts have balances of less than \$30,000. Retirement savings were decimated by losses in the stock market and, even with the gains the market has achieved in recent years, it will take years to make up for those losses. Taking into account all sources of income, it is estimated that the gap between what working Americans need to maintain their standard of living in retirement and what they actually have is \$6.6 trillion.

Social Security is not insolvent and will not be in the foreseeable future. In fact, without any congressional action, the Fund will be able to pay full benefits through 2034, according to the most recent report by the Social Security Trustees.

In fact, simply by raising the cap on earnings that are subject to the Social Security tax a modest amount, the Social Security Trust Fund would be completely solvent for decades beyond 2034. Social Security will never run out of money because there will always be hundreds of billions of dollars in contributions to the Trust Fund, according to leading economists who have studied the actuarial projections (see Ross Eisenbrey of the Economic Policy Institute).

Working Americans have too little retirement security, and only Social Security offers the certainty that working people deserve. It is the nation's most successful anti-poverty program, and it remains a fundamental pillar of the American economy – one that is critical to the long-term economic security, not only of seniors, but of all working people.

The current Social Security benefit levels are too low. Its income replacement rate is one of the lowest of all the industrialized countries. The benefits must be increased to compensate for the decline of traditional pensions and the loss of retirement savings. Real wages have been declining for years and are now actually falling. Since Social Security benefits are based on a worker's earnings, actual Social Security benefits are lower than they would have been in 1997. There can be no caps on the cost-of-living adjustments that Social Security recipients receive periodically. In fact, the COLAs need to rise just to meet the increase in health care costs that seniors face.

Policies:

- OPEIU and its local unions will fight against any and all attempts to lower Social Security benefits.
- OPEIU and its local unions will fight against the “chained CPI” COLA, which results in payments that don’t keep up with inflation and thus a reduction in benefits in the long term.
- OPEIU and its local unions will fight any increase in the retirement age.
- OPEIU calls for legislation to strengthen Social Security’s financing by getting rid of the cap on taxable earnings and considering broadening the sources of income that support benefits.

STUDENT DEBT

Background:

The cost of college education, both private and public, has led to an enormous debt crisis for millions of working and middle-class students. The debt results in limiting any economic mobility and contributes to the income-inequality divide. It is estimated the current debt is \$1.3 trillion, with the burden mostly falling on African-American and Latino students. While the super-rich pay little in taxes, thus depleting public revenues, all but two states are spending less on higher education than they did before the recession of 2008.

While the idea of a free college education in the public university system was scoffed at a few years ago, a new movement is emerging among trade unionists, known as Jobs with Justice, the U.S. Student Association and many other groups to look seriously at how this can be accomplished.

Policies:

- OPEIU supports the AFL-CIO's position that all students should be able to have access to public higher education without fear of graduating with impossible debt.
- OPEIU recognizes that true access for all to higher education will take more than simply lowering the interest rate on student loans; OPEIU will fight for restoration of funding for public higher education from community colleges to four-year institutions to provide the money necessary so that low-income and middle-class students can attend free. (This was the case from the New York public universities to Universities of Wisconsin and Michigan and the largest university system of all, the Universities of California and the California State and Community colleges.) Higher education should be viewed as a force for public good and a path to the middle class.

- OPEIU will continue to support the OPEIU Student Debt Reduction Program, which provides five (5) scholarships of \$2,500 each to eligible OPEIU members with at least \$10,000 in student debt.

- OPEIU also will continue to support the OPEIU Free College program, which provides all OPEIU eligible members and their dependents the opportunity to earn an associate's degree at no cost to the member, thus eliminating the burden of accumulating student debt in the first place.

SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER AND DRUG TESTING

Background:

Employer alcohol and drug testing raises complex and controversial issues for the unions that represent the affected employees. Workers who suffer from drug addiction — or alcoholism — need, and benefit from, well-conceived and soundly administered treatment programs. Likewise, no one doubts workers impaired by either of these illnesses can pose health and safety hazards on the job. Accordingly, the problem of substance abuse ought to be addressed squarely and cooperatively by employers and unions.

OPEIU and its local unions have long promoted prevention and rehabilitation programs in the workplace and the community. We have been strong supporters of employee assistance programs. OPEIU has promoted the training of counselors to offer guidance and referral to those with alcohol and drug-related problems and has cooperated with communities in sponsoring institutes on alcohol and drug abuse. All of these activities should be continued and expanded.

Unfortunately, many employers, both public and private, have looked to drug testing and punitive measures as the answer to substance abuse problems. This type of approach, drug testing in particular, is subject to numerous serious objections; and if the tests are conducted on a random basis, the process cuts deeply into individual privacy rights.

There are serious questions about testing accuracy. Currently there is insufficient regulation of laboratories engaged in drug testing, and surveys have shown the majority of laboratories do not perform adequately. Problems associated with testing accuracy are particularly disturbing since a false positive test can stigmatize its victim for life.

Contrary to the general belief, drug testing alone cannot establish whether a worker is currently addicted to a drug, is

under the influence of a drug, or is unable to do his/her work because of drug use. Testing that leads to discipline rather than treatment, therefore, often gives the employer broad powers to punish employees who are doing their job because of employer disapproval of their off-duty conduct. In addition, mandatory drug and alcohol testing programs raise serious legal questions under federal, provincial and state law.

Furthermore, the decriminalization of cannabis in thirty-one (31) states and the District of Columbia means employers' justifications for drug testing are wearing thin. Testing employees for cannabis use, especially in states where its use is legal, is an invasion of privacy and amounts to surveilling employees off-the-clock.

We will try to ensure a just, fair and privacy-maintaining process on disciplinary actions for employees engaging in legal activity.

Policies:

- OPEIU and its local unions will vigorously resist employer programs that require widespread random mandatory drug or alcohol screening or that in other ways ride roughshod over human rights of workers. Random pre-employment drug testing may also result in unfair treatment of individuals. Therefore, we should give careful attention to employer proposals to screen job applicants for drug use.

- Workers and their local unions must be fully informed of the methodology of the tests used, what substances the tests were conducted to detect and which labor and medical personnel were involved. Moreover, workers are entitled to test results in writing, under conditions of strict confidentiality, as expeditiously as possible.

- We support regulations requiring laboratories that perform drug testing analysis to meet the standards established by the National Institute on Drug Abuse.

- Local unions should take an active role in assisting their members who are injured by unjustified and harsh employer testing programs to invoke their rights under federal and state law. OPEIU will continue to urge Congress and state legislatures to move quickly to strengthen the legal protections against employer testing programs that unnecessarily infringe on the privacy and dignity of all private and public sector workers.

- For OPEIU members who come under CLC jurisdiction, CLC policy shall apply.

- We oppose substance abuse and drug testing wherever it is not law or a contractual obligation.

UNIVERSAL VOTER REGISTRATION

Background:

Voter-suppression attacks have grown at an alarming rate culminating in unprecedented attempts to curtail the right to vote during the 2016 presidential campaign. These attacks stem from the changing demographics in the U.S. The age of white-male dominance is coming to an end as the percentage of Hispanic voters increase, as more and more African-Americans register to vote (and actually do so), and as the registration of young people has hit an all-time high. In African-American communities across the country – and not just in the South – these suppression tactics resembled those used during the Jim Crow era of brutal racial segregation.

From denying voter registration; to ending early-voting days in city after city; to closing convenient precincts, thus forcing people to wait countless hours in lines that snaked around city blocks; to buying huge billboards in African-American communities warning people, in very frightening, graphic portrayals, that voter fraud is a crime it seemed no tactic was too low for those trying to suppress the attempt to vote. Indeed, the right-wing groups passed voter ID laws (struck down by most courts) in a blatant attempt to deny Hispanics and other legal immigrants the right to vote. These ID laws also discriminated against senior citizens, poor people, and college students. ID laws passed in thirty-four (34) states.

These pernicious actions backfired in most places as unprecedented numbers of African-Americans, Hispanics, woman and young people came out to vote. It was a victory for voter participation and our democracy. Such voter suppression tactics continue, however, and must be stopped.

Policies:

- OPEIU calls upon the federal government to expand voter opportunities and to support universal voter registration.
- OPEIU supports expanding access to voting through expanded early-voting, no-fault absentee voting, same-day registration, and voter-registration modernization.
- OPEIU will work to see that voting rights are restored to individuals who have committed crimes but served their time.
- OPEIU will continue to support the Voting Rights Action, Section 5.
- OPEIU will join with the AFL-CIO and our community allies to support legislative and administrative reforms at the federal, state and local levels to expand all voting rights.

WORKERS' MEMORIAL DAY

Background:

On April 28, 1989, the AFL-CIO and the U.S. labor movement held the first "Workers' Memorial Day" services throughout the country in memory of workers who had been killed, injured or made sick because of workplace hazards. A day of mourning was first observed by the Canadian labor movement, which inspired Workers' Memorial Day in the United States.

Policies:

OPEIU and its local unions call upon the AFL-CIO, the CLC and the rest of the labor movement to continue the observance of Workers' Memorial Day/National Day of Mourning as an annual event in order to keep the fight for safer and healthier workplaces before the general public, Parliament, the White House and Congress.

OPEIU encourages all workers to participate in the following ways:

- Hold a candlelight vigil, memorial service or moment of silence to remember those who have died on the job and to highlight safety problems in the community and at work.
- Organize a rally to highlight job safety and health problems in the community and how the union is fighting to improve protections.
- Create a memorial site where workers have been killed on the job.
- Distribute workplace fliers and organize call-ins to congressional representatives during lunchtime or breaks and tell them to support stronger OSHA, mine safety and health administration and worker safety and health protections.
- Hold public meetings with members of Congress in their home districts and bring injured workers and family members to

talk firsthand about the need for stronger safety and health protections.

- Write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper and talk to reporters you know to encourage them to write a story about how the threat of job safety protections endanger workers in the community.

- OPEIU and its local unions pledge to lobby the administration and Congress for stringent new standards to protect workers from known safety and health hazards, for harsher fines to give employers greater incentive to obey the law and clean up life-threatening conditions, and for administrative procedures that make it less difficult for workers to get inspections when they file a complaint about hazardous working conditions.

Workers' Memorial Day recognizes the countless workers who have been killed, injured or made sick because of workplace hazards, and serves as an invaluable reminder of the continued need for stronger regulations governing our nation's workplaces.

YOUNG WORKERS

Background:

Today's young workers are part of the largest generation to enter the workforce since the baby boomers. People born between the late 1970s and 2000 also make up the most diverse generation in America's history. They are also the most technologically savvy generation in America's history. But they suffer the highest unemployment -- more than twice the national average -- and the fewest jobs in today's economy. This disparity is even more alarming among youth of color. In 2015, the youth unemployment rate was 12.2 percent, but for African-American youth it was close to 20.7 percent, and 12.7 percent for Hispanics.

Further, even when young people do get jobs, most often they are low-wage, dead-end ones. Only 4.2 percent of workers between the ages of 16 and 24 are union members. That is the lowest percentage among any age group. Students are on the front lines of every social movement, but when those students leave school and enter the workforce, they are not joining unions. All this despite the fact that 68 percent of those ages 18 to 29 hold a positive view of unions.

Youth who do go to college and graduate are saddled with enormous debt with little chance of ever affording to pay it back. Many get unpaid internships and no longer are these just a stepping stone to permanent jobs. Many young college graduates are taking two or three unpaid internships to try to break into their chosen career fields. Young people who do have jobs have no benefits and no seniority.

Policies:

- OPEIU supports the actions of the AFL-CIO in creating a Young Workers Advisory Council (YWAC) made up of youth from young workers groups across the U.S., including OPEIU representatives.

- OPEIU has established its own young workers initiative, known as Rising Stars, to encourage and help develop emerging leaders in both the union and community.

- OPEIU encourages its local unions to form young workers groups, particularly on college campuses where we represent many students, who are also full or part-time employees of the universities where they go to school.

- OPEIU encourages its local unions to model their young workers groups after the Young Emerging Labor Leaders (YELL) groups that have been established in State Labor Federations. A good example to model is in Washington State. These groups are activists in nature in protesting budget cuts, doing creative GOTV efforts, and creating shadow-a-lobbyist programs to learn how to fight for issues in state legislatures and in the halls of Congress. They have also sponsored “pub crawls,” banner-painting parties, music festivals, and trivia nights – all with an activist edge.

- OPEIU encourages its local unions to work together with Pride at Work’s local chapters, which have sponsored flash mobs in support of hotel workers (see YouTube – SFPAW) and organized sit-ins at banks to protest foreclosure policies, just to name a couple.

- OPEIU will support Pride at Work’s Futures Committee and encourage its local unions to publicize and, where possible, participate in the work of all the AFL-CIO’s Constituency Groups Youth Leadership Development Programs.

- OPEIU will encourage its local unions to actively participate and send delegates to the AFL-CIO’s annual Next Up youth summit. At the 2015 summit, nearly 1,000 delegates came together to discuss and define their vision for the kind of

economically just world they want to live in, and detailed plans to fight for it.

