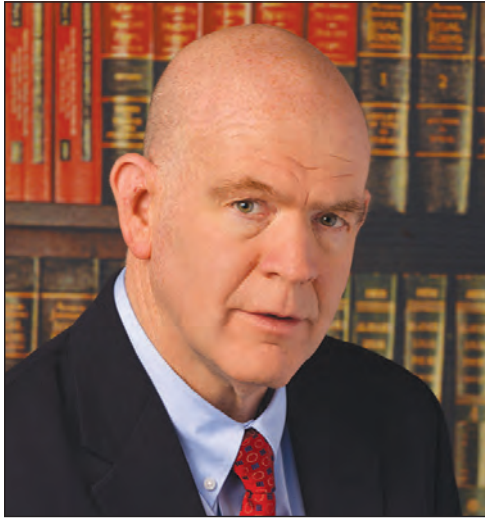


OPEIUCONNECT

Issue 549, Summer 2022



OPEIU is going back to its organizing roots and making waves, even playing a pivotal role in the historic Amazon Staten Island win



Working People Say They've Had Enough

By Richard Lanigan
President

Picture yourself two years ago, working in a meat processing plant or another front-line job. COVID-19 was rampant, and your employer provided little support and minimal protective equipment. Perhaps you worked in a different field, maybe as a nurse or a first responder, and the facility did not provide adequate PPE while it struggled with an overload of COVID patients. Maybe you contracted COVID, and your employer subjected you to a cross-examination about all your social contacts because it didn't want liability and tried to prove you contracted the virus somewhere other than at work.

Imagine working at a warehouse with thousands of other employees where you are all tracked by efficiency software that leaves you no time to use the bathroom, requiring you to relieve yourself in the work area or lose your job. Add to that the stress of a deadly and surging pandemic. Imagine you're a young worker employed in this front-line job to pay down your student debt.

In all these circumstances the worker felt the danger of contracting the virus, but the employer threatened to fire anyone who took time off. These were real-life financial and work conditions for millions of American workers during the last two years, and people wonder why employees want to retire or resign from their jobs?

American front-line workers have seen the hypocrisy of the campaigns and slogans thanking them for their work but

After years of an austerity based economic model, people are saying they need safety, a living wage, health care, job security and a means to a secure retirement. Workers no longer want to be treated like rental cars.

doing nothing to change work conditions. They have seen the lawn signs and have heard the empty political statements thanking front-line workers. They have seen the same politicians who thanked them fight to prevent their families from having the right to sue the employer when a worker died of COVID contracted in the workplace. The way people were forced back to work during the pandemic, with no protection from the virus provided by their employer or their government, will go down as a low period in our history. These workers also saw the federal government providing no support for their student debt.

While some union members took their unions for granted, many others have instead been willing to risk their jobs and livelihoods to stand up for their unions in an effort to improve working conditions.

If the employer won't help and the government won't help, is it any surprise

workers see no upward mobility or security and are helping themselves by forming their own unions? Is it any surprise people realize forming unions is the only way to get workplace protection and economic security?

In April, history was made when a group of Amazon employees said "ENOUGH!" and formed their own union, the Amazon Labor Union (ALU). While much has been said, and Amazon is gearing up to resist their efforts further, the fact remains the ALU won their NLRB election. This campaign and the Starbucks campaigns have shown Americans real change in the workplace requires a union. People are now organizing for change.

After years of an austerity based economic model, people are saying they need safety, a living wage, health care, job security and a means to a secure retirement. Workers no longer want to be treated like rental cars.

This is why more people filed union election petitions in 2022 than any other time in more than 60 years.

The late John Kelly, a former OPEIU president, used to say you could do away with all unions and in time, almost by spontaneous generation, unions would be reborn. When thousands of people from workplaces in different industries all around the country are willing to risk their jobs to form a union, I believe we are witnessing that rebirth. ■

Labor 2022

Analysis: Despite Big Legislative Gains for Working People, Student Debt Drives Young Voters Opinion of POTUS

Two polls released in April show support for President Biden and his party slipping among young people going into the 2022 midterm elections, despite the administration delivering a number of key victories for working people.

A Quinnipiac University poll showed people under 30 were more than twice as likely to disapprove of the president's performance. A Gallup poll revealed a similar pattern: Biden's poll numbers are slipping rapidly among younger voters, with majorities disapproving of his performance as the midterm elections near. Why?

Young voters are more likely to feel Biden has not used the power of his office — and his majorities in the House and Senate — to deliver on his campaign promises, specifically on at least \$10,000 of student debt forgiveness, which does not require congressional approval. That may be crucial with the midterms approaching, not

only because polls are showing young Democrats with student debt are less enthusiastic than they were in 2020, but because Republicans have largely blocked key parts of Biden's Build Back Better agenda (including the PRO Act), which were cornerstones of his campaign.

Young voters have these reservations despite the Biden administration's delivery of many key victories for working people, including at the NLRB, with the nomination of the fiercely pro-worker Jennifer Abruzzo as its top lawyer; at the Supreme Court, with the recent confirmation of Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson; and helping to create temporary and permanent union jobs with \$1 trillion in historic and much-needed infrastructure investments in our communities.

Still, young people (18-30) — a financially precarious group even preceding the pandemic — are anxious about student loan payment pauses giving way to payment restarts at a time when inflation is negating wage growth. Seventy-four percent of Gen Z borrowers

and 68 percent of millennial borrowers report delaying major life decisions due to student debt, according to a recent survey conducted by [bankrate.com](https://www.bankrate.com). But that study revealed even older borrowers — 42 percent of baby boomers and more than half of Gen Xers who borrowed to pay for school — made the same decision to delay buying a home or starting a family.

The Education Department's continual expansion of eligibility for the Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program is a positive start on this front, as is the administration's move to put 3.6 million of the 43 million student debtors on track for forgiveness via income-based repayment plans and its efforts to correct long-standing issues with student loan financiers incorrectly ruling out eligibility for hundreds of thousands of borrowers.

But it will likely take broad-based student loan forgiveness for young people en masse to not only regain their enthusiasm come November but, more importantly, to have any chance of having a quality of life at least on par with the one their parents had.

OPEIU Helps Members Struggling with Student Debt

If you're one of the millions of Americans living with student debt, your union may be able to help!

Each July, OPEIU awards five scholarships of \$2,500 to members in good standing through the OPEIU Student Debt Reduction Program. To be eligible, members must have completed an associate degree or undergraduate degree and have at least \$10,000 in outstanding student debt.

Full details and eligibility requirements can be found at opeiu.org under the Member Resources tab and by clicking the Membership Benefits link. The application deadline is June 30, 2022.

Apply today!

Grateful for OPEIU’s Free College Benefit

I’m so grateful our union provides the opportunity to go back to college without the financial hardship. I’ve always wanted to continue my education and this job and the union allowed me to do that.

Ashley Duety
Local 494
Indianapolis, Indiana

Editor’s Note: Ashley will graduate this spring with an associate degree in business management/human resources from Eastern Gateway Community College through the OPEIU Free College benefit. She’s graduating summa cum laude with a 4.0 grade point average! Ashley now plans to obtain her bachelor’s degree, which she can also do through the OPEIU program. Visit freecollege.opeiu.org for upcoming registration deadlines and more information about the OPEIU Free College benefit.



Ashley Duety and her family, from left, are Brayden Sorrell, 14, husband Roger Duety, Carter Duety, 12, and Landon Duety, 13.

The CROWN Act Could Help End Natural Hair Discrimination

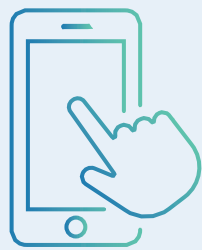
In March, the U.S. House of Representatives passed legislation seeking to end employer discrimination against natural hair and stop the harmful, lifelong impact of hair discrimination in schools.



The Creating a Respectful and Open World for Natural Hair (CROWN) Act now awaits a vote in the Senate. A coalition of unions, including OPEIU, and President Biden have urged lawmakers to swiftly pass the bill. If signed into law, discrimination based on one’s natural hair will be treated as a federal crime akin to religious-based or race-based discrimination under Title VII of the landmark Civil Rights Act of 1964.

In 15 states, the CROWN Act, or bills inspired by it, has already been signed into law. In 2019, personal care brand Dove commissioned a survey of 2,000 women working in offices — with half of those surveyed Black and half white — that found Black women disproportionately face workplace bias due to their natural hairstyles. A 2022 follow-up survey of Black mothers found more than half had daughters who, as early as five years old, had already experienced hair discrimination. Eighty-six percent of Black teens surveyed report experiencing hair discrimination by age 12.

Passing the CROWN Act will clarify natural hair discrimination is race discrimination, and it has no place at work. Contact your senators and tell them to support the CROWN Act.



Stay Connected!

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

Don’t miss out! Sign up to receive texts from OPEIU.

Text **OPEIU** to 844-240-4114.

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

OPEIU Towing Program Keeps Members on the Road!



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

The program, provided by your union to members at no cost, gives all members and family living in the same household

up to two tows/service calls annually, valued at up to \$100 each! The 24-hour plan includes free hookup and tow up to 15 miles and 24-hour emergency roadside assistance, battery and lockout service, delivery of certain supplies, emergency tire service, travel discounts and more.

All the information you need about the program and the host of OPEIU benefits you’re entitled to is at your fingertips at opeiu.org under the Member Resources tab. It’s also on the OPEIU app, available for free download on the App Store and on Google Play by searching **OPEIU**.



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

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

INSIDE



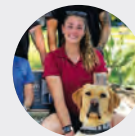
On the Cover: A version of the “OPEIU on the move!” logo, pictured, first appeared in White Collar, the predecessor to OPEIU Connect, in 1989. Throughout this issue, see the many ways OPEIU is on the move today, shaking things up and bringing union power to working people throughout the country.



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INTERNATIONAL UNION
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President

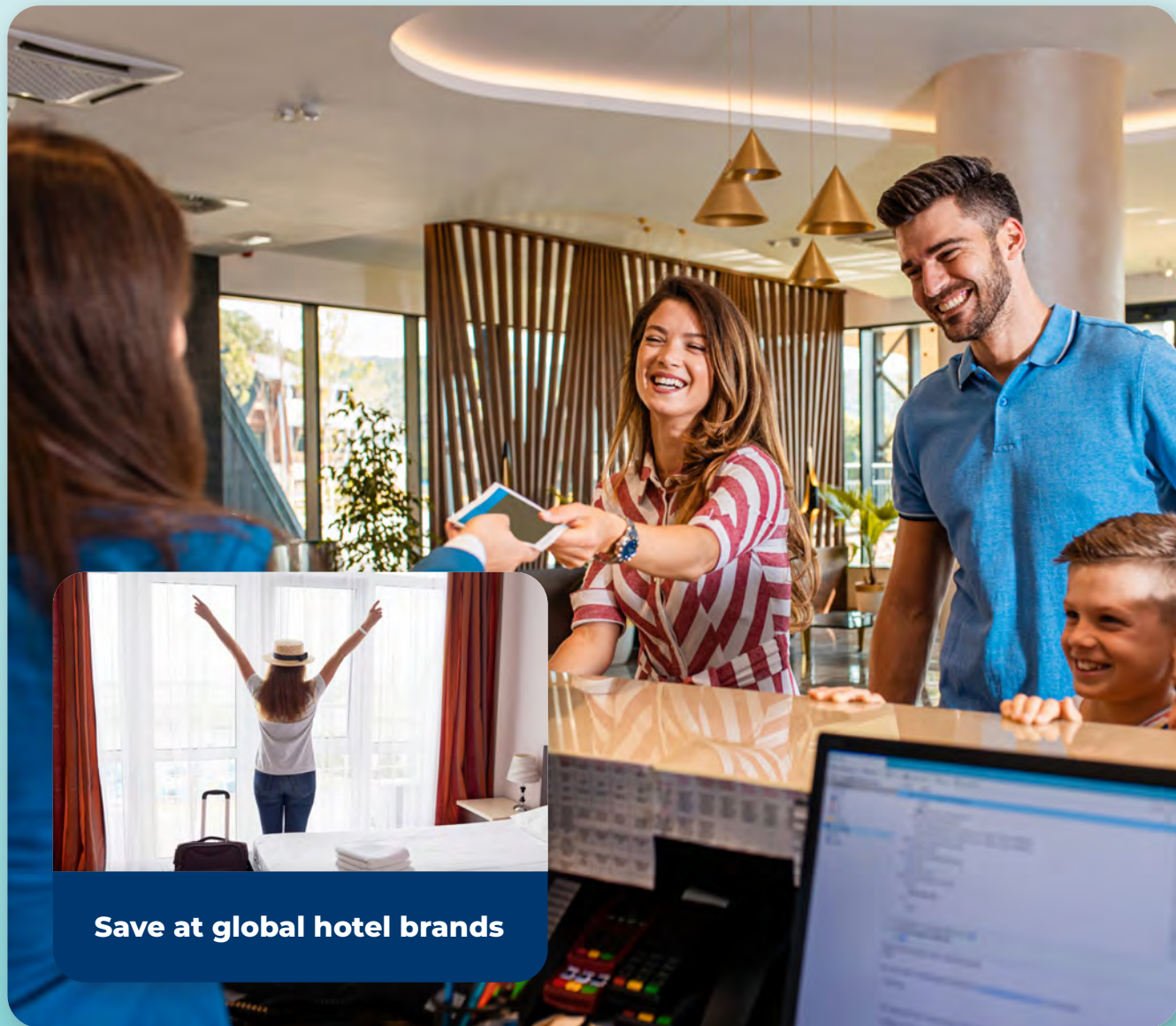
MARY MAHONEY
Secretary-Treasurer

ILCA **CALM**
ACPS

OPEIU CONNECT (ISSN 2771-6597) is published quarterly by the Office and Professional Employees International Union, 80 Eighth Avenue, Suite 201, New York, NY 10011. Periodical postage paid at New York and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to the Office and Professional Employees International Union, P.O. Box 1761, New York, NY 10113.
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Subscription Price: \$1 a Year

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OPEIU Retirement Plan Adds New Investment Options

The OPEIU National Retirement Savings Plan (NRSP) is continually evolving and adding new retirement investment possibilities for OPEIU members. Now, OPEIU members enrolled in the 401(k) plan can choose to open a Schwab Personal Choice Retirement Account (PCRA).

A Schwab PCRA resides within your employer-sponsored retirement plan, allowing increased freedom to invest more widely. These potential investments range from nearly 8,800 traditional mutual funds to approximately 67 ESG funds, which are portfolios of equities and/or bonds with environmental, social and governance factors integrated into the investment process.

Members across the nation are taking advantage of the collectively bargained OPEIU 401(k) plan. Most recently, Local 153 members working at Yankee Stadium for Legends Hospitality, LLC, negotiated the plan into their contract.

Ask your union representative about negotiating the plan into your next collective bargaining agreement. You can also visit opeiu.retirepru.com for more information.

Learn more about the OPEIU National Retirement Savings Plan and upcoming educational webinars by visiting opeiu.org, searching under the Member Resources tab and clicking the link “OPEIU National Retirement Savings Plan (401k) Educational Webinars.”

OPEIU’s 401(k) Plan Counsel Named to ERISA Advisory Council

OPEIU’s National Retirement Savings Plan (NRSP) counsel Marcelle Henry has been selected to serve on the prestigious Advisory Council on Employee Welfare and Pension Benefit Plans, also known as the ERISA Advisory Council, representing the employee organizations category. Nominated by OPEIU and appointed by Secretary of Labor Marty Walsh, Henry is immensely qualified to serve on the council, and her specialized knowledge of multiemployer plans and extensive experience will make her an invaluable addition to this important group.

Henry is currently a partner at Pitta LLP in New York City, which she joined in Nov. 2017, and is chairperson of the firm’s ERISA/Employee Benefits Practice Group. Her practice primarily encompasses the representation of multiemployer Taft-Hartley pension and welfare funds, where she regularly advises clients on ERISA plan administration and compliance issues. She brings a wide breadth and depth of knowledge and experience with respect to the Affordable Care Act, Pension Protection Act, HIPAA, Mental Health Parity Addiction Act and COBRA. She also has experience drafting and administering single employer plans.



Marcelle Henry

No One Thought We'd Win



Local 153 Senior
Business Representative
Seth Goldstein

OPEIU played a pivotal role in the historic organizing win at a Staten Island Amazon warehouse, providing invaluable guidance to the group of activists and proving when working people stand together we win!

In April, history was made when workers at Amazon's JFK8 warehouse facility on Staten Island, New York, voted to form the first-ever union at the retail giant. The group of workers beat back a very sophisticated anti-union campaign in which Amazon spent more than \$4.3 million — approximately \$538 per worker — to defeat the union effort.

Though they still have to overcome Amazon's challenges to the election results and then negotiate a first contract, the Amazon Labor Union's (ALU) victory has electrified the labor movement and broadened the organizing possibilities of the moment.

For several months, Local 153 Senior Business Representative Seth Goldstein has acted as ALU's pro-bono attorney. OPEIU Connect spoke with him recently about ALU, what it means, and what lessons can be drawn from the victory that Goldstein calls "the most significant victory since the Flint sit-down strike in 1937." Below is an abridged version of that conversation.

OPEIU Connect: How did you first get involved with ALU?

Seth Goldstein: [ALU President] Chris Smalls put out a tweet asking for labor attorneys to work with ALU. I took him up on it immediately, because I had conversations with several people, and we all felt a worker-based, grassroots-engaged organizing campaign could have success on Staten Island. If it comes from the workers, it will have more success. Since then, I've helped with their constitution and union cards, instructed them on labor law and filed a ton of unfair labor practice charges with the NLRB.

OC: A lot of people are wondering: How did you do it? Is it simply just talking to the workers?

SG: The practices of ALU are simply just good labor practices. This idea that labor unions aren't doing this already is completely wrong. We're doing it at OPEIU with our nonprofits and with [our Tech Workers Union Local 1010, dedicated to helping organize tech workers, and wins such as] Kickstarter. Workers United is doing it with Starbucks. Those are all worker based. All OPEIU campaigns already do that. The ideas I brought to ALU were ones developed at OPEIU. Still, no one, not even me, could guarantee a win. No one thought we'd win.

OC: Can you speak a little bit about the union-busting that took place, specifically led by Global Strategy Group (GSG)?

SG: GSG working as a union buster for Amazon is a real concern. If the Democratic Party doesn't disconnect themselves and condemn their union busting, that's one factor that will contribute to them losing elections. The ALU is a working-class organization. We have conservatives and communists, those on the left and those on the right, all doing the same thing, which is pretty cool.

OC: Why, in your view, is the political aspect so important?

SG: We're being hurt by people who are our "friends." The political aspect is crucial because there has to be political

pressure on Amazon. If they take the vote away, there goes democracy. All of labor needs to be aware of what is on the line here. [Amazon] has all the money in the world, so you know that's what the ALU is fighting against. There's a serious question to be asked of the Democratic politicians in this respect: Which side are you on?

OC: What sort of issues are ALU members prioritizing heading into first contract negotiations?

SG: A salary raise. They're asking for \$30 [per hour], and I don't think that's outrageous. This is back-breaking work, a lot like mine working. So better safety measures and compensation for their hard work is crucial. The average Amazon worker walks about 25,000 steps a day.

OC: What's the biggest lesson you've taken away from this experience?

SG: I think we have to continue to prioritize worker engagement. That's understood by our apprentice organizers, many of our local unions, and our staff at the International. I think if we practice that, it's certainly in the interest of OPEIU and our members. That's the lesson: When unions forget the workers, we lose. Unions are the workers.

OC: Final thoughts?

SG: I say this humbly: This victory is the most significant victory since the Flint sit-down strike in 1937. There have been a lot of union victories since, but mostly regional, and not a huge player defeated by a bunch of workers. That's not to say there weren't organizing victories. Look at the South, look at UPS in the late 1990s. It's not just me. It's not just Chris Smalls. It's the timing coming together. OPEIU played a big role in first organizing Kickstarter; Amazon is a tech company all the same and what we learned organizing tech workers, in turn, helped ALU.



67 RADFORD ST.
STATEN ISLAND, NY 10314

April 5, 2022

Myra Hepburn, Secretary-Treasurer
Local 153 OPEIU
42 Broadway
Suite 1201
New York, NY 10004

Dear Secretary-Treasurer Hepburn,

I am writing to sincerely thank you on behalf of the 8,000 newly organized Amazon Labor Union members for your vital support and solidarity during our union organizing campaign. Local 153 OPEIU provided enormous help in our long, arduous fight, and your involvement was a key factor in our historic victory.

We would especially like to thank you for permitting Senior Business Representative Seth Goldstein to work with our organizing committee on unfair labor practice charges. We would never have made it this far without his mentorship and support. Seth has filed over 42 unfair labor practice charges against Amazon and worked closely with our organizers to push the company into a national settlement agreement that affirmed our right to organize in our own break areas, helping us to create the community necessary to mobilize for our election victory.

Additionally, I would like to thank the Local 153 shop stewards who participated in our phone bank. I know that Steve Turkeltaub, President of Local 153, Renee Spradley, Chief Steward of Municipal Credit Union, and also other workers from Amalgamated Life Insurance Co. all made hundreds of phone calls to our co-workers. We will never forget this generous contribution to our movement. The donation of your time and resources is emblematic of the community solidarity that made our victory possible. We hereby pledge that we will work with and support OPEIU Local 153 or other OPEIU units in any challenges you may face with your employers in the future.

We also know that, much like us, you are making bold efforts to create an engaged, worker-based organization, which is something we greatly admire. We must both signal the labor movement that the business union model is dead. It'll continue to be an uphill battle, however, and I hope we can continue to work closely together to achieve a strong and fair contract for Amazon workers, and to win even greater victories for the working class.

Our deepest gratitude,

Christian Smalls, President
Amazon Labor Union

Amazon Labor Union President Chris Smalls' letter thanking OPEIU for its key role in the successful Amazon organizing drive.

Nava Employees Secure Voluntary Recognition of their Union with OPEIU Tech Workers

Professional employees at Nava Public Benefit Corporation have formed a union with OPEIU Tech Workers Union Local 1010, continuing the growing trend of tech workers seeking OPEIU representation. They are now bargaining for a first contract.



From Kickstarter to Code for America and now Nava, employees in the tech world are forming unions with Local 1010 to help ensure their workplaces match the values guiding their organizations' work.

Local 1010 is organizing workers for a better future through collective bargaining in their own workplaces and beyond, fighting for the dignity and respect all working people deserve. It's a local union within OPEIU created for and run by tech workers, formed around a core of engineers,

designers, salespeople, product managers, operations specialists, finance administrators, community support agents, trust and safety analysts and every other person who makes tech companies run.

In February, a supermajority of more than 170 Nava employees sought and secured voluntary recognition from their employer of their union, Nava United, to promote transparency in internal company policies, ensure pay equity, attract new talent in a highly competitive space and increase staff well-being and retention. Nava is a public benefit corporation focusing on solving digital issues in the public sector.

"[A union] allows us to act on our shared values of being active stewards, thinking long term, building together," said Nava United in a statement. "Inclusion is essential, and progress takes work. Through collaboration, we believe we can continue to strengthen the work we are so proud to do at Nava."

"After being at Nava for nearly two years, I know a union will push the organization to be even more equitable, inclusive, open and transparent," said Shaun Mosley, a Nava United member. "I'm excited to exemplify why unions make workplaces better."

Wesleyan University Student-Workers Join Local 153

Undergraduate student resident advisors at Wesleyan University in Middletown, Connecticut, have voted to join Local 153 in New York and are now negotiating their first contract.

"The 102-person group engaged in a series of public actions to put pressure on the administration to recognize their request to unionize," said OPEIU's Lead Northeast Organizer Grace Reckers. "A delegation put posters all around the campus, they engaged the community to release a letter of support, the Wesleyan student government issued a resolution in support of the union effort, two rallies were held with students and local elected officials, a public sit-in was held and alumni support was coordinated.

"Even when management indicated they'd be willing to work toward voluntary recognition, we kept up the pressure to meet right away to discuss the terms and get things finalized," Reckers said.



Student resident advisors at Wesleyan, left to right, are Charissa Lee, Sophie Taubman, Ruby Clarke, Yoheily Comprés, Sam DosSantos, Nigel Hayes, Robyn Wong and Violet Daar.

Take Pride in Democratizing Your Workplace

Employees at The Public Interest Network (TPIN) won their nationwide union via card check in March 2022, joining Local 2 in Washington, D.C. “TPIN is filled with people like me who are advocates for the public interest, and it’s time for us to advocate for a workplace that foregrounds equity, justice and a healthy working environment,” said Rishi Shah, an advocate with Maryland PIRG, an organization within TPIN. After two years of organizing, the group is excited to be negotiating their first contract and winning some demands benefiting not just them, but future co-workers.

OPEIU Connect interviewed four employees, including Shah, who were heavily involved in the unionizing campaign, each from different organizations within TPIN, to hear what they’ve learned along the way and any advice they would give others organizing their workplaces.

OC: What were some of the challenges you faced when organizing?

Mireille Bejjani, energy justice director (Community Action Works): The sheer size and basic structure of the organization were two of the largest hurdles to overcome. Slowly chipping away at recruitment and making inroads into all the sub-teams across the network was a gradual and intentional process. In addition, staff turnover is so high that keeping momentum was difficult. The organizing committee ebbed and flowed in size over time, and the core staff doing most of the work shifted drastically as folks moved on to new jobs and new people stepped up.

Will Eley, deputy political director (Fund for the Public Interest):

I guess the actual challenge for us was making sure colleagues who were new to our movement felt as included and critical to our success as those who had been part of our organizing committee for several months or even years, which can be tough for both veterans and rookies.

OC: What drove you to believe you’d be successful in winning a union at such a complex, nationwide organization?

Olivia Perfetti, Western Pennsylvania field organizer (PennEnvironment): We built and won overwhelming support: a supermajority of authorization cards from eligible staff, a dedicated and hardworking organizing committee, the most incredible union organizers at OPEIU we could have asked for and a sturdy backbone of alumni, partners and even board members on our side. We’ve certainly worked very hard for this, but it probably helps that we’re a company of organizers, and we were trained very well to do all of the work it takes to build a union.

WE: I was confident. Our union is so grateful for the time, capacity, care, expertise, patience and knowledge OPEIU has given over the past 18 months. Also, I feel so lucky there is just such an overwhelming wave of support out there for us, even from total strangers. Outside of love, marriage and being a new dad, this has been the most joyful experience of my life.



The Public Interest Network operates and supports organizations committed to a shared vision of a better world and a strategic approach to social change on issues such as voting rights and the environment.

I think most of my comrades are on the same page about that, too. Perhaps we won because of the joy we had for each other along the way.

OC: What advice would you give to other groups who are organizing unions at their workplaces?

MB: Don’t lose sight of why you’re organizing. The process can take a really long time, years, even. So, it can be easy to get sucked into the mechanics of it and forget the motivations that first started the effort. Stay grounded in why you joined and learn about why your co-workers got involved. In addition, don’t lose sight of the vision you’re building. When you’re commiserating with co-workers and recruiting people through conversations about problems with the workplace, it can be difficult to balance that negativity with the new reality you want to create at your organization. Make sure you continue to paint that picture for everyone involved, so you’re

driven not just by what you’re moving away from, but also by what you’re moving toward.

RS: Enjoy the process! Organizing a union is a unique opportunity to get to know your co-workers and create a better workplace for yourself, the people you work with and future employees. Take pride in democratizing where you work.

OP: You can start building a union with your friends and the co-workers you’re closest with... but just wait until you have one good conversation with a stranger in your workplace who ends up being supportive. You’ll be unstoppable after that.

WE: It is mission critical for your organizing committee to meet weekly: Find a time and day that works for most, then make sure everyone feels duty-bound to make nearly every meeting, almost no matter what. Trust that showing up for your comrades consistently is one of your most important responsibilities. Big turnouts for organizing committee meetings — especially when major decisions need to be made — are so reinvigorating. It’s how and why your union will endure. Being there for one another is the whole point.

An important suffix to all of this: Let your family, close friends, roommates and/or loved ones know not only what you are up to but why your union effort is so important to you and your co-workers.

Leadership Conference Employees Have a Union with Local 2

A supermajority of more than 75 percent of eligible staff of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights and The Leadership Conference Education Fund have secured voluntary recognition of their union with Local 2. Contract negotiations are now underway.

The group of 53 employees of the nation’s oldest and largest civil and human rights coalition, known as Leadership Conference Workers United (LCWU), organized out of a deep commitment to the organization’s ideals and its legacy and to ensure their workplace lived up to those ideals. “In forming a union, we find inspiration in the legacy of our coalition’s co-founder, A. Philip Randolph... and honor The Leadership Conference’s long history of advocacy on behalf of workers and the central role major unions have played both in our coalition and on our boards,” said the group in its letter to the organization’s leadership requesting recognition.

“We believe by raising our voice collectively, as a diverse group of workers from different levels and departments, we can better work with senior leadership to successfully address workplace issues and make The Leadership Conference an even better place to work,” they wrote. The union plans to continue the organization’s tradition of transparent and open communication to address employee career growth and retention, compensation, leave, telework policies and other benefits that better align with the policies The Leadership Conference lobbies for at the federal level.

Local 30 Wins Election at Guide Dogs of America



Guide Dogs of America bargaining committee members, clockwise from top left, Sean Chiles, Alberto Molina, Kelsey Horst and Lesa Miller celebrate their union vote with Tycho, one of the many guide dogs the organization trains.

Employees of Guide Dogs of America have voted unanimously to join Local 30 in San Diego.

Serving its community for many years, Guide Dogs of America breeds, trains and provides service animals to those in need of assistance. The new members of Local 30 are dedicated to providing the best quality service and care to ensure these animals are able to assist those who need it.

“We have been working with this group for several months and, since the start, I found them to be very serious about union representation,” said Jamie Campbell, director of organizing at Local 30. “We look forward to working with our newest members to achieve their goals in bargaining.”

“This is a great victory for Local 30 and for Jamie,” said Marianne Giordano, executive director and chief financial officer of Local 30 and an International vice president. “I want to welcome our newest members to Local 30. We look forward to bargaining their first contract.

“And I want to congratulate Jamie and International Organizer Andom ‘Nati’ Kabsay, who provided assistance in this effort.”

Pennsylvania Voice Employees Join Local 32 to Build Equity for All

Employees at Pennsylvania Voice (PA Voice) have achieved voluntary recognition of their union with Local 32 and are now bargaining their first contract.

“We’re at an exciting period at PA Voice characterized by growth and reflection,” said the staff of eight in a joint statement with the organization’s leadership. “In 2021, PA Voice entered its second decade, welcomed a new executive director, doubled our staff and moved into the second year of a global pandemic, all while intentionally centering collective power. It’s fitting that in this growth year, we, the workers of PA Voice, unanimously affirmed this locus of collective power by unionizing. We’re excited to take the next step to affirm workers’ rights and equity for all staff.”

PA Voice was founded in 2010 to amplify the political voices of Pennsylvanians statewide, and over the years has transformed into a data-driven, BIPOC partner-led movement to build an inclusive, just and reflective democracy.

As a majority-BIPOC staff, the employees understand race is inextricably connected to their identities as workers, and are excited to continue centering racial equity internally as well as externally. “PA Voice has always been about building and expanding power for communities of color,” they said. “The establishment of a union is the best example of how our organization has decided to do that: By starting within and making sure its staff feels empowered in the organization and demonstrating how PA Voice continues to lead by example.”

“PA Voice has always been about building and expanding power for communities of color. The establishment of a union is the best example of how our organization has decided to do that.”

IATSE Employees Join Local 251

The staff of IATSE Local 480 in Santa Fe, New Mexico, have secured voluntary recognition of their union with OPEIU Local 251.

The 12 employees work as administrative assistants, membership coordinators, accountants/bookkeepers, field representatives and in IT, according to Local 251 President Kelley Allen.



Members of the new Pennsylvania Voice bargaining unit. Also pictured is Local 32 Business Manager Bill Henning, upper right.

Remembering the Life and Service of Terrie Bares



Terrie Bares

OPEIU remembers the life and many contributions of Terrie Lou Bares, former president and longtime member of Local 12 in Minnesota.

Bares, 65, passed away April 21 after a hard-fought battle with cancer. “Terrie served more than 30 years as a member of our local, as chief steward of CenterPoint Energy, as a board member for many years and recently finished her term as president while battling cancer,” Local 12 reported. Bares served as Local 12 president from 2019 to earlier this year.

Local 12 posted a lovely tribute to Bares on its website, saying in part, “Terrie was a kind

soul with a beautiful smile that radiated any room she walked in. We will miss her kindness, determination and willpower. We also thank her for all she has given to our local union through the years.”

Bares resided in Blaine, Minnesota, and is survived by her mother, Bonnie Seiferth; husband, Craig Bares; children Derek Larsen, Jennifer Park and Chelsey Carlson; seven grandchildren and many other family and friends.

OPEIU extends its condolences to all who knew and loved Bares and remembers her for her many years of dedicated service to our members. She will be greatly missed.

Locals 29 and 39 Commemorate Workers’ Historic Struggles

OPEIU members participated in International Workers’ Day events throughout the country, commemorating the historic struggles and gains of working people and standing united in pursuit of a more dignified future for all.

The celebration by workers, of workers and for workers, also known as May Day, is a potent reminder of the collective power we share when those who work for a living stand together. It’s also a time to remember the heroic struggles waged by generations before us for an eight-hour day, a minimum wage, overtime rights, the weekend, the abolition of child labor, Social Security and much more.

“When we mark this occasion and think about all the gains made by organized labor over the years, we are reminded how important it is to stay vigilant and keep fighting,” said OPEIU President Richard Lanigan. “Today, many of these hard-fought gains are being challenged, working people are working more for far less, and basic necessities like health care, housing and food are, for many, becoming increasingly out of reach at the worst possible time. Younger generations have, on average, little hope things will improve in their lifetimes.

“OPEIU believes the only way to reverse those trends is by organizing and building union power,” Lanigan said.

OPEIU’s commitment to prioritize organizing the unorganized has paved the way toward historic wins in new industries, amplifying the voices and improving the material conditions of workers in the nonprofit, tech and higher education sectors. “Through their union — our union — workers who long had no collective voice now have a vehicle to take power into their own hands,” Lanigan said.

Members of Local 29 came out in force to support a march and rally coordinated by the San Francisco Labor Council and other Bay Area central labor councils. Proudly wearing their union gear, the group recreated the historic march down Market Street held during the San Francisco General Strike of 1934, the first-ever complete shutdown of an American port city.



Members of Local 39 demonstrate on May Day at CUNA Mutual Group’s offices in Madison, Wisconsin.

Local 39 members used May Day to bring attention to their ongoing contract negotiations at CUNA Mutual Group (CMG) in Madison, Wisconsin. Local 39 President and Business Manager Kathryn Bartlett-Mulvihill said CMG has proposed “zero job security, elimination of the HMO medical plan, freezing the pension for new hires and wage adjustments far below inflation, despite record profits.

“OPEIU has been in contract negotiations with CMG since Feb. 7 but there has been very little movement,” Bartlett-Mulvihill continued. “CMG, one of the largest private sector employers in Madison, made more than \$590 million net profit in 2021 and \$1 billion over three years! They proudly state to their clients they are in the business of ‘helping people protect, invest and plan for the future,’ but refuse to provide the same securities to their own employees.” The company also has a long history of outsourcing, transferring and contracting bargaining unit work, eliminating more than 1,200 union jobs in the past 20 years alone.

“CMG has walked away from its commitment to the city and the community by eliminating jobs,” Bartlett-Mulvihill said. OPEIU members at CMG marched on International Workers’ Day to send the message to management they are committed to the company’s long-term success and want to see the same level of commitment to them through job security and fair wages and benefits that reflect the company’s success.



Local 29 members, including, from left, executive board member Rhonda Fortier-Bourne, an unidentified member of the United Farm Workers, Secretary-Treasurer Kelly Gschwend, shop steward Christina Grady and executive board member Hang Le To join in a May Day march and rally in San Francisco.

Celebrating Greg Blackman’s Lifetime of Service to Local 100

A transformative and inspiring leader, Greg Blackman has led the Government Supervisors Association of Florida (GSAF)/OPEIU Local 100 in Miramar, Florida, since January 2008. In that time, he has strengthened and grown the local union, transforming it into an organizing powerhouse.

After 14 years as president — and a lifetime of dedication to OPEIU and its members — he’s now handing the reins to the next generation of leaders. OPEIU extends its congratulations to Blackman and its deepest appreciation for his unwavering dedication to the members in Florida and throughout the country.

“Greg has built an organizing program that’s a model for how we can reach working people and make them understand the benefits of collective action — even in states with so-called ‘right-to-work’ laws like Florida — and build a strong and powerful union that can best represent our members,” OPEIU President Richard Lanigan said. “His leadership has positioned Local 100 to continue to grow and thrive in the years to come.”

“Greg is second to none in regard to his work ethic,” said Fredricka Green, who succeeded Blackman as president. “He became completely focused on organizing and growing our local, and because of that, we have grown and become stronger with increased power at the bargaining table.”

Blackman has been a union man his entire career. His first union job came at just 18, when he worked as a rail car cleaner for the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) and joined the Amalgamated Transit Union Local 689. He was promoted through many positions in his five years at WMATA and left as a technician. Blackman then became a Transport Workers Union Local 291 member as an electronic technician at Metrorail. He eventually transferred to the automated Metromover system and became a supervisor and a member of the GSAF.

Blackman was appointed by late president Ed Darcy Sr. as a GSAF representative and elected first vice president, an office he held for nine years.

Always wanting to learn more to better serve the membership, he trained at the Florida International University Labor Center and the George Meany Center for Labor Studies, as well as attended Broward College. The most important training came from working with two great labor leaders, Darcy and Richard Ellis, who Blackman says both exemplified the bedrock attributes needed to build an effective labor union.

Blackman now serves as Local 100 chief of staff. He has been a vice president on the OPEIU Executive Board since 2010 and will complete his final term at the 29th Convention in June 2023.



Greg Blackman

One Workplace Death is One Too Many

April 28 was Workers’ Memorial Day and OPEIU members throughout the country participated in events to mark the occasion.

On that date in 1971, the Occupational Safety and Health Act went into effect and on the anniversary each year, working people come together to honor fellow workers, union and nonunion alike, who died a preventable death on the job in the last year.

This past year, 4,764 workers were killed on the job. An estimated 120,000 more died from occupational diseases. Sadly, we know the actual number of lives cut short by employer behavior — whether covert, like cutting health benefits during a pandemic, or overt, like failing to provide adequate PPE — is far greater.

Construction sites remain one of the deadliest places to work in the country. But the neglectful actions of employers of all stripes and in every industry — from Amazon and Tesla to Amy’s Kitchen and McLaren Macomb where our OPEIU nurses work — impact not just their employees’ well-being, but the well-being of workers’ families and the communities in which they live. Honoring those senselessly lost means standing up in unison to say loud and clear: One workplace death is one too many.

Local 40 President Dina Carlisle, RN, spoke at a Workers’ Memorial Day event in Detroit about the profound effect the pandemic has had on medical professionals. Local 40 has begun a letter-writing campaign to urge local hospitals to show their employees the respect they deserve and have earned working through the greatest health crisis of our lifetimes. This means ensuring hospitals are adequately staffed and these hardworking professionals are fairly compensated.



Scan to read the AFL-CIO’s annual report on worker safety and occupational hazards in all 50 states.



Local 40 President Dina Carlisle, RN, with Michigan Lt. Gov. Garlin Gilchrist II, at an event in Detroit.



Nancy Swanson, a retired Local 153 member and steward, at an event in Hartford, Connecticut, with Ed Hawthorn, president of the Connecticut AFL-CIO.

Fredricka Green Elected Local 100 President

Fredricka Green has been elected president of the Government Supervisors Association of Florida (GSAF)/OPEIU Local 100 in Miramar, Florida. She is the first woman to hold the office.

Green, who formerly served as Local 100 first vice president, was elected in December to succeed Greg Blackman. “Local 100 is moving into an exciting new chapter under the leadership of Fredricka, who envisions a dynamic and progressive agenda emphasizing organizing and growth as well as effective membership communication,” Blackman said.

“Having grown up in a union household, one of my fondest early memories is seeing my father, a longshoreman working on the Miami docks, walking to a strike picket line to support the causes

he strongly believed in,” Green said. Her father explained to her the real-life struggles and sacrifices of his fellow strikers. She was amazed to see her dad belonged to a large group of people standing up for so many others. “I can remember thinking when I grow up, I’m going to be just like my dad, who constantly reminded me of the importance of standing up for what I believe in.”

Green worked for the Miami school system as a bus driver for 10 years before becoming a paratransit operator with the Miami-Dade Transit system. Within a year she became a supervisor and her lifelong interest in union activism led her to get involved with Local 100, the union representing her workplace.

After serving as a shop steward, member of the organizing committee and contract negotiations team, chaplain, second vice president and first vice president, Green is excited to put her experience to work leading Local 100 into the future.



Fredricka Green, right, is sworn in as president of Local 100 by Miami-Dade County Mayor Daniella Levine Cava.



The newly elected Local 100 Executive Board, left to right, are board member Mickey Green, Chaplain Robert Prymus, Treasurer Walter Clarit Jr., former president and International Vice President Greg Blackman, First Vice President Luiz Morizot-Leite, President Fredricka Green, Second Vice President Ralston Coombs, Sergeant-At-Arms Angela McCoy and board member Cedric Dallas. Also elected but not pictured are Secretary Boon-Choo Tan, Second Vice President (Broward) Mark Dubin and board members Eric Gomez, Anthony Clay, Sonya Breland, Heather Barnhart and James O’Connor.

Spotlight: Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month

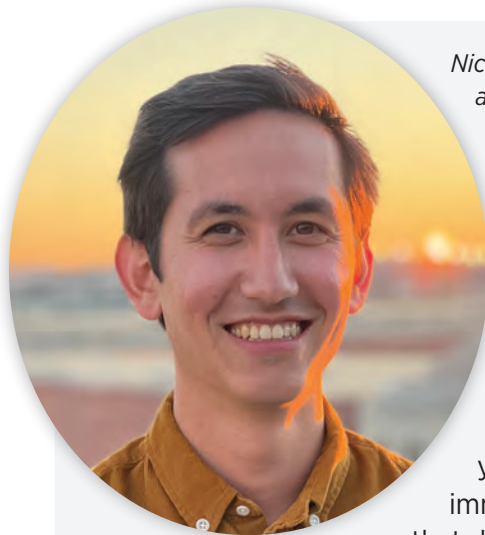
May is Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) Heritage Month. In recognizing the myriad contributions and influence of Asian and Pacific Islander peoples and culture to the U.S., we are proud to highlight the voices of seven incredible OPEIU member-leaders who were asked:

“How can the labor movement better support its AAPI members and the broader AAPI community?”



Kristina Romines, director of economic justice and capacity building at the Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance (APALA), bargaining committee member, Local 2

“Unions can better support AAPI members by including them in messaging and outreach materials. The visibility is really terrific, especially at a time when pandemic and global anxieties have been driving discrimination and hate toward Asian American folks. In some instances, particularly for organizing campaigns in bigger and more diverse workplaces, having materials that are accessible and printed in multiple languages is crucial.”



Nick Do, grant systems administrator at the National Endowment for Democracy, shop steward, Local 2

“There is no monolithic AAPI experience in America. You have high-earning AAPI workers, but you also have a lot of immigrant communities that don’t have access to the traditional industries that helped build an American middle class. A union movement must work to expand not only in traditional industries, but also organize people working in the gig economy, and in ‘white-collar’ professions, evangelizing the role a union can play in the modern workplace.”



Rose Agas-Yuu, critical care transport nurse at Kapi’olani Medical Center for Women and Children, vice president, Hawai’i Nurses’ Association (HNA)/OPEIU Local 50

“Get them involved! Tap into the AAPI members who are already union members, and educate them about what a union really is and what it can do for them. You need to find the leaders who already exist in these workplaces.”



Vivian Chang, civic engagement and racial justice director at the Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance (APALA), bargaining committee member, Local 2

“Unions should invest resources in organizing AAPI workers, including hiring AAPI organizers, producing materials that aren’t just in English, showing up to events in the AAPI community and standing in solidarity with the AAPI community by partnering with groups like APALA and other community based organizations.”



Maggie Tsai, campaigns and data manager at APALA, bargaining committee member, Local 2

“We need more organizers getting trained from AAPI communities, especially people who can speak multiple languages, and more AAPI workers in leadership positions. Both would help create a lot of new opportunities to organize. International solidarity is also important. We have to look at the labor movement [from that perspective], not from a nationalist, white supremacist perspective.”



Pam Ng, West Coast lead organizer at OPEIU

“Unions, especially OPEIU, have a lot of young Asian Americans who want to understand their political identity. Helping folks see their identity beyond just simple identity politics, and also looking into class consciousness and viewing their workplace as a space to also advocate for themselves and advocate for racial justice is very important.”



Hang Le To, finance director at the San Francisco Labor Council, executive board member, Local 29

“We need to open our arms to welcome every AAPI community, no matter their size. There are a lot of different ethnic groups within the AAPI community, and we need to help bring visibility [to their issues].”

OPEIU CONNECT

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INTERNATIONAL UNION, AFL-CIO, CLC



All the News You Can Use!

Eighteen-month-old Rory Pearson already knows the best place to get news about her union is by reading OPEIU Connect! Rory's dad, Brian Pearson, is the campaigns director of the North Shore AFL-CIO in Cleveland, Ohio, and a member of Local 1794.

All issues of OPEIU Connect can be found in English and Spanish at opeiu.org and on the OPEIU app. The app is available for free download for iOS devices on the App Store and for Android devices on Google Play by searching **OPEIU**.



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