



Work Connects Us All!

Summer 2015 Issue

Teachers Strike to Save Catholic Schools

“Threatening to close our schools is an unfair labor practice”



The Federation of Catholic Teachers members and leadership, including President Julia Pignataro, center in pink scarf, demonstrate outside the offices of New York’s Cardinal Timothy Dolan on March 26, 2015. Also pictured are International Vice President and Local 153 Secretary-Treasurer Richard Lanigan and International President and Local 153 Business Manager Michael Goodwin.

In an effort to secure a fair contract and save New York’s Catholic schools from further closings, the Federation of Catholic Teachers (FCT), members of Local 153, engaged in a series of one-day rolling strikes during the month of May.

“We are conducting rolling strikes for as long as it takes for our members to be treated fairly,” said FCT President Julia Pignataro. “We need to make ends meet just like all working families. We know the Archdiocese will say our rolling strikes hurt the

children, but we think closing 60 schools in four years is what really hurts our students.

“Threatening more closings simply because we asked for a fair wage increase is unfair to teachers, and we believe it violates labor law,” Pignataro continued. “It is also unfair to the students. These strikes are aimed at saving schools, not closing them.”

The FCT has filed unfair labor practice charges against the Archdiocese’s Association of Catholic Schools for threatening to close up to 10 more

schools a year if the teachers receive a wage increase of even 1 percent. The FCT represents more than 2,600 Catholic school teachers in the Archdiocese of New York employed at 139 elementary schools and 14 high schools from Staten Island to Poughkeepsie.

“They offered us a paltry 1 percent wage increase and then said they would have to close more schools if we accepted it. That’s coercion. It’s unjust and unwarranted.”

The teachers, who have been working without a contract since September 2014, accepted low wage increases three years ago to help keep schools from closing. Catholic schools Superintendent Dr. Timothy McNiff later announced that the schools were financially sound and there would be no additional closings, yet a total of 60 schools have been closed since 2011. McNiff also said that the money from closed school buildings now being rented by others would be poured back into the Catholic school system.

“We are Catholic school teachers; we know how to do the math,” said Pignataro. “The Archdiocese is reaping millions from closed schools that are being rented out, and we have the evidence to prove it.”

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Workers Win Temporary Victory Against TPP



By Michael Goodwin, International President

On Tuesday, May 12, 2015, workers won a temporary victory against the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) in the United States Senate, when a bill promoting Fast Track authority for the international trade deal failed to gather enough votes to advance. On a largely party-line vote, the measure got 52 votes, eight short of the 60 needed to overcome a possible filibuster and bring the legislation to the floor.

AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka said the outcome was a temporary victory; the Hatch-Wyden-Ryan Fast Track bill is halted – for now.

“That’s good news for America’s working families, domestic producers and communities. Defeating this legislation is our highest priority. Union members have made tens of thousands of calls to Congress and had hundreds of in-person meetings with members of Congress at home and in Washington, D.C.,” Trumka said.

OPEIU appreciates the work of our members on this issue and those senators who stood with working people against a bill that would have led to an undemocratic trade deal that would lower wages and eliminate jobs. This vote sends a message loud and clear.

If Congress is serious about creating jobs, reviving U.S. manufacturing and raising wages, it needs to use its leverage to reshape the terms of TPP. It must remove special legal privileges for foreign investors, add enforceable rules to prevent currency manipulation, strengthen rules of origin and redouble efforts to ensure the right of workers to organize and bargain collectively.

Workers must continue to fight against Fast Track authority and open up TPP for debate and amendments in Congress. OPEIU will continue its efforts to fight against the bill. Trade deals passed by Congress since NAFTA in 1993 were preceded by claims that they would bring about higher wages and jobs in the United States – none

of which ever happened. In fact, every trade deal has reduced wages and lost jobs.

Critics of the trade deal say that it would do little to help ordinary American workers while mostly serving as a vehicle to advance the agendas of multinational corporations at home and abroad.

The AFL-CIO has issued a report on the top ten reasons why Fast Track should be defeated. They are:

- **Costs Jobs** – Trade policies adopted under Fast Track have cost more than 1 million jobs and contributed to the shuttering of more than 60,000 factories.
- **Benefits the 1 Percent** – Fast Track ensures trade policies are made by and for multinational corporations and the wealthy, making income distribution even more unequal and making it harder to get a raise.
- **Undermines Democracy** – Fast Track doesn’t allow adequate public scrutiny of trade deals while they are being negotiated, and permits only a simple up or down vote – no amendments.
- **Gives Power to Corporate Lobbyists** – Fast Track trade deals almost always include rights and privileges for foreign investors that our home-grown businesses don’t have.
- **Prevents Amendments** – Fast Track doesn’t allow our representatives to amend trade deals, no matter how problematic some provisions might be.

- **Permits Foreign Currency Manipulation** – Fast Track legislation doesn’t require trade agreements to contain adequate provisions addressing currency manipulation.
- **Neglects Jobs** – Fast Track legislation doesn’t include negotiating objectives on job creation, reducing the trade deficit or protecting “Buy American” policies.
- **Lowers Access to Medicines** – Fast Track legislation includes objectives that would interfere with the ability of governments to ensure the provision of affordable, lifesaving medicines.
- **Hurts the Environment** – Fast Track weakens environmental protections.
- **Offshores Jobs** – Fast Track legislation promotes U.S. participation in “global value chains,” which is shorthand for offshoring production to places with weak labor and environmental laws and enforcement.

OPEIU urges members to continue to call and write to their congressional representatives and say NO to Fast Track to make sure that the temporary victory we won on May 12 becomes permanent! Members can call Congress at 1-855-712-8441.

Thank you for your support.

**Say NO to
Fast Track**



Sanchez Pledges to Vote Against Fast Track of TPP

Representative Loretta Sanchez of California's 46th Congressional District, second from left, met at OPEIU headquarters on May 6, 2015, with International President Michael Goodwin, Secretary-Treasurer Mary Mahoney, and International Vice President and Local 153 Secretary-Treasurer Richard Lanigan to discuss the upcoming House Fast Track vote on the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade pact.

Rep. Sanchez – who recently wrote in an op-ed on the political website The Hill that “Congress should not take, or cede, their responsibility lightly,” and that the TPP “is too secretive and potentially too damaging to be rushed through Congress via ‘fast track’ authority” – pledged to vote down the measure that would cause lost wages and jobs for America’s workers. Also attending the meeting were Director of Communication, Education and Research Nicole Korkolis and Project Organizer Mario Seneca, not pictured.

Teachers Strike to Save Catholic Schools

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At stake is not just the wages, but also the values that are taught by the teachers in the Catholic school system such as dignity, fairness and social justice. “If it were just about the money, we wouldn’t be here,” said Jennifer Farrell, a social studies teacher at Notre Dame Academy High School on Staten Island. “We chose to teach in our schools; we believe in our schools and the values we teach.”

FCT members staged several demonstrations outside the office of New York’s Cardinal Timothy Dolan in March, hoping the added pressure on the Archdiocese would improve things at the bargaining table. “They offered us a paltry 1 percent wage increase and then said they would have to close more schools if we accepted it. That’s coercion. It’s unjust and unwarranted,” said Pignataro.

“We are striking to save Catholic schools,” she continued. “It is unfair for our members – and Catholic school students – to be threatened with more school closings simply because we are engaging in our legal right to bargain collectively. Pope Francis said school teachers are grossly underpaid. It’s too bad the Archdiocese doesn’t realize the Pope is right about this.”



Striking teachers demonstrate at Our Lady Queen of Peace elementary and middle school in Staten Island, New York.



Strikers stand united at Sacred Heart elementary and middle school in Hartsdale, New York.

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After 30 Years Serving Working People, Kevin Kistler Retires

"I want to wish Kevin the best in his retirement; he really deserves it. I will miss his insight, humor and wisdom. I was proud to have him as a supervisor and colleague, and he remains a friend."

*Senior International Organizer
Jeffrey Rusich*

After more than 30 years serving the labor movement and nearly two decades bringing the benefits of OPEIU representation to thousands of workers, Director of Organization and Field Services Kevin Kistler has retired. "OPEIU deeply appreciates the valuable services that Kevin Kistler performed during his 17-year tenure. His retirement will create a vacuum that will be hard to fill," said International President Michael Goodwin.

Kistler was instrumental in OPEIU's efforts to organize new and nontraditional industries – many of which had never



Kevin Kistler addressing an OPEIU education conference and participating in a demonstration in San Francisco to stop Medicare and Social Security cuts.



"Kevin's unfaltering optimism, incredible energy and consistent support are much appreciated and will be greatly missed."

International Representative Patt A. Gibbs

"I hope he enjoys retirement in a way that's reflective of how great a human being he is, how wonderfully he directed his staff and how much of a warrior of the movement he has been."

*Representative/Organizer
Zoraida Seguinot*

"Kevin, without exception, will be missed by the entire staff for his calm, unflappable persona, his guidance and leadership, his friendship, his unconditional support even in very difficult situations, his genuine care and concern, and perhaps most of all his respect for the professionalism of the staff as evidenced by a leadership style devoid of any micromanagement tendencies."

*Senior International Representative
Gary Nuber*

experienced the benefits of representation – helping bring helicopter pilots, Minor League Baseball umpires, and real estate appraisers and adjusters, among others, into the union.

“I will continue to follow your success on behalf of OPEIU with the only change being that I will be applauding your work from the stands rather than as a player on the field,” said Kistler in a letter to OPEIU staff. “My relationship with you has been the highlight of my life, and I wish you the best in all your future endeavors. You will continue to be in my thoughts and prayers every day.”

Prior to joining OPEIU in 1998, Kistler served as a regional director and senior staff member for the AFL-CIO in Washington, D.C., functioning as a coordinator for state legislative, political and organizing activities. He began his union career as a member of the engine department on a U.S. Merchant Marine freighter crew and later became active in his union while serving as a D.C. police officer.

Kistler has also demonstrated his commitment to public service through his involvement in a number of community organizations, serving as a member of the Founding Class of Maryland Leadership and a former board member of the Montgomery Leadership Corp in Maryland. In 2009, Kistler received the Ellis Island Medal of Honor, one of the highest nonmilitary honors bestowed upon American citizens.

“OPEIU owes a great debt of gratitude to Kevin, and extends its sincerest wishes for a long and healthy retirement,” said Goodwin.

“We can say so many good things about Kevin. We learned a lot from him, not only because of his wisdom, but because of his actions, and for that he will always be remembered. He was more than a supervisor; he was a leader and a friend.”

Senior International Representative Iram Ramirez and International Representatives and Organizers Josué Montijo Rodriguez and Nicole Diaz

“Hopefully, in some small way, I’ll be able to follow the huge footprints he’s left and contribute to the ongoing advancement of OPEIU in Canada. My goal is to do Kevin proud.”

Chairman of DAGs 2007 and 2007A Bruce Wade

“Kevin has been and will always be one of the greatest people I have ever met. I will always be very grateful to him. He will be greatly missed at OPEIU.”

Organizer Cesar Mendia

“I want to thank Kevin for the time and the lessons. The labor movement will miss a warrior like Kevin Kistler! Well done!”

Project Organizer Green Lewis III

“Kevin might be surprised to learn how many lives he’s affected. The numerous calls and texts I’ve received from Local officers, members and even activists on organizing campaigns, expressing their distress upon hearing of his retirement, speaks volumes about his far-reaching influence.”

International Representative/Organizer Susan French



Kistler receiving the 2009 Ellis Island Medal of Honor, with his sons, standing, Alan and Kevin Jr.

Northeast Educational Conference Explores Strategic Contract Campaigns

Members from throughout Regions II and VII gathered in Atlantic City from April 30 to May 3, 2015, to explore ways in which using a strategic approach can increase success during contract campaigns.

This and many other topics aimed at preparing OPEIU leaders to compete in today's shifting economic and political landscape were discussed at the North Central-Erie/Northeast Educational Conference.

"The purpose of strategic planning is to build an organization that proactively pursues its objectives, rather

than just reacting to issues as they arise," said William Brucher, Ph.D., an educator with the Labor Studies and Employment Relations Department at Rutgers University School of Management and Labor Relations.

"In an organizational development process, strategic planning is a time to look at the strengths and weaknesses of your own organization," Brucher continued. "This gives you the opportunity to develop your organization as you pursue your goals. For instance, when your union is gearing up for contract negotiations, you should not only develop



Top: Secretary-Treasurer Mary Mahoney, left, and Accounts Payable Coordinator Tennile Ramkhelawan lead a discussion about Local Union reporting requirements. They also impressed upon leaders the importance of submitting monthly membership lists to the International to ensure members receive all their membership benefits.

Bottom: International Vice President and Local 153 Secretary-Treasurer Richard Lanigan shares step-by-step procedures for investigating and processing disciplinary cases. "Facts win grievances, not opinions, assumptions or impressions," he stressed.

Top: Tod Lansing, center, second vice chair of the Global Helicopter Engineers Association (GHEA) DAG 403, attends his first OPEIU educational conference. Also pictured are International President Michael Goodwin, right, and International Representative Paul Huertas.

Bottom: Left to right are Local 17 Recording Secretary-Treasurer Cathy Wittenbrook and President Karen Szczesniak with Local 376 President Nancy Swanson.

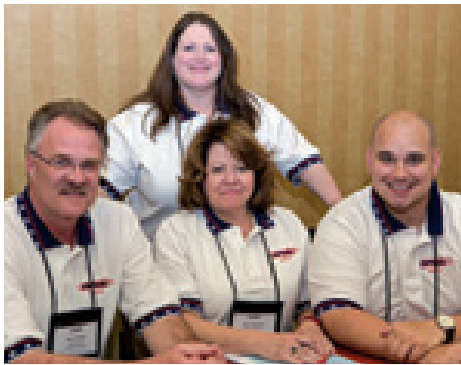
a plan to mobilize your membership in support of the bargaining team, but also continue developing these mobilized members into long-term leaders after negotiations are done.”

Jeff Grabelsky, associate director of The Worker Institute at the Cornell University School of Industrial and Labor Relations, laid out new strategies that the labor movement must embrace if it hopes to continue to make the American dream of

financial prosperity a reality for working people. [See box below.]

Pam Whitefield, a research fellow at the Center for Place, Culture and Politics of the City University of New York Graduate Center, explained why having a women’s committee at the Local Union level can be integral to success. “The fact remains that genuine, systemic equality for women at the workplace, in their unions and within the labor movement is still unrealized,” said Whitefield.

“Research shows that women need independent space to identify and create their own culture where they can speak out about concerns and identify strategies to engage with and change the dominant culture. Mobilizing and organizing women to champion their interests – and, ultimately, the advancement of their union or organization – is an effective means to hasten change,” she continued.



Clockwise from upper left: Local 12 Recording Secretary Ron Phillips, Secretary-Treasurer Sue Malcolm, Business Manager Ryan Mortensen and President Susan Ebeling, standing. • Local 391 Trustee Chicon Hodges. • Local 6 Executive Board member Richard Martin and Local 453 Vice President Beth DiVirgilio. • Local 95 Vice President Barbara Saddison, second from left, and President Ray Schmidt, second from right, with Local 39 President/Business Manager Kathryn Bartlett-Mulvihill. Also pictured are Senior International Representative Iram Ramirez, left, and International President Goodwin. • Local 393 Secretary-Treasurer Susan Vogt, President Lynda Eckstrom, Rising Star Dominique Prince, Recording Secretary Julie Garcia, and Vice President Jocelyn Phillips with International President Goodwin.

Labor and the American Dream — *New Strategies and New Hope*

Expand the scope and broaden the stakeholders in collective bargaining to make it more relevant to the majority of workers outside our ranks.

Enlarge and elevate the issues unions embrace to make the labor movement more meaningful to the next generation of workers.

Fight for economic democracy and make fairness and equity central to labor’s agenda and vital to America’s future.

Build a broad movement for social justice and change in order to grow our unions, and not the other way around.

DAG 76 First Contract with TEA Includes 19 Percent Wage Increase



TEA negotiating committee members John Carrega, left, and DAG 76 President Ryan Flynn.

OPEIU Directly Affiliated Group (DAG) 76 in Boston, Massachusetts, has ratified its first contract with the Transportation Executives Association (TEA) that provides four annual 2.5 percent wage increases, 7 percent retroactive pay for all members and salary adjustments for some workers whose salaries collided with those of their subordinates, bringing the total wage increase to a whopping 19 percent.

Unanimously approved by the membership and then by the board of directors on April 15, the three-year agreement ends an eight-year battle for a fair contract. The effort was led by the negotiating committee of DAG 76 President Ryan Flynn, members Kevin McDermott and John Carrega, and attorney Howard Lenow.

Local 251 Helps Defeat Anti-Worker Legislation in New Mexico

Local 251 was part of a huge victory in New Mexico when the state legislature voted down proposed right-to-work legislation at the closing of its 2015 session.

“The people of New Mexico made their voices heard, and labor joined together in an unprecedented effort to defeat these unfair, unnecessary bills that were bad for New Mexico’s middle class,” said Local 251 President Valerie Martinez. “New Mexico Democratic legislators in the House, Senate democrats and especially Senate Majority Leader Michael Sanchez deserve a special thank-you for staying united, respecting the political process and defeating efforts to speed right-to-work legislation to

the floor. We owe these individuals an immense amount of gratitude for continuing to support New Mexico’s working families.”



Local 251 President Valerie Martinez, center, Secretary-Treasurer Angeleen Saiz and Trustee Sam Ruiz join the protests against right-to-work legislation.

Local 174 Members at Warner Bros. Studios Ratify Agreement

Local 174 members employed at Warner Bros. Studios facilities in Burbank, California, ratified a new 40-month contract that is effective June 1, 2015, and includes no concessions by the union from the previous agreement, a new 3 percent wage increase for all regular and floater employees on May 31, and two additional 3 percent increases on October 1 of 2016 and 2017, among other improvements.

“The most valuable achievement in this agreement was maintaining our

members’ current defined benefit pension and healthcare plans should increases occur,” said International Vice President Christine Page, Local 174 business representative and member of the negotiating committee.

“The company agreed to pay any increases in the employer’s hourly contribution rate to the Motion Picture Industry Pension Plan, Active Health Plan or Retired Employees Fund during the term of this agreement for our members and apply the benefit,” said Page.

Local 32’s Barnes Elected to New Jersey CLC

Local 32 Business Representative Karevin Barnes, far right, has been elected to serve as financial secretary-treasurer of the Union County Central Labor Council in New Jersey. Also elected were Recording Secretary Linda Bradbury (AFT Local 2187), President Jim McManus (UA Local 24) and First Vice President Tom Fischbach (Sheetmetal Workers Local 22).

Local 153’s Alicia Bruce has also been elected recording secretary of the Passaic County Central Labor Council. Congratulations to Brother Barnes and Sister Bruce.





Vice President Lanigan Honored by LCLAA

International Vice President and Local 153 Secretary-Treasurer Richard Lanigan, center, is honored by the New York City Labor Council for Latin American Advancement (LCLAA) at the Eleventh Annual Labor Celebration and Gala on May 8, 2015. Also pictured are LCLAA NYC President Angel Luis Acosta and LCLAA Second Vice President Yolanda Pumarejo from SSEU Local 371, DC 37 AFSCME.



Photo credit: Robert Figueroa



ITPEU Executive Board Visits UFW Headquarters

International Vice President and ITPEU/OPEIU Local 4873 President Dennis R. Arrington, center, with United Farm Workers President Arturo Rodriguez, right, and Cesar Chavez Foundation President and Chairman Paul F. Chavez during a visit by the ITPEU Executive Board to the UFW headquarters at La Paz in Keene, California. UFW presented ITPEU with a keepsake flag to commemorate the visit.

Dameron Hospital Members Ratify Agreement

Local 29 members at Dameron Hospital overwhelmingly ratified their contract that includes wage increases of 3.5 percent over the term of the contract and additional time to complete annual requirements, among other improvements. The negotiating team consisted of, left to right, Tammy Brunt, Mary Chavez, Carmen Gutierrez and Schnita Rabon.



GHPA Elects Leaders

The GHPA/OPEIU Local 103 pilots have elected David Tibbals to serve as president, effective May 1, 2015. Also elected were Todd Pynoo as first vice president, Luke Yosca as second vice president, Colin Jaques as treasurer and Jim Whately as secretary.

Local 2 Members Honored for Community Service

Local 2 members who are part of the Local 2/AFGE Community Service Committee were honored by the Metro Washington Council AFL-CIO for their activism and dedication to bettering the lives of those living in the community.

The committee was formed in 2012 by a group of AFGE staffers who are represented by Local 2. The committee organizes or participates in approximately 10-15 community service projects per year, including food, clothing, and personal care and school supplies drives, as well as fundraisers for various causes.

"There's almost no greater opportunity than that of serving and uplifting our communities," said Chelsea Bland, who serves as chair of the committee. "As a collective, we have the chance to meet the immediate needs of those who are facing challenging times. With that service we learn about our neighbors who are facing adversity and the systems that need changing in order to improve our collective condition."

Pictured from left to right receiving the award are Community Services Agency Executive Director Kathleen McKirchy, committee members Tim Kauffman and Caniesha Seldon, Metro Council President Jos Williams, committee Chair Chelsea Bland, AFGE National President J. David Cox Sr. and committee member Jorae Williams.



Photo credit: Chris Langford

Local 29 Celebrates Great New Contract

After months of negotiations, Local 29 members at Chabot Federal Credit Union have ratified a new three-year agreement. Although members were faced with reductions in current benefits, the new agreement doesn't include any reductions or takeaways and provides a \$1 per hour wage increase each year, a \$750 signing bonus and an additional \$200 per month to the members' 401(k) plans.



Left to right are Michelle Pinch, Madeline Rivera, Committee Member Mary Born, Sara Castellanos, Regina Liu and Committee Member/Shop Steward Peggy Hanan.

Local 8 Organizes Plymouth Housing Employees

By an overwhelming majority, Seattle-based Plymouth Housing Group employees voted to form a union with Local 8. The group of 90 case managers, building assistants and coordinators, janitors, and other employees join with hundreds of Local 8 members in social and housing services.

"It's an important campaign for us because we've targeted several other service organizations and this will help bolster these campaigns," said Local 8 Organizing Director/Secretary-Treasurer Cindy Schu. "We had members from our other nonprofit groups help with this campaign, and that was instrumental in our success."

Plymouth Housing Group is a nonprofit organization that provides permanent, supportive homes to homeless people. "We voted to have a union so our options and ideas are heard, because we're the ones working directly with our tenants on a daily basis. When we're empowered, we're in a better position to empower others," said new member Meghan Rowley, a housing case manager at Plymouth.



Local 8 Organizer Corinne Cosentino, left, who led the campaign, and members of the union organizing committee at Plymouth hold the NLRB Tally of Ballots certifying their win. Left to right with Cosentino are Paul Rosenthal, Meghan Rowley, Kristina Grotts and J.J. Stein.



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union member

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American Labor Museum Is Labor's Schoolhouse

Students from Haledon, New Jersey, are shown participating in labor arts classes in the Botto House Old World Garden at the American Labor Museum, which is often referred to as Labor's Schoolhouse due to the many educational programs offered year-round to students and their families.

During the summer months, the museum offers Girl and Boy Scout tours and lessons about the development of the U.S. labor movement, hands-on programs about the 1913 Patterson Silk Strike that led to the 40-hour workweek, and off-site presentations to adult and senior groups in the area. This summer, the museum also features the temporary exhibit "Got Work? The New Deal/WPA in New Jersey," on view through August 29. For location and more information, visit www.labormuseum.net.

