

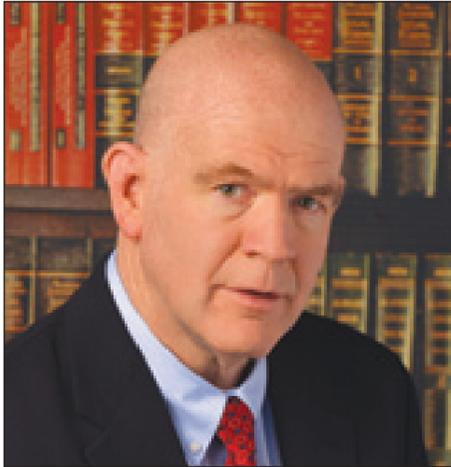
WHITE COLLAR

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

ISSUE 546 | FALL 2021



A majority of Americans say they would join a union, with 77 percent of those 18-34 voicing their approval for unions. Many are choosing OPEIU.



Playing the Long Game

By Richard Lanigan
President

Years ago, when an employer decided to try to rid its workplace of a union it would retain a union-busting consultant who would attempt to persuade the majority of workers to vote the union out when the contract expired. These campaigns were usually one to two years in duration, often very expensive and didn't always provide the desired result. Since then, many employers have adopted a long-game approach by weakening the union gradually over time.

How have they done that? For starters, employers work to undermine the legitimacy of the union. As an example, employers now fight valid grievances with greater zeal than before and often refuse to reinstate a worker, even when the union shows the member has been wrongfully discharged. When the employer makes proposals or decisions that leave the union membership removed from collective decisions, it also undermines the union as an institution. There are other methods:

- When the employer insists on conducting negotiations in a way that removes members from the process;
- When the employer insists on ground rules for negotiations making it difficult for the union committee to communicate with the union membership concerning bargaining issues;
- When the employer communicates directly to our members more effectively than we do, establishing themselves as the trusted, reliable source for information. They use their communications to distribute misleading messages depicting the union as a third

party and create a sense of futility, fear and division among members; and

- When they communicate with members about support for the union.

While these changes in an employer's modus operandi will usually not turn the membership on its union, they do undermine the union.

Constant undermining of a union impacts its credibility with its membership, lowers members' expectations and creates apathy. These are exactly the effects the employer hopes to achieve! If the membership becomes more apathetic, participation decreases at meetings, rallies, parades, demonstrations, phone banks, organizing drives, etc., and fewer members provide their email addresses to the local union or run for shop steward positions. Eventually, shop stewards find themselves doing the job indefinitely because no one else wants to do it.

Eventually in so-called "right-to-work" states, union membership starts to decline, leaving it with fewer assets to fight for good contracts and quality representation. After this "gradual" work is completed, the employer is now in a position to try to push out the union altogether. In the novel, "The Sun Also Rises" by Ernest Hemingway, two characters are having a conversation in which Bill asks Mike, "How did you go bankrupt?" Mike responds, "Gradually and then suddenly."

This quote reminds us when certain behaviors are continued over time and become habitual, they can weaken the resolve of a person, family or union. But it

also means where certain other behaviors are continued over time, they can strengthen the resolve of a person, the bonds of a family or the collective capacity of a union. In other words, you can build an effective union gradually and suddenly. It takes commitment, hard work and usually a plan, but there are many examples of unions changing to become stronger and more sustainable.

Making a union strong over time starts with quality and straightforward communication with members. It requires all involved to embrace the idea that the relationship with members is more important than anything else. It requires unions to make decisions in a transparent way with involvement of both elected and unelected members. Negotiations should be an open topic with as much contact with the membership as possible. People care about their workplaces. Many would be willing to serve on a union committee that met to learn about the work rules, or the retirement plan, or the best way to engage newly hired bargaining unit employees. It also involves embracing people who exhibit interest in the union or exhibit leadership qualities, thus developing rank-and-file leaders. It also means developing and putting into place robust communication structures with members.

Strengthening a union is not about making everyone happy. It is about telling people the truth and constantly keeping them aware of their collective best interests because we know management will be trying to undermine the union at every opportunity. It is management's 2021 playbook. So, keep in mind the union can play the long game, too. ■

As Working People Struggle, CEO Wages Soar

America's Workers Need the PRO Act

The COVID-19 pandemic has drastically widened the wage gap, with the wealthiest Americans experiencing record-breaking profits while working people struggle to keep up in an unfair economy.

A recent survey conducted by The New York Times found the gap between the pay of CEOs and working people ballooned during the COVID-19 pandemic, with the very wealthiest raking in record profits for their companies.

The highest-paid CEO, Alexander Karp, of Palantir, a big data company that relies heavily on government contracts, made more than \$1.1 billion in 2020 alone. The number of CEOs earning more than \$100 million jumped, the Times said, from one in 2019 to eight in 2020. And pay, on average, jumped 14.1 percent for CEOs but only 1.9 percent for workers.

The Economic Policy Institute puts it even more bluntly — in 2020, top CEOs earned 351 times more than the typical working person.

The stock market, and compensation for CEOs tied to stock performance, played a big role in the boost.

A company's performance on the stock market bears little relation

to a company's profits or how they operate, but plays an outsized role in determining CEO pay across a spectrum of publicly traded companies.

Some companies, such as Uber and DoorDash, have never earned a single dollar in operating profit, but continue to stay in business, in large

part, because of their stock market performance. They, in turn, use investor money to fund lobbying efforts to

create exemptions and labor law carve-outs that further draw investors to their business, despite losing money in the core business.

Individual policies, such as the Protecting the Right to Organize (PRO) Act labor law

reforms, worker representation on corporate boards and tackling emerging monopolies, such as Amazon and Uber, will alter the dynamics for American workers. Taken together, however, these policy prescriptions can stem the growing inequity and serve as a meaningful step toward a fair economy.

Pay, on average, jumped 14.1 percent for CEOs but only 1.9 percent for workers.

The PRO Act is Key to America's Future

Gross income inequality has only gotten worse during the pandemic. Outdated labor laws have hampered our fundamental right to join together and negotiate for better wages, benefits and working conditions. That's why we need the Protecting the Right to Organize (PRO) Act, which will empower America's workers and strengthen our democracy.

The PRO Act is landmark worker empowerment, civil rights and economic stimulus legislation, and is key to America's future.

The PRO Act will:

- **Prevent employers** from interfering in union elections
- **Protect workers** who engage in peaceful protest
- **Create a mediation and arbitration process** to ensure newly formed unions reach a first contract
- **Prohibit companies** from permanently replacing workers
- **Prevent employers** from misclassifying their workers as independent contractors, and much more

Join the fight!

Visit PasstheProAct.org to learn more and get involved.

Earning Minimum Wage? Good Luck Renting That's Why We Need the PRO Act

Full-time minimum wage workers can't afford rent in most of the United States — and it's only gotten worse during the COVID-19 pandemic.

So says a recent report by the National Low Income Housing Coalition detailing the squeeze on minimum wage workers looking to rent. Since 2001, average rents in 45 states and Washington, D.C. have risen significantly faster than wages.

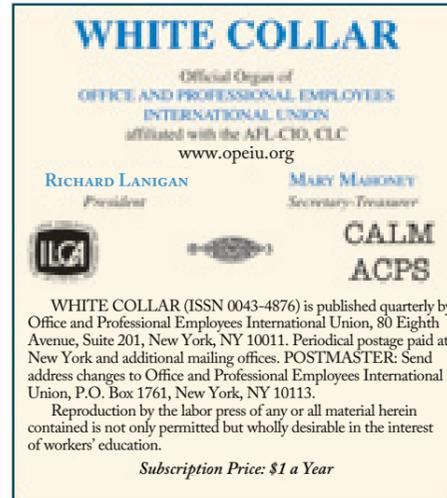
Defining affordability as 30 percent or less than total income, the report, titled "Out of Reach," makes clear securing even the most basic necessities, such as housing, is a delicate balancing act for minimum wage workers. In only 7 percent of U.S. counties can someone earning minimum wage afford a decent one-bedroom apartment at fair market prices, the authors wrote.

These trends have been exacerbated by the fact the federal minimum wage hasn't been raised in more than a decade...

These trends have been exacerbated by the fact the federal minimum wage hasn't been raised in more than a decade, housing stock is being purchased en masse across the U.S. by Wall Street firms, and relatively low union density nationwide means workers are, on average, earning much less than the value they produce.

The dismal situation for minimum-wage-earning renters is just one reason the Senate needs to take action: to pass the PRO Act, to give millions of working people a fighting chance to ensure dignity and respect at work; to raise the minimum wage, so working people get more of what they are owed; and to expand federal rental assistance in the short term to insulate precarious renters from homelessness.

Visit PasstheProAct.org to learn more.



INSIDE



OPEIU 401(k) Plan Reaches \$100 Million in Assets 5



OPEIU Launches New Medicare Advantage Plans for Retired Members 7



Cover Story: 77 Percent Approval 12



Local 50 Nurses Ratify Contract with Queen's Medical Center 15

OPEIU 401(k) Plan Reaches \$100 Million in Assets

The OPEIU 401(k) plan has reached more than \$100 million in assets, providing an unparalleled retirement savings solution for OPEIU members and their families. Additional commitments mean the plan will likely reach more than \$150 million by year's end.

OPEIU's 401(k) plan, known as the OPEIU National Retirement Savings Plan, launched in 2017 and has quickly grown to be among the best in class, providing members with a low-cost, feature-rich retirement savings solution through their employers that is negotiated into their collective bargaining agreements. The OPEIU plan is a better fit for union members than most traditional plans with high administrative fees, ensuring a reliable retirement savings option with the lowest fees possible.

"The plan has been designed by the union with OPEIU members in mind, to help protect your hard-earned assets and provide a retirement savings plan unlike any other — one that offers the lowest fees possible and is only available to OPEIU members," OPEIU President Richard Lanigan said.

"We are so pleased that, in just a few short years, the plan has grown to more than \$100 million in assets and is providing a reliable retirement savings option for so many of our members," Lanigan added.

Unlike traditional target date funds with a "one-size-fits-all" risk approach, the OPEIU plan's investment options can be customized to each participant's risk tolerance and target retirement date, with an emphasis on prudent and sound investing. The plan features automatic wage escalation, whereby a participant increases the amount he or she contributes incrementally over time as their wages increase. It's a form of forced savings for retirement, and a person using this process would reach their maximum contribution level early in their employment. This would

"The plan has been designed by the union with OPEIU members in mind, to help protect your hard-earned assets and provide a retirement savings plan unlike any other — one that offers the lowest fees possible and is only available to OPEIU members."

— OPEIU President Richard Lanigan

ensure they have time and the money needed for their account to accumulate necessary retirement assets.

The plan is also more accessible than most, making it easier for members to manage their accounts and understand how the investment process works. Member education is available to learn about enrollment, investments and automatic wage escalation with the union-designed plan. The goal? Ensure OPEIU members have as much control as possible over their retirement futures.

Talk to your local union to learn more about the OPEIU National Retirement Savings Plan.

OPEIU's 401(k) Offers Unparalleled Features



- Lowest fees available
- A benefit stream for life through a guaranteed minimum withdrawal
- Superior "set it and forget it" low-cost target date investment options
- No cost, unlimited access to licensed education counselors, continuous financial wellness programs and tools, debt counseling, extensive webinars and excellent online tools
- Open brokerage option, whereby participants can purchase mutual funds through a low-cost platform

NEW! Discover the Benefits of Better Health as a Union Retiree

Medicare Advantage plans offered exclusively to retired union members



Comprehensive coverage available exclusively to retired union members

The AFL-CIO Medicare Advantage Plans include:



Nationwide access to providers and care



Telehealth and other virtual options



The same benefits in and out of the plan's network



Hearing and vision coverage



Brand name prescriptions drug and "Rx" cap (or donut hole) coverage



Value-added resources, such as SilverSneakers® gym memberships

[Learn more](#)

To learn more about plan features:

Call the Anthem First Impressions Welcome Team at 833-371-1160, TTY: 711, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. ET, except holidays.

To learn more about enrollment or cost:

Call Benistar Admin Services, your plan sponsor's administrator, at 844-235-3787, Monday through Thursday, 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. ET, and Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. ET.

retireehealth.unionplus.org

Disclaimer:

Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield is an LPPO plan with a Medicare contract. Enrollment in Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield depends on contract renewal. Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield is the trade name of Community Insurance Company. Independent licensee of the Blue Cross Blue Shield Association. Anthem is a registered trademark of Anthem Insurance Companies, Inc.

OPEIU Launches New Medicare Advantage Plans for Retired Members

If you're at or nearing 65, OPEIU has an exciting new option to help save you money and provide dependable health care benefits during your retirement.

OPEIU is pleased to now offer our Medicare-eligible union retirees comprehensive Medicare Advantage plans through a trusted national partner, Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield. These plans are available exclusively to retired OPEIU members and their spouses/partners and cannot be found or bought on the open Medicare market.

These plans offer enhanced services compared to the Individual Medicare market, brand name prescription drug benefits and gap ("donut hole") coverage, nationwide access and value-added programs, such as SilverSneakers® gym membership, telehealth, hearing and more.

Medicare open enrollment starts Oct. 15. You can learn more and compare plans and features by visiting retireehealth.unionplus.org or calling the Anthem First Impressions Welcome Team at 1-833-371-1160, TTY: 711, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. ET, except holidays.

Benistar Admin Services, your plan sponsor's administrator, will be handling everything related to enrollment in the plan and questions related to premiums. To enroll or ask about these topics, please call 1-844-235-3787, Monday through Thursday, 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. ET, and Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. ET.

OPEIU is also developing a Retiree Medical Savings Account program that would become part of the collective bargaining process and would be funded by employers. Money would be placed into this program tax free, similar to a 401(k) benefit, but unlike a 401(k) taxes will not be applied to funds that are withdrawn for health care purposes. Funds in retired members' individual medical savings accounts could be used to pay for anything associated with health care.

Both programs are the latest steps in the union's mission to expand and improve the benefits and services offered to our members and their families.

These plans are available exclusively to retired OPEIU members and their spouses/partners and cannot be found or bought on the open Medicare market.



Retired? Your Union Needs You! Join the OPEIU Retiree Action Team

OPEIU would like to keep in touch so we can keep you abreast of other exciting OPEIU retiree benefits and important developments affecting you and your family.

To join the OPEIU Retiree Action Team, please visit opeiu.org/retirees and sign up today.

Congrats to OPEIU Scholarship Winners

Congratulations to the 2021 OPEIU scholarship recipients. Annually, OPEIU awards numerous scholarships to further the education of members and their families, as well as a summer camp for kids.

More information about all OPEIU scholarship opportunities can be found at opeiu.org under the Member Resources tab and by clicking on Union Scholarships, as well as on the OPEIU app, which is available for free download for iOS devices in the App Store and for Android devices on Google Play by searching **OPEIU**. Applications and updates about the 2022 scholarships will be posted in January.

Howard Coughlin Memorial Scholarship — Full-Time Winners



Casey Antczak
Local 8



Gevon Finley
Local 29



Alex Chau
Local 30



Kaitlyn Walters
Local 32



Tamah Tyau
Local 50



Jasiah Edmond
Local 101



Collin Carofano
Local 106



Daniel Roman
Local 153



Blaise Slattery
Local 277



Brienna Anderson
Local 2002



Isabel Higgon
DAG 2007A

Howard Coughlin Memorial Scholarship — Part-Time Winners



Godwin Akpata
Local 6



Gina McMillin
Local 40



Tara Allen
Local 381



Edwin Soto Saucedo
Local 537

OPEIU Program Can Help Pay Down Your Student Debt

Annually, OPEIU provides five awards of \$2,500 each to help members reduce student debt through the OPEIU Student Debt Reduction Program. The 2021 recipients are Angel Contreras, Local 30; Carl Green, Local 32; Nicolle Navarrete, Local 251; Suzanne Brisbois, Local 459; and Raymond Zammit, Local 494. OPEIU members with at least \$10,000 in student debt can apply each year.

For more information, visit opeiu.org, search the Member Resources tab and click OPEIU Membership Benefits.

OPEIU Free College Program Registration Deadlines

Further your education by registering for the OPEIU Free College program. OPEIU members and their families can complete an associate or bachelor's degree completely online for FREE.

Online learning is safe and can fit into your busy schedule. For more information, visit freecollege.opeiu.org.



CLASSES START:

Jan. 10 (associate degree)

Jan. 17 (bachelor's degree)

More than 2,200 OPEIU members have saved
\$7.6 million
 in tuition, e-books and other fees through
 the OPEIU Free College Program.



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 from the OPEIU SMS program. After you opt out, you will no longer receive SMS messages from OPEIU.

Brandon Nessen Named Organizing Director



Brandon Nessen

OPEIU is pleased to announce Brandon Nessen has been named its organizing director, a role he fills after serving as senior organizer and Midwest lead organizer under his predecessor, Cindy Schu.

“My belief in working people’s ability to build power from the bottom up and make change, combined with proven tools and strategies that drive results, fuel my passion to lead, develop and expand the OPEIU organizing department and greater organizing network,” Nessen said. Building on the success of Schu and a growing number of OPEIU local unions and leaders embracing an organizing model, Nessen plans to make OPEIU the organizational home of working people seeking justice and a voice in their workplaces and lives.

In his previous role at OPEIU, Nessen led successful organizing efforts across health care, higher education and the nonprofit sectors while developing and strengthening the organizing department’s training programs, data management infrastructure and apprentice organizer program.

He also brings a wealth of experience with him to OPEIU. He was an organizer for more than 16 years with several local and international unions and community organizations, leading campaigns to build unions in the health care and construction industries and fighting against home foreclosures and predatory mortgage lending. The unique ability of a union to build working people’s power is a through line in all of Nessen’s campaigns and roles. “I believe workers and people do better when they come together and use their power in numbers to accomplish things they could never do on their own,” he said.

Cesar Leyva Engages Members Through Political Education



Cesar Leyva

Cesar Leyva, OPEIU’s national political director, began his journey to political activism early in life when he immigrated to the United States from Mexico.

“I learned the importance of economic freedom at an early age as I watched my mother work long hours as a fast food worker,” Leyva said. His experience with unions began as a telecom employee in the early 2000s, when he joined the Communications Workers of America (CWA) and, on his first day of work, witnessed firsthand how collective worker power could result in tangible benefits for working and middle-class families.

Leyva soon became a shop steward and later an officer in his local union. His activism and leadership were quickly noticed, and he was offered a staff position with CWA as a senior political campaign lead in the Southeast district.

For seven years, he worked to raise the voice of organized labor within the broader social justice movement.

In August 2020, he joined OPEIU to lead the political department. “My goal is to engage our union membership through consciousness-raising political education and leadership development,” Leyva said. “There is a lot on the line for working people today, and the stakes couldn’t be any higher.”

Join OPEIU’s Member Action Team to be the first to hear about important legislative battles in your state and nationwide. Visit opeiu.org and sign up today.

Celebrating the Many Contributions of Retiring Organizing Director Cindy Schu

After more than 30 years of dedication to bettering the lives of OPEIU members, Organizing Director Cindy Schu is retiring.

“Cindy brought an energy and commitment to organizing the unorganized that was unmatched in OPEIU’s history,” OPEIU President Richard Lanigan said. “Cindy believes deeply in the power of unions to better the lives of all working people, and knows how to reach people and help them see how much their lives could improve by coming together in a union.

“Her impact on OPEIU has been tremendous,” Lanigan continued. “Cindy helped reorganize OPEIU’s organizing plan to focus on certain key industries, giving a new voice to tech and nonprofit workers.” Schu also helped launch innovative initiatives, such as OPEIU’s Apprentice Organizer Program, which is building capacity at our local unions throughout the country and has brought our organizing capabilities to a new level, Lanigan added.

“OPEIU is grateful for her many contributions and wishes her a healthy and happy retirement,” Lanigan said.

Schu joined the International in 2016 after leading organizing efforts at Local 8 in Washington State since 1991. During that time, she also assisted OPEIU with a number of key organizing campaigns.

“Freedom from Poverty Through Action,” served as the motto for the nonprofit organization where she worked as a home care director after graduate school. The motto, however, was a bit of a contradiction, Schu said, given the agency provided its caregivers poverty-level wages and no health insurance or paid time off. That injustice compelled her, with the support of her union, Local 8, for the first time to organize home care workers in Washington. The successful campaign resulted in wage increases, health insurance and paid sick leave for workers statewide.

As organizer, and later organizing director, she helped thousands of health care, social service, office and public-sector workers successfully unite in a union. Local 8’s commitment to organizing was recognized with multiple awards under Schu’s leadership, including the 2008 Henderson B. Douglas Memorial Award, OPEIU’s highest organizing award. In 2001, she was elected secretary-treasurer of Local 8, while continuing to serve as organizing director.

“The impact Cindy’s made on so many workers and organizers is felt



Cindy Schu

and will continue to be felt for a very long time,” said Brandon Nessen, who succeeds Schu as organizing director. “As organizers, we thank her for her mentorship, which has shown us a unique, effective and compassionate leadership style that we can all aspire to.”



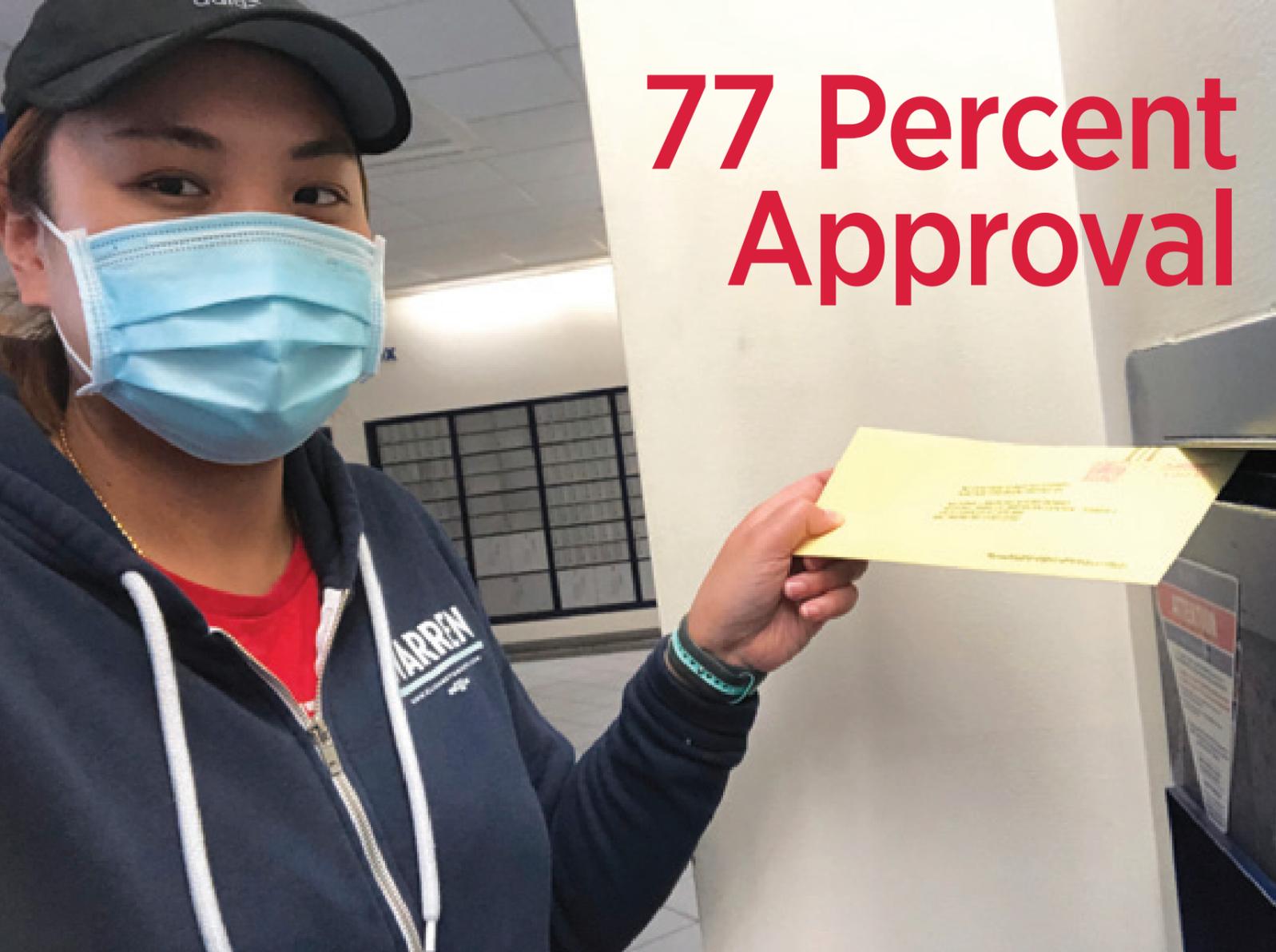
Sandy Pope

Sandy Pope Named Bargaining Director

Sandy Pope has been named OPEIU bargaining director, previously serving as bargaining coordinator. Under her direction, the bargaining team provides expert assistance to local unions in all aspects of the union’s duty to bargain and enforce collective bargaining agreements, local union administration and relations with other unions and community-based allies.

“Our commitment is to support and strengthen our local unions with resources, education and staff so we can defend and improve on good contracts and grow our membership,” Pope said.

77 Percent Approval



Laura Phonharath, a program analyst at NACCHO, casts her ballot in favor of unionizing with OPEIU.

Gallup polling released in September shows Americans' approval of labor unions is at its highest point since 1965, with 68 percent reporting a favorable view of organized labor.

The survey, conducted in mid-August, also showed a staggering 77 percent of those age 18–34 have a favorable opinion, echoing the findings of surveys conducted earlier this year by Pew suggesting most Americans, especially younger ones, would vote to join a union if given the opportunity.

Many are choosing to organize with OPEIU, looking to improve their working conditions, give voice to marginalized workers and address issues of diversity and inclusion in the workplace. Employees at four nonprofits are among those who recently formed unions with OPEIU. Here are their stories.

NACCHO Staff Fights for Dignity and Respect

Employees at the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) won their election to join Local 2 in the Washington, D.C., metro area, with 80 percent of employees voting to form a union.

The group initially sought voluntary recognition of their union by their employer in November 2020. When management refused, they were forced to undergo a lengthy hearing at the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) over challenges to the majority of their bargaining unit.

“Management knows they can treat us like we’re expendable, because — let’s face it — we are,” said Laura Phonharath, a program analyst and member of the union’s organizing committee. “A union changes that. And that’s why I’m in this righteous fight for dignity and respect.”

The 53-person unit is based in D.C. Through their work, NACCHO employees strengthen the capacity and effectiveness of local health departments across the United States, with their expertise ranging from health care equity to pandemic preparedness. The staff is composed of program analysts, lead analysts, senior program assistants, membership specialists, consulting specialists and more.

“We all believe in NACCHO and love the work we do,” the group said in its letter to management seeking voluntary recognition. “Therefore, we see our union as being a core part of NACCHO’s successes and accomplishments. We intend to build NACCHO into an organization where staff are respected, valued and will stay and work into the future. We envision a workplace where staff are recognized as an important part of the organization and as such, deserve to be included in decision-making — especially when those decisions have an impact on our compensation, as well as our working conditions.”

The group sought open communication between management and employees and a role in the development of organizational policies and procedures impacting their work. “As a national voice for local public health, we know how important it is to engage and involve people who will be affected by decisions. We want this in our workplace,” the letter continued.

They also wanted to emphasize the importance of racial and ethnic equity across the organization to ensure staff, and thus NACCHO, are able to harness everyone’s full potential and advance their mission.

“Our staff bring diverse experience and expertise to NACCHO,” said Julia Zigman, a program analyst and another member of the organizing committee. “Ensuring staff are meaningfully engaged and represented in leadership and decision-making will enable us to fully harness and build on that breadth and depth of experience and expertise.”

American Jewish World Service Employees Form Union to Uplift Values

Employees at the American Jewish World Service (AJWS), the leading global Jewish human rights organization, are pleased management has voluntarily recognized the AJWS Union, affiliated with Local 153 in New York City.

“My colleagues and I are excited to have joined together to form the AJWS Union,” said Hannah Fajer, a policy associate and union spokesperson. “Every day, we uplift our core values of dignity, humility, inclusivity, accountability and courage. We are proud to work for a progressive human rights organization that supports labor rights, and we are eager to further align AJWS’s internal practices with the organizational values that drive our work around the globe.”

“We welcome the AJWS Union as a partner in shaping the future of AJWS, and we applaud its members’ commitment to our mission and core values,” added Robert Bank, AJWS president and CEO. “For more than 35 years, AJWS has supported people around the world who organize in their communities, and we view our staff organizing as an expression of our shared values. We respect the members of our staff and their valuable work, and we respect their right to organize.”

Local 153 Apprentice Organizer Dana Kopel shares that AJWS is inspired by the Jewish commitment to justice, including the value of *b’tzelem elohim* — a belief that every person is made in the Divine image — as well as by the rights enumerated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Both AJWS’s Jewish values and the Universal Declaration teach that every individual is worthy of dignity and respect.

The more than 550 grantee-partners AJWS supports around the world pursue justice in their communities every day, and the new union members say they are proud to join them in their fight for equity and human rights for all people. In forming and voluntarily recognizing the union, the staff of the AJWS Union and AJWS’s management said they seek to align how they express their values in the world, embracing the dignity of their workers in creating a more just and equitable organization for all.

“AJWS and the AJWS Union look forward to collaborating on their first contract in the coming months, and, in so doing, continuing the long history of progressive Jewish labor organizing,” Kopel said.

Center for Book Arts Employees Unionize to Encourage Inclusion

Employees at the Center for Book Arts (CBA) in New York City have won their election with Local 153 through voluntary recognition, seeking to uplift the perspectives of staff otherwise excluded from important decision-making within the organization.

The 27 new members of the group, which is composed of instructors, studio coordinators, librarians, education specialists, project managers and more, are joining the movement of literary workers across the United States organizing to guarantee arts workers a seat at the table.

CBA is a nonprofit arts organization founded in 1974. It is the first organization of its kind in the nation dedicated to contemporary interpretations of the book as an art object.



New OPEIU members at the Center for Book Arts.

New Staff Union at Minneapolis Nonprofit Seeks to Promote Equity

Staff at the Minneapolis-based Institute for Local Self-Reliance (ILSR) have won employer recognition of their union with Local 12 and are now beginning the collective-bargaining process.

“The decision to form a union was grounded in our personal values and in the mission of ILSR itself, particularly the belief that democracy can only thrive when economic and political power is widely dispersed,” the staff union said. “We are grateful to ILSR leadership for their ongoing commitment to this mission and for their decision to voluntarily recognize our union. We are excited to move forward and build a stronger, more sustainable organization together.”



Organizing team members, left to right, are Michelle Andrews, GIS and data visualization researcher; Jess Del Fiocco, communications manager, who also will serve on the contract negotiating committee; and Katie Kienbaum, senior researcher.

“From its founding, ILSR has believed in grassroots organizing, collective action and fighting corporate concentration to disperse power, wealth and decision-making more broadly and equitably — values we share with the labor movement,” ILSR Co-Directors Stacy Mitchell and John Farrell said. “Our work to build up thriving, equitable communities and fight corporate control has met with growing success because of our talented team and shared commitment to ILSR’s mission. We look forward to working together to build an even more effective organization and further advance our mission.”

The group of 14 will now bargain a first contract with an eye toward promoting transparency, ensuring equity and increasing staff well-being.

ILSR is a national research and advocacy organization partnering with allies across the country to build an American economy driven by local priorities and accountable to people and the planet. In addition to Minneapolis, there are offices in Washington, D.C., and Portland, Maine.

Local 50 Nurses Ratify Contract with Queen’s Medical Center



Local 50 registered nurses at Queen’s Medical Center in Honolulu.

Nurses employed at Queen’s Medical Center in Honolulu and represented by the Hawai’i Nurses’ Association/OPEIU Local 50 stood together in solidarity and ratified a new contract that provides a \$1,000 signing bonus, a certification bonus, a certification differential commencing in the second year, significant shift differential increases and an 8 percent wage increase during the life of three-year agreement.

“This is one of the best contracts we’ve achieved in a very long time, with no givebacks and significant improvements, and it was all done just prior to the worst COVID-19 surge we’ve experienced throughout the pandemic,” said Local 50 President Dan Ross,

who also serves as an OPEIU vice president. “Our hospitals and our nurses are being pushed to their limits, with politicians and hospitals showing more concern for profits than people, but our union fights on and our membership remains united.”

Ross notes the union made it a top priority to secure monetary recognition of all the nurses have done during the pandemic, when they’ve been short-staffed and overworked. “These were extraordinary times with COVID and a whopping five percent inflation,” Ross noted. “We wanted to ensure our nurses received a raise to meet the rate of inflation.”

The union also fought attacks on the nurses’ pension, defeating management’s

efforts to replace the defined pension benefit with a 401(k). “The contract contains no concessions or givebacks, and we were able to correct and improve much of the language regarding breaks and holiday paid-time off, while increasing tuition reimbursement, maternity leave and other significant improvements,” Ross said.

Local 50 initiated a “Paint it Black” contract campaign that engaged nurses at Queen’s, as well as sister bargaining units at Straub and Kapi’olani medical centers in Honolulu. Several physician colleagues stood with the nurses as well.

Schuylkill Hospital Nurses Fight Back and Win!



Local 153 nurses employed at Schuylkill Hospital hold a vigil demanding a fair contract.

Nurses at Schuylkill Hospital in Pottsville, Pennsylvania, who are members of Local 153, maintained strength and determination during difficult contract negotiations with Lehigh Valley Health Network (LVHN), concluding with an overwhelming majority supporting ratification of a two-year agreement with the hospital.

The agreement, which expires March 31, 2023, includes robust safe staffing language and a new process for registered nurses to report unsafe assignments without fear of retaliation. The contract also includes an across-the-board 2 percent cost-of-living increase, annual increment and tier raises and an appreciation bonus for all union nurses. Tuition reimbursement, improvements to the medical plan, and other monetary benefits were also won, in

addition to strengthened language aimed at combating workplace violence.

For five months, Local 153 negotiators bargained in about 25 sessions. “We had a tough fight, especially about health insurance and their demand to eliminate nurse tier raises,” said Seth Goldstein, Local 153 senior business representative. “Management came to negotiations with an aggressive stance to silence the nurses and bust the union. LVHN hired a union-busting attorney to represent them, a lawyer who specializes in what he calls ‘union avoidance.’”

Management’s demands included abolishing nurses’ roles on safety and staffing committees and forced overtime, the latter of which is only allowed in emergency situations under Pennsylvania

law. Also, LVHN wanted to slash employee leave, gut daily overtime, provide only 10 cents per hour annual cost of living increases, discontinue the nurses’ pay increment and cap nurses’ pay.

To fight LVHN’s union-busting demands, the nurses adopted an organizing strategy that got members involved. The nurses dramatically augmented their negotiating committee to 13 members and held regular Zoom membership meetings, tripling attendance in the process. Demonstrations and vigils were held to put pressure on the hospital to negotiate fairly.

“Without the membership’s active participation, we would have never reached such a fair agreement,” Brandee Siegfried, RN, said.

“We listened to what our members wanted and needed, and fought hard,” said Chrissy Newton, RN, a member of the union negotiating committee. “We are a stronger union, now more than ever.”



Local 40 registered nurses at McLaren Macomb, left to right, are Michelle Mulder, Angela Gress, Laura Pape, Kim McCorry and Julie Genis.

Local 40 Nurses Ratify Contract Enabling Safer Patient Care

With more than 90 percent support, Local 40 nurses employed at McLaren Macomb hospital avoided a potential strike and ratified an agreement that increases nurse-to-patient staffing ratios throughout the hospital and provides an average 15.5 percent wage increase with \$4,000 appreciation and retention bonuses for each nurse.

The unit of nearly 600 registered nurses began bargaining Feb. 1 with the hospital, located in Mount Clemens, Michigan. “A top issue the nurses wanted addressed was improved staffing to ensure quality, safe patient care,” Local 40 President

Local 6 Ratifies New Contract with Mass Bay

Local 6 members employed at the Mass Bay Credit Union in Massachusetts have ratified a four-year agreement that provides a 7.5 percent wage increase, a \$350 signing bonus and a significant increase in the life insurance benefit, among many other improvements.

“The union held the line against a number of givebacks management wanted,” Local 6 Business Manager George Noel said. “We prevailed in allowing employees to be union members after 31 days, instead of after their probationary period as the employer wanted, maintained the 401(k) company match and increased the life insurance benefit from \$75,000 to \$100,000.

“The union also was able to get the credit union to agree to split the premium cost of group health insurance, with the employer paying 81 percent in the first year, decreasing to 79 percent by the end of the contract,” Noel said. Congratulations to the negotiating committee, which included Noel, Pam Irvin, Barbie Boyd and Kathleen McLaughlin.



New Contract at AMR Brings Wage Hikes, Bonuses



employee appreciation bonuses, make this a great new contract.

The contract also means probationary employees are now eligible for holiday pay, and there now will be four different medical plan options with the employer paying up to 85 percent of the premium costs. Beginning January 2022, the employer will provide matching contributions of up to 4 percent for those employees enrolled in the 401(k) plan. Also in January, there will be a new boot reimbursement of \$125 annually. The negotiating committee, composed of Local 6 Business Manager George Noel, Cindy Foster and Art Gaskins from the Springfield location and Tim O’Brien from Greenfield, also negotiated other important language changes.

Local 6 paramedics, EMTs and van drivers at American Medical Response (AMR), an emergency and patient relocation service, in Springfield, Massachusetts, ratified a contract that provides up to an 18 percent wage increase for EMTs and 13 percent for paramedics over the life of the three-year agreement. New classifications and increases in starting pay rates, as well as

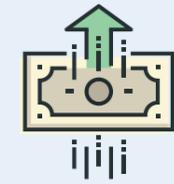
Jeff Morawski said. “Morale in the hospital needs to be improved by seeing an increase in recruitment and retention of ancillary staff, as well as recognition and appreciation of the tireless effort employees made during the past year and a half of the COVID-19 pandemic.”

The agreement, which runs through October 2024, increases staffing ratios, and for the first time institutes procedures to quickly expedite to arbitration any staffing disputes and enforce financial penalties if the hospital is found to be under the required staffing matrix.

“After fighting an unprecedented global pandemic and nurses feeling like they had no more to give, they still stood together in solidarity, willing to strike and put everything they had left on the line to continue to stand up for our patients and our community,” Morawski continued.

“It was a huge day for our Local 40 nurses to negotiate a contract in six months, which has never happened in our local’s history,” Local 40 Vice President Dina Carlisle said. “That is the

Woodland Pulp Employees Secure 10 Percent Wage Increase



10 percent salary hike over the life of the four-year agreement.

The contract was negotiated by Local 295 President Darlene Bohanon, Tiffany Gilman and Jamie Crowe, with the assistance of neighboring Local 6 Business Manager George Noel, who was chief negotiator. Since 2016, Noel has served as Local 295’s International representative for support, contract negotiations and the handling of grievance procedures.

The contract also provides for the addition of a new, well-paying resource clerk position. Employees may now elect to sell back any unused holidays into the 401(k) plan with a company match of 75 cents for every dollar, and the company will pay up to \$250 for safety glasses every two years.

Language also was secured to protect against the use of agency workers, which employers hire for the same jobs but without any benefits, such as retirement savings or vacation and sick leave, or any job security.

true definition of solidarity and the union difference in the workplace.

“In 2004, we went on strike to get nurse-to-patient ratios in our contract and we were ready to strike to enforce it” she continued. “Now, we believe we achieved breakthrough contract language that will hold management accountable for staffing more safely.” This enforcement and penalty language could become a model for other unions throughout the country.



Dream Bigger with a Union Plus Scholarship

Awards ranging from \$500 to \$4,000 are available to students from union families attending a two-year college, four-year college, graduate school or recognized technical or trade school.

The **Union Plus Scholarship** application is now available online.

Deadline: Jan. 31, 12 pm ET

Learn more at unionplus.org/scholarship



Liz Shuler is First Woman Elected AFL-CIO President

The AFL-CIO Executive Council elected Liz Shuler, the former secretary-treasurer and a longtime trade unionist, to serve as president of the federation of 56 unions and 12.5 million members. Shuler is the first woman to hold the office in the history of the labor federation. The Executive Council, of which OPEIU President Richard Lanigan is a member representing OPEIU, held the vote Aug. 20, following the death of Richard Trumka.

The Executive Council also elected United Steelworkers (USW) International Vice President Fred Redmond to succeed Shuler as secretary-treasurer, the first African American to hold the office. Tefere Gebre will continue as executive vice president, rounding out the most diverse team of officers ever to lead the AFL-CIO.

"I am humbled, honored and ready to guide this federation forward," Shuler said after her election. "I believe in my bones the labor movement is the single greatest organized force for progress. This is a moment for us to lead societal transformations — to leverage our power to bring women and people of color from the margins to the center — at work, in our unions and in our economy, and to be the center of gravity for incubating new ideas that will unleash unprecedented union growth."

"OPEIU congratulates Liz Shuler on her election" Lanigan said. "We are confident that working people throughout the country will make great strides under her leadership."

Shuler grew up in a union household and spent many years as an organizer and political representative with the IBEW. In 2004, she was promoted to assistant to the international president, helping drive the agenda of the nearly 1-million member union.

In 2009, she joined forces with Trumka, becoming the first woman elected to the position of secretary-treasurer at an AFL-CIO convention and the youngest woman ever on the federation's Executive Council. As secretary-treasurer, she also served as the chief financial officer, turning deficits into surpluses and steering the federation through multiple fiscal crises, including the COVID-19 pandemic.

In addition to her stewardship of the federation's finances, Shuler led the AFL-CIO's initiatives on the future of work, retirement security, the clean energy economy, public safety reform, workforce development and empowering women and young workers. She is committed to busting myths about labor, leveraging the labor movement's diversity for innovative approaches to social justice and making the benefits of a union voice on the job available to working people everywhere.

The terms of the three executive officers run through June 2022, when delegates to the AFL-CIO Convention in Philadelphia will elect leaders for new four-year terms.



OPEIU President Richard Lanigan and newly elected AFL-CIO President Liz Shuler following the Executive Council vote on Aug. 20.



Richard Trumka

Remembering the Life and Legacy of AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka

OPEIU is celebrating the life and legacy of labor icon and longtime AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka, who passed away Aug. 5. A lifelong fighter for workers' rights, first with the United Mine Workers and later as secretary-treasurer then president since 2009 of the AFL-CIO, he led a life of purpose and conviction in pursuit of dignity and respect for working people.

"Working people had a real champion in Richard Trumka," said OPEIU President Richard Lanigan. "We are thankful for all he accomplished in his 50 years of dedication to working people and America's unions, particularly recently as he nimbly guided the labor movement through an extremely politically divided time, all the while keeping the movement united in the fight for the future of all working people."

"OPEIU is committed to upholding his powerful legacy and the fight for dignity and respect for all," Lanigan concluded.



Printed in the USA

AFL-CIO, CLC

WHITE COLLAR

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

Get the OPEIU App Today

The OPEIU app is available for free download.

It's a great way to stay connected to your union, learn more about your membership benefits, find links to OPEIU's social media networks and much more. Available for free download for iOS devices in the App Store and for Android devices on Google Play by searching **OPEIU**.

