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.
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 the union. As an example, employers now weaken the union gradually over time.

As Working People Struggle, CEO Wages Soar

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 while working people struggle to keep up in an unfair economy.

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 $11 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 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 Outdated labor laws have hampered our fundamental right to join together and negotiate for better wages, benefits and working conditions.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.
**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, 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.

**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 become one of the most 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 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 managers 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.

**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

**Talk to your local union to learn more about the OPEIU National Retirement Savings Plan.**
NEW! Discover the Benefits of Better Health as a Union Retiree

Medicare Advantage plans offered 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

Comprehensive coverage available exclusively to retired union members

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.

Learn more about Medicare Advantage plans at:
retireehealth.unionplus.org

Disclaimer:
Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield is an HMO 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, an 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.

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.

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

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

Ge von Finley
Local 29

Alex Chau
Local 30

Kaitlyn Walters
Local 32

Tamiah Tyau
Local 50

Jasiah Edmond
Local 101

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; Nicole 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.

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

CLASSES START:
Jan. 10 (associate degree)
Jan. 17 (bachelor’s degree)
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.

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 and will continue to be felt for a very long time,” said Brandon Nessen, who succeeds Schu as organizing director.

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.
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 Phonhanrath, 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 respected, valued and will stay and work into the future. We envision a workplace where staff are recognized for their hard work and respect.”

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 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. “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.

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.
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 comprised 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 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.”

Local 50 Nurses Ratify Contract with Queen’s Medical Center

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 Sinub and Kapi’olani medical centers in Honolulu. Several physician colleagues stood with the nurses as well.
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 supporting ratification of a two-year contract, concluding with an overwhelming majority during difficult contract negotiations with management. "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.’”

"We listened to what our members wanted and 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 Christy Newton, RN, a member of the union negotiating committee. "We are a stronger union, now more than ever." The unit of nearly 600 registered nurses began bargaining in Baileyville, Maine, represented by Local 295 have ratified a contract securing a 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 during Local 6’s 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 have tried to use in the past but without any benefits, such as retirement savings or vacation and sick leave, or any job security.

Local 6 members employed at the Mass Bay Credit Union in Massachusetts have ratified a four-year agreement that provides a 1.75 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 Irvn, Barbie Boyd and Kathleen McLachlin.

Local 6 Ratifies New Contract with Mass Bay

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 an average 15.5 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 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 our current paid options with the employee 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, Judy Foster and Art Gaskins from the Springfield location and Tim O’Brien from Greenfield, also negotiated other important language changes.

"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 Irvn, Barbie Boyd and Kathleen McLachlin.

New Contract at AMR Brings Wage Hikes, Bonuses

Local 40 nurses ratify a new contract at McLaren Macomb, a hospital where employees have fought for better staffing, better retention bonuses for each nurse and added strength through collective action.

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 Jeff Morawski said. “Morale in the hospital needs to be restored 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 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.

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.

"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, tripled 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 Christy Newton, RN, a member of the union negotiating committee. "We are a stronger union, now more than ever.”
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 lifetime 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 social 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.

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.
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.