

# OPEIU CONNECT

Issue 561, Summer 2025



# Fighting Back!





# We Have a Choice

By *Tyler Turner*  
*President*

“An injury to one is an injury to all.” The phrase describes how the mistreatment of one worker can impact all workers. It is a rallying cry emphasizing the importance of solidarity and unity in defending the rights of all working people. What should not be lost in this message is workers’ rights are human rights, and humanity demands those rights be extended to all working people in this country, no matter their status.

In the past few months, we have watched in disbelief as basic protections under federal law have been ignored or arbitrarily exercised against undocumented workers, people with permanent resident status and even against U.S. citizens. Routine things like going to work and getting groceries have become terrifying to people who came to this country in search of a better life. They live in fear they could be snatched off the street, separated from their family and friends, placed in a detention camp or deported. These individuals are being denied the due process of a fair trial in immigration court, including reviewing and challenging the evidence against them, a right afforded to them under the U.S Constitution. Surely, we as union members protected by collective bargaining agreements and advocates for just cause can, at the very minimum, agree that is an injustice. Even the staunchest of conservative U.S. Supreme Court Justices, Antonin Scalia, believed and wrote that it is well established the Fifth Amendment entitles immigrants to due process of law [*Janet Reno, Attorney General, et al., Petitioners v. Jenny Lisette Flores, et al.*]. Let me be clear, this is not just a legal issue; it is a moral one.

Recently, one of our own OPEIU members was detained by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents, forcibly removed from his vehicle and ripped away from his family and community. The livelihood of his family, both here in the U.S. and in Afghanistan, hangs in the balance as he sits in a detention center hundreds of miles away from home in Eloy, Arizona. Jamal has spent the better part of a decade in this country helping other refugees find security and a new life for their families. He was part of the original organizing committee that successfully formed a union with OPEIU at the International Rescue Committee (IRC) Dallas, which has now grown to 11 unionized locations across the country. When he was detained, Jamal’s employer declined to continue paying his salary. Our members stepped up. Through their union they raised more than \$10,000 for legal fees and rent for Jamal. They reached out to their elected officials to start a congressional inquiry into his case. They contacted other OPEIU members at the Florence Immigrant and Refugee Rights Project (FIRRP) in Arizona to get help with real-time updates and information about the detention center. That is what solidarity looks like. That is what makes our movement strong.

The reality is this is not about immigrants or whether they are here legally. It is about cruelty. It is about casting the blame on the most oppressed communities amongst us and sowing division between the common interests we all share. This is class warfare designed to distract from the billionaire class with their hands in our pockets. It is profits over people, and it is not new. We have seen this same playbook across history. In the 19th century, Irish immigrants came to

this country to escape famine, pestilence and British oppression. They took dangerous and low-paying jobs and were demonized as disease-ridden criminals and rapists. Before long, an America-first party emerged known as the “Know Nothings.” With an “America must be ruled by Americans!” rallying cry, they were successful in electing mayors, governors and congressmen. They mandated the reading of the King James Version of the Bible in public schools, guarded and intimidated voters at polling stations during elections and deported immigrants. It all sounds too familiar, and we have witnessed it time and time again. In my home state of Texas, the governor signed into law Senate Bill 10, which mandates that the Ten Commandments be displayed in every classroom. This is the same governor who uses the law to demonize transgender people and terrorize immigrant communities.

We have a choice. We can sit by and watch as our friends, co-workers and neighbors have their rights stripped from them, lamenting what a shame it is. Or, we as a union can stand out in front of the issue, be vocal, take action and truly be a union for all. We can denounce authoritarianism and racist policies. It has never been clearer that no one is coming to save us. The labor movement is our single greatest tool to defeat the forces seeking to oppress us and our communities, but we must choose to use it. We must meet this moment. And if you are someone who looks like me, your charge is even greater. You must be more than an ally in mindset and spirit. You must be outspoken against this hateful and dangerous rhetoric in both words and actions.

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## Gonzalez Brings Decades of Experience to OPEIU VP Role

Linda Gonzalez has been named a vice president representing Region IV on the OPEIU Executive Board, filling the vacancy left by Tyler Turner’s appointment as president in February.

Gonzalez, a 37-year-member of Local 277 (Region IV) in Fort Worth, Texas, began her union journey in 1988 at General Dynamics, now Lockheed Martin. She has served Local 277 as steward and chief steward fighting for fair treatment of members, recording secretary on the executive board and as a negotiations team member. Gonzalez has been secretary-treasurer/assistant business representative since 2014. She retired from Lockheed Martin Aeronautics with 30 years of service in 2018. A graduate of North Side High School, she holds a Bachelor of Science degree in business administration from Columbia College.

Gonzalez is married to her forever dance partner in life, Abel, and is proud mother to sons Xavier and Rafael. Born and raised in Fort Worth, she remains involved as a member of All Saints Catholic Church serving as lector, eucharistic minister and a member of the finance council. She also supports her community as vice chair of the Advisory Council of Cassata Catholic High School, where she mentors the next generation, and as a member of the Knights of Columbus Council 16663 Ladies Auxiliary. The remainder of her time is dedicated to family, friends and pets Brie and Esmae.



Linda Gonzalez

## INSIDE



**On our cover:** OPEIU members stand united in solidarity to fight back against attacks on working families. Members of Local 153 (Region II) in New York joined thousands of union members at New York City’s Foley Square to protest the Trump administration’s attempts to target immigrant families, defund NYC schools and privatize public services. Learn more about how OPEIU members are fighting back against attacks on working people in our cover story, “Trump’s Anti-Union Executive Order Explained” on pg. 10.

### OPEIU CONNECT

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## Fighting the Good Fight



By Zareef Chowdhury  
Marketing and Events Coordinator  
BookPeople  
Local 277 (Region IV)  
Fort Worth, Texas

There are so many roles a steward must fill: communicator, contract defender, organizer, negotiator and advocate. The many technical aspects of the role, however, are not the most important part about being a steward; having the right attitude is.

Six months ago, I became one of three stewards at BookPeople in Austin. I decided to take on the responsibility because I saw how a union contract improved my workplace and the lives of my co-workers, and I wanted to help defend our contract and become involved with our union.

Like all stewards, I am still developing my skills on the job and did not come into the role knowing everything I needed to, which is okay. By learning as I go, with helpful context and resources passed down by former stewards, I become more capable every day of defending my colleagues and our collective bargaining agreement.

Serving concurrently on the bargaining committee, as I did during our last round of negotiations, can also help new stewards begin to develop this mindset. (See pg. 13 for details on the new BookPeople contract.) Knowing the context of contract language, its intent and its implementation is an essential part of stewardship and is made easier by being in the room when the contract language is being developed. Over time, your expertise as a steward can, and will, make you a better negotiator, able to preempt future contract disputes by identifying potentially problematic language before it ever enters the contract.

The most valuable lesson I have learned thus far is to approach the work with the right mindset. It’s vital that you put your personal opinions aside and analyze situations objectively. This skill has proven far more relevant in my day-to-day work than learning specific technical tips, such as conversation techniques or note-taking methods. The mindset you bring to meetings — whether it be with your colleagues, fellow stewards or with management — can make a real difference in outcomes for your colleagues.

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# A Vision for Our Future: Building a Stronger Union for All

**More than 200 OPEIU members, activists and leaders gathered in Las Vegas this spring for the 2025 OPEIU All Regions Educational Conference to explore both the opportunities and barriers to building stronger, more inclusive local unions for all members.**

Themed “A Vision for Our Future,” the conference gave participants the opportunity to tailor their learning experiences to the needs of their local unions. Workshops covered a range of subjects, including bargaining first contracts, negotiating health care, engaging members in political action and developing a local union organizing plan that includes pursuing new organizing leads. The conference’s large turnout — OPEIU’s biggest since 2018 — inspired engaging discussion, the sharing of skills and stories and a forum to strategize on major fights impacting union members across state and industry lines.

Coming on the heels of President Donald Trump’s executive order to nullify federal union contracts (see pg. 10 for more details), the conference served as a meaningful opportunity to learn practical skills, consider the current moment in a historical context and reflect upon tangible steps local unions can take to build organizing and bargaining capacity in their regions.

“Educational conferences are the backbone of our national effort to organize the unorganized,” said Tyler Turner, OPEIU president. “Sharing lessons and skills between locals raises our entire union’s capacity to grow and bring the benefits of a union contract to more and more workers within the industries we organize.

“The conference’s focus on creating culture change within local unions will have a profound impact for our members and brings us closer to our collective goal of being the most diverse, inclusive, equitable and justice-oriented union we can be,” he continued.

*“The conference’s focus on creating culture change within local unions will have a profound impact for our members and brings us closer to our collective goal of being the most diverse, inclusive, equitable and justice-oriented union we can be.”*

*Tyler Turner, OPEIU president*



**Above and on pg. 9, local union leaders from around the country explore ways to build stronger, more inclusive local unions for all members.**





# Trump’s Anti-Union Executive Order Explained

*The administration’s efforts to throw out public sector union contracts are an affront to the values union members hold close. Unions are fighting back!*



**WHAT DOES THE EXECUTIVE ORDER DO?**  
President Donald Trump's March 27 executive order nullifies union contracts and collective bargaining rights for three-quarters of the federal workforce. The order completely ends the collective bargaining process for more than 750,000 workers at more than 30 federal agencies.

Under the pretext of “national security,” the president signed away the right to bargain wages, benefits and working conditions for unions he deemed “obstructive” to his goals. The order also puts an end to dues deduction for federal employees, meaning federal unions will now need to individually collect dues from members. This is a clear attempt to strip unions of the resources required to fight back against presidential retaliation.

Recently, a federal judge granted federal unions a preliminary injunction, effectively pausing the executive order. Still, the conflict continues as unions and the White House remain engaged in legal fights over the constitutionality of the president’s actions.

**WHY WAS IT DONE?**  
The order was an obvious attempt to silence workers, force obedience and strip unions of the resources needed to fight back against the president’s billionaire-backed, anti-worker agenda. A White House fact sheet explicitly notes “[c]ertain [f]ederal unions have declared war on President Trump’s agenda,” citing grievances filed by unions representing workers at the Department of Veterans Affairs as justification to strip them of collective bargaining rights. The fact sheet also notes “President Trump supports constructive partnerships with unions who work with him.”

**I DON’T WORK FOR THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT. HOW DOES IT IMPACT ME?**  
Trump’s executive order is the single most significant attack on workers’ rights since President Ronald Reagan fired striking air traffic controllers in 1981. Reagan’s unilateral firing of striking workers signaled to corporate America that a new era of labor relations had arrived, one where the balance of power shifted away from workers and toward employers.

Trump’s sweeping executive action aims to do the same. In nullifying the union rights of nearly 1 million workers with a stroke of his pen — in addition to his well-publicized assault on the National Labor Relations Board, the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service and the Department of Labor — he has signaled to corporate America that his administration does not and will not protect the rights of workers and their unions.

**HOW IS OPEIU FIGHTING BACK?**  
Alongside our siblings from other unions, OPEIU is organizing, mobilizing and making our voices heard on the streets and in the halls of power:

- Participating in rallies, protests and movements throughout the country in coalition with other unions and community groups.
- Supporting lawsuits to challenge the legality of Trump’s unilateral actions.
- Training worker-leaders to have difficult conversations with their co-workers on workplace issues stemming from these actions.
- Lobbying elected officials in states with significant numbers of OPEIU members, pressuring them to do the right thing and stand up for the rights of workers.

There is still plenty more to be done. Help our union remain strong by getting involved in your local union and participating in actions in your community. Consider signing up to support OPEIU’s J.B. Moss Voice of the Electorate (VOTE) Fund to help us protect and build our collective power. Ask your local union how to get involved today!



OPEIU members join thousands of union members at events throughout the country to celebrate International Workers’ Day. Clockwise from top left, Local 6 (Region II) in Massachusetts, Local 8 (Region VI) in Washington state, Locals 29 and 30 (Region V) in California and Local 153 (Region II) in New York.



## Brilliant Corners Ratifies First Contract

More than 300 employees at Brilliant Corners, a nonprofit, California-based housing service, ratified their first union contract this spring. Their union, BC United, is one of the largest nonprofit units within OPEIU and is affiliated with Local 30 (Region V) in San Diego after organizing in March 2024.

The agreement introduces staffing ratios to ensure staff can provide quality services without being overworked, a fairer and more transparent structure for wage increases and improvements to mileage allowances—all priorities that contributed to the initial organizing campaign.

Many of the staff qualify for the low-income housing provided at Brilliant Corners, said Alex Kanegawa, a fund development associate who served on the bargaining committee and has worked at the organization since 2021. “Unionizing was the way for our collective voice to demand the things we need,” he said.

“It’s a starting point to address opportunities for us as employees, especially frontline workers, to actually have a say in the implementation of policies that dictate workloads and distribution of responsibilities,” he said. “Our union helps us vocalize our needs, not just to management but to each other, as well.”

The contract, which expires June 2028, covers staff across the state, including San Diego, Los Angeles and the Bay Area.

“As a larger organization there’s a lot of equity issues to consider,” Kanegawa continued. “We are not all the same type of employee, but I am really happy we found common ground for a lot of disparate groups within the organization. The complexity of the process was rewarding for building relationships and a stronger sense of support for each other.”



Members of the negotiating team celebrate a new contract at Brilliant Corners.



Nurses represented by Local 50 at the Wilcox Medical Center walked off the job for three days in January.

## HNA Nurses at Wilcox Secure Three-Year Agreement

A new agreement, struck after nearly a year of negotiations and a three-day strike in January, has been reached, covering 160 registered nurses represented by the Hawai’i Nurses’ Association (HNA)/OPEIU Local 50 (Region VIII) at Wilcox Medical Center on Kaua’i.

“It has been a relentless battle for almost a year,” said HNA/OPEIU Local 50 President Rosalee Agas-Yuu, RN, who is also an OPEIU vice president. “After countless hours of organizing, more than 35 bargaining sessions, a three-day strike and a Kaua’i County resolution, we are finally seeing a breakthrough.

“Our progress to date would not have been possible without the community standing together with us and fighting for what is fair,” Agas-Yuu said.

The contract, ratified with 97 percent voting in favor, includes a 6 percent wage increase this year and 4 percent increases in years two and three. Other highlights include: longevity pay increases for nurses with 5, 10 and 15 years of experience at Wilcox; an agreed upon staffing matrix based on patients’ needs; the creation of a Staffing Council to work collaboratively on staffing issues; and a commitment from Wilcox to continue developing recruitment and retention programs to bring in new nurses and provide support for current nurses.

In January, Wilcox nurses held a three-day unfair labor practice strike to protest the hospital’s harassment, discrimination and retaliation against union nurses taking part in contract negotiations. By then, nurses were already working without a contract, which expired Aug. 31, 2024.

“Under the new contract, we’re able to establish several committees to take a hard look at staffing, scheduled breaks and other improvements to enhance patient care so that Kaua’i residents have the same standard of care as those on O’ahu,” said Sonya Balian-Grande, a woman’s and infant health nurse at Wilcox, to *Hawai’i News Now*.

## Texas Bookstore Staff Ratify Contract with Local 277

Employees at BookPeople, Texas’ largest independent bookstore, voted unanimously to ratify a new three-year contract in April. Their union, BookPeople United, organized with Local 277 (Region IV) in November 2018.

The contract addresses several bargaining priorities for the 45-member unit, including higher wages, career development opportunities, protections against AI and recall rights for laid-off employees.

“One of the highlights of working here is knowing there’s a union,” said Zareef Chowdhury, a marketing and events coordinator at the Austin bookstore, who served on the union’s bargaining committee. During negotiations, he said, “we stood our ground, negotiated as a team and didn’t let negotiation tactics trip us up or get us off focus.”

Throughout bargaining, members creatively showed management they were united by holding coordinated t-shirt and button days, consistently posting to social media and creating pro-union bookmarks to give to customers to support the bargaining team.

Bargaining team members included Chowdhury, Ashton Skidgell, Rachel McInnes, Joan Ray, Mountain Kelsey and Leah Islam. Chowdhury, Kelsey and Islam have been elected the unit’s stewards.

“We had some really good wins, some really good negotiations, and I’m proud of the contract we were able to put together,” Chowdhury said.



Local 277 members at BookPeople celebrate their new contract.



# Alameda County Community Food Bank Employees Have First Contract

Employees of the Alameda County Community Food Bank (ACCFB) in the Bay Area, members of Local 29 (Region V), have ratified their first contract with much-needed wage increases.

ACCFB staff organized with Local 29 in November 2023, citing pay inequities and safety concerns. Their union represents approximately 90 full- and part-time employees at the nonprofit organization. Many workers at the food bank — the second to unionize with Local 29, following the San Francisco-Marin Food Bank in 2020 — make below-living wages. The new contract provides 2-4 percent step increases in salary and 3 percent across-the-board increases each year of the three-year agreement. The contract also includes a guaranteed cap on any employee health care contributions for three years, a pay premium for anyone who uses a second language on the job, increased vacation accrual and two additional holidays.



Local 29 members employed at the Alameda County Community Food Bank.

# Local 251 Negotiates Historic Wage Increase at Sandia

Local 251 (Region IV) in Albuquerque, New Mexico, negotiated a successor contract with Sandia National Laboratories with major wins, including a historic general wage increase of 11 percent during the three-year agreement and an unprecedented ratification bonus of \$2,700. The contract was ratified by an overwhelming majority of the more than 500 OPEIU members at Sandia.

The bargaining team also resisted management’s efforts to eliminate the unit’s full-time designee position and was able to maintain a cap of 8 percent in annual increases in medical plan contributions, among other highlights. “The support from our membership during this contract campaign was unprecedented,” said Kelley Allen, president of Local 251. “It was fantastic to see how much the members were engaged,” volunteering to be part of the bargaining team, attending weekly town hall meetings, wearing union shirts and showing up to events, Allen said. The unit also had the support of local Teamsters and SMART unions in Albuquerque, as well as the New Mexico Alliance for Retired Americans.



Local 251 members at Sandia National Laboratories show their support of the bargaining committee during negotiations.



Local 174 members employed at Warner Bros. Studio Operations are, left to right, Ayne Laveaga, Kelby McClellan, Maribeth Baranowsky, Kellie Elhai, Kerry Sanborn and Joyce Twumasi. Not pictured are bargaining committee members Tyler Weil, Dan Schwartz, Tracy Freitag, Georgina Zamora and Local 174 Secretary-Treasurer and Business Representative Richard Rosen.

# Local 174 Members at Warner Bros. Studio Operations Ratify Contract with Average 31 Percent Wage Increase

Members of Local 174 (Region V) in Burbank, California, employed at Warner Bros. Studio Operations stood united in solidarity during contract negotiations and secured significant initial wage increases averaging 23.52 percent, as well as a steady yearly increase averaging more than 31 percent during the next three years. The hardworking, member-led bargaining committee helped secure additional gains, including increased employer contributions to their 401(k) of 1 percent and improvements to medical coverage, additional holidays, severance pay and more. The 262-member unit includes tour guides, mail room clerks and administrative back lot support employees who work in the property, costume and operations departments. Many of the employees perform billing, payroll, accounts receivable and clerical support services. “I am beyond proud of my union and representation for standing together and fighting for what we are worth,” said Jake Ortega, a Local 174 member employed by Warner Bros. Studio Operations. “With this new contract, I will finally be financially stable enough not to give a second thought to buying groceries or having that third meal of the day! Maybe now I can save up for my future as well.”

# Oregon Tilth Workers Win Voluntary Recognition, Joining Local 11

Workers at Oregon Tilth, based in Corvallis, Oregon, won voluntary recognition of their union with Local 11 (Region VI) in April. Local 11 represents about 80 employees at the organization. “The purpose behind organizing Oregon Tilth Workers United (OTWU) is to collaboratively strengthen the organization through transparency, integrity, courage, compassion, harmony, knowledge and teamwork,” said Megan Ogle, a certification officer at the nonprofit. “I worked hard to land this job, and now I’m working hard to keep the values at Tilth that brought us all here.”

Oregon Tilth is a nonprofit organization offering certification services for organic crop, livestock, wild crop and handling operations, as well as certifying to other standards, including Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS), National Sanitation Foundation (NSF) Organic, Mexico’s Organic Products Law (LPO), Bee Better, Salmon Safe and Organic Plus Trust (OPT) Grassfed. Employees work and live across the United States and Mexico. “The employees of Oregon Tilth are pleased by the voluntary recognition of OTWU, and we look forward to working together to strengthen this organization,” said Margaret Liddiard, a senior inspector at Oregon Tilth. “As employees, we organized because we care deeply about Oregon Tilth’s mission, the work we do and the communities we serve. Together we can create a stronger, more resilient workplace that is aligned with the values of empowerment, integrity, courage and compassion that Oregon Tilth promotes and supports,” Liddiard said.



# IRC Expands Organizing Campaign to Three More Locations

*Maryland, New Jersey and Salt Lake City Locations Join the National Organizing Effort at the International Rescue Committee*

International Rescue Committee (IRC) staff from three locations — Silver Spring, Maryland, with Local 2 (Region II), Elizabeth, New Jersey, with Local 32 (Region II) and Salt Lake City, Utah, with Local 11 (Region VI) — have joined OPEIU’s national campaign to organize the humanitarian aid nonprofit. In total, 11 IRC offices have unionized since September 2023.

“Unionizing is a major step to make the work we do at the IRC more sustainable for our staff members,” said Katy Ducos, an immigration legal representative who has been with the IRC since 2020. “When we take care of our staff, our staff can take care of our clients, and in our current landscape this is more important than ever.”

IRC workers are organizing to improve working conditions and ensure job security and fair compensation amid a turbulent time for nonprofits across the country.

The organizing campaign is “uplifting to see,” said Shahira Bibars, a caseworker assigned to intensive case management at IRC Silver Spring, who has been with the organization for three years. “I feel like it’s given a lot of hope to me and other staff members to see we have more power than we’re given.”

“Everyone loves their job, and we are dedicated to our roles in helping our clients, but we deserve better as employees of the IRC,” said Milagros Apolaya, an immigration legal representative with IRC Elizabeth. “We have become brothers and sisters, united to make a difference for ourselves.”



*Top: IRC Silver Spring employees celebrate after winning voluntary recognition of their union with Local 2. Bottom: A group of IRC Salt Lake City employees deliver a petition to management, signed by more than 75 percent of the office staff, asking for voluntary recognition.*



*Molly Thul, at the 2024 OPEIU All Regions Educational Conference.*

## Local 12 Mourns Loss of Representative Molly Thul

Local 12 (Region VII) in Roseville, Minnesota, is mourning the loss of Molly Thul, a dedicated union representative, who died April 2 at the age of 42.

Thul joined Local 12 in early 2020, representing clerical workers and others employed at nonprofits in Minnesota. Always with a smile on her face, she negotiated many contracts, including those at Community Action, Minnesota Freedom Fund, Minnesota Voice, Minnesota Youth Collective and Advocates for Human Rights. Local 12 President Devin Hogan said Thul always worked to include a respect and dignity clause in every contract because she believed all workers deserve this as a contractual right.

Thul always encouraged her members to stay active and involved in their union. She often said to them, “Your union is only as strong as its membership,” encouraging them to use their voices to improve conditions in their workplaces.

Prior to joining OPEIU, Thul was a staff representative at UNITE HERE Local 17, where she represented her longtime colleagues at Minneapolis St. Paul International Airport and campaigned for a \$15 minimum wage.

A devoted mother, Thul leaves behind two children, a son, Logan, 19, and daughter, Allie, 17.

“The labor movement was made better with Molly in it,” Hogan said. “Her contributions, personal sacrifices and dedication improved the lives of thousands of union members. All of us in the local and in her units feel her absence every day. We miss her terribly.”



*John Brenton IV*

## John Brenton IV Named ITPEU/OPEIU Local 4873 President

**John Brenton IV has been named the new president of the Industrial, Technical and Professional Employees Union (ITPEU)/OPEIU Local 4873 (Region III) in Savannah, Georgia.**

A fourth-generation union member and 18-year veteran of the ITPEU, Brenton served as a representative, organizer, assistant to the president and secretary-treasurer before becoming president. He has served on all three ITPEU multiemployer benefit trusts. He is also an OPEIU vice president representing Region III.

“I see this work as a vocation, and I truly believe the calling is to service and stewardship,” Brenton said. “I and the other officers, executive board members, shop stewards and members all play an equally important role in ensuring the ITPEU lives up to its great mission.”

## Lena Bailey Makes History at ITPEU/OPEIU Local 4873

After 42 years of service as a member, representative, director of operations and vice president, Lena Bailey has been named secretary-treasurer of ITPEU/OPEIU Local 4873 (Region III).

“I feel very privileged and honored to be secretary-treasurer,” said Bailey, the first woman to hold the position and to serve as vice co-chair of the ITPEU Health and Welfare, Annual Benefit and Pension Funds. Her ascension within her union, she said, “opens the door for more females to follow the road.”

Originally from New Hampshire, Bailey moved to California in 1981 and became an ITPEU member while working for a military contractor. In 2005, she began an eight-year tenure as a representative with ITPEU before becoming director of operations. In 2019, she was elected vice president. Bailey services 29 units and approximately 2,400 members working under service contracts.

Growing up, she said, her father often came home after work discussing his union. “When I got to California,” she said, “I realized, ‘wait a minute, we have good benefits and security here.’ That experience in a union helped solidify my thought process and my belief in the power of organized labor.”

Throughout the years, Bailey says she has noticed many positive changes within her union. “Members are more informed about how their union works,” she said. “More people are wanting to be organized.”

As secretary-treasurer, she said, “our membership is the No. 1 priority. If not for the members, we would not have these jobs. It is very important to keep everything on track and stay true to us and our members.”

“The ITPEU has always been on the forefront of diversity and representation, and Lena’s ascendancy to this position is further testimony of it,” said ITPEU President John Brenton IV. “The ITPEU celebrates Lena for her years of service and for her well-deserved rise to the position of secretary-treasurer.”



*Lena Bailey*

**“Our membership is the No. 1 priority. If not for the members, we would not have these jobs. It is very important to keep everything on track and stay true to us and our members.”**

**Lena Bailey, ITPEU/OPEIU Local 4873 secretary-treasurer**



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## One Workplace Death is One Too Many

### *AFL-CIO's Annual Workplace Safety Report Details the Toll of Employer Neglect*

The AFL-CIO's annual report, "Death on the Job: The Toll of Neglect," paints a vivid picture of the health and safety risks facing America's workforce.

The report is the only comprehensive study of its kind detailing the state of safety and health protections for American workers. In its 34th year of publication, the report analyzes the most recent workplace safety data available on a state-by-state and national basis.

#### 2023 BY THE NUMBERS:

**385** workers died each day from hazardous working conditions

**5,283** workers were killed on the job in the U.S.

**135,304** workers died from occupational disease

**28%** increase in heat-related workplace deaths

**84,937** workers per OSHA inspector

Workplace risks are higher for Black and Latino workers, who are significantly more likely to die on the job than white workers. Agricultural, mining, transportation, warehouse, construction and oil and gas workers face the highest fatality rates in the country. Workers 65 and older have two-and-a-half times the risk of dying on the job—a risk heightened by having to work later into their lives than previous generations as retirement security becomes increasingly unattainable.

Every workplace death is avoidable, but an underfunded OSHA, regular attacks on departments and agencies tasked with holding employers accountable and weakened regulatory systems threaten meaningful progress made through the passage of the Occupational Safety and Health Act in 1970. Its provisions have saved the lives of countless workers but, as the report shows, there is still far more work to be done to ensure every worker has the right to a safe workplace.



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