Emergency fund seeks donations for union members impacted by COVID-19 — page 6

Minneapolis Labor Review
112th Year No. 10 March 27, 2020 www.minneapolisunions.org Minneapolis Regional Labor Federation, AFL-CIO

State locks down for COVID-19
Union members work on the front lines of response

MINNEAPOLIS — As the Labor Review went to press, Minnesota Governor Tim Walz issued an emergency “stay-at-home” order in an attempt to slow the spread of the growing coronavirus pandemic.

The order runs from March 27 through April 10 and directs that all non-critical businesses cease operations and that workers stay home.

The order exempts the construction industry and also allows grocery stores to continue to operate, as well as pharmacies, and other essential services.

The “stay-at-home” emergency executive order was latest in a series of executive orders issued by Governor Walz to address the growing public health crisis, including shuttering down schools, closing theatres and bars and other places for public gatherings, as well as restricting restaurants to offering only take-out food.

Walz’s executive orders, together with other business closings and slow-downs, have put tens of thousands of Minnesotans out of work.

Union members working in Minnesota’s hospitality and entertainment industries have been particularly hard-hit (see “Local Union News,” pages 9-10).

At the same time, other union members will be on the front lines as the number of people sickened by COVID-19 grows.

“It’s the nurses and the healthcare workers who are marching into battle,” said Mary Turner, president of the Minnesota Nurses Association. Nurses

Nurses warn of lack of tests, safety gear and preparedness

SAINT PAUL — Nurse after nurse stepped to the microphone at a March 18 news conference called by the Minnesota Nurses Association to warn that nurses lack adequate safety gear to deal with COVID-19 patients and that area hospitals appear to be woefully unprepared to deal with the expected rush of patients.

“Nurses are the front line of the COVID-19 response,” said Mary Turner, MNA president and nurse at North Memorial Hospital. She said the number one piece of equipment missing was the N95 respirator mask. “It is past time to address the concerns about added protection."

“We are not addressing this fast enough,” warned Cliff, a nurse at United Hospital.

“We need to be better prepared and have a plan,” said a nurse from St. Joseph Hospital.

“Nurses have no idea what’s going on in their hospitals,” Turner said. “Right now we get instructed in the moment.”

Melanie, an ICU nurse at St. Joseph, said some patients had been at the hospital for days before getting COVID-19 tests.

Outside the ICU, she said, nurses did not have training or fitting for the vital N95 masks.

“In the event a patient would test positive for COVID-19, we’re not protected,” said Randy, a nurse at Fairview Southdale Hospital.

“A big issue we’re having is finding staff are not part of the de...”

Coalition urges COVID-19 response to include a broad range of policy solutions to address inequities

MINNEAPOLIS — The COVID-19 public health emergency is further exposing longstanding inequities in Minnesota and the nation. Families who are living paycheck to paycheck and who don’t have adequate health insurance clearly are most at risk.

In response, a new coalition — Minnesota COVID-19 Response — has formed to advocate for a broad range of policies to address both the public health crisis and the related economic crisis.

One of the key proposals: a moratorium on evictions and foreclosures, as keeping people in their homes will be especially important during this time.

“We are all connected, and our fates are tied together. Without question, the way we pull through this pandemic and economic crisis is together, or not at all,” the coalition’s website states.

Several labor-related organizations have endorsed the coalition’s platform, including the Minneapolis Regional Labor Federation, Awood Center, CTUL, CWA Minnesota State Council, Education Minnesota, Minnesota Nurses Association, Minnesota State College Faculty, Restaurant Opportunity Center (ROC) Minnesota, SEIU Healthcare Minnesota, SEIU Local 26, SEIU Local 284, and SEIU Minnesota State Council.

For more information: mncovidresponse.com
Our response to COVID-19: Acting in solidarity with you

By Chelsie Glaubitz Gabiou, President, Minneapolis Regional Labor Federation

As the March 27 Labor Review goes to press, Minnesota is bracing for the worst impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Workers are on the front lines fighting this pandemic. They are caring for us, they are delivering our goods, they are protecting us, and they are maintaining our essential services and infrastructure. Their safety must be a top priority.

Jobs have been slashed and workers are experiencing massive unemployment. While there are some fortunate enough to continue work from home, most are making terrifying decisions about how to afford their survival during this time.

The news of federal and state relief packages and promises of paid time off are hitting the airwaves. However, when workers are finally able to access these benefits, it is going to be too little too late, and it leaves far too many workers behind. Those workers who are being excluded from these relief packages also are the ones most likely to already be facing financial hardship due to an economy that was failing us long before this pandemic.

While there is more to do, we are extremely thankful for Governor Tim Walz and his strong leadership to address both the looming health crisis and the related economic crisis.

The MRLF is a critical piece of the response network for this crisis. We are embracing this moment to fight for the things we have always fought for — safety, dignity and economic security for all workers. We are working around-the-clock to support our members.

This crisis is exposing what we already know — the U.S. economy is not working for today’s families.

Policy Considerations
This crisis is exposing what we already know — the U.S. economy is not working for today’s families. We need to continue our push for paid leave and expanded healthcare access. Workers need to be safe at work. We need to fight for emergency relief. And any emergency relief must go to those most directly impacted and must be distributed equally.

In addition to direct support for those out of work, we also are fighting for the rights of front line employees who need workplace protection.

Contracts and Industry Strategies
We are consulting with unions to determine the best way to work with their employers during this time. We are creating a clearinghouse of resources for best practices for workplace policies. We also are convening conversations within industries to deal with the broader immediate impacts and long-term recovery.

There are some fortunate enough to continue work from home, but most are making terrifying decisions about how to afford their survival during this time.

Those Directly Impacted
Members who lose work, lose pay or are laid-off need direct assistance and are a high priority for us at this time. Members who are the most vulnerable are the most likely to be impacted and need our assistance. We are expanding our direct relief services through a new initiative to support workers in the hospitality industry — many of whom now have been out of work for almost a month and may not have access to traditional forms of relief. We are growing our capacity and training a team of navigators to help workers apply for things like Unemployment Insurance and access other benefits.

We are working with unions to determine the best way to work with their employers during this time. We are creating a clearinghouse of resources for best practices for workplace policies. We also are convening conversations within industries to deal with the broader immediate impacts and long-term recovery.

During COVID-19 crisis, MRLF staff will be working from home via e-mail, phone, web

Steve Share, Editor

Minneapolis Labor Review
Since 1907

AFL-CIO

Next issue: April 24, 2020
Deadline: April 8, 2020

See page 11 for complete 2020 schedule

“The rights labor has won, labor must fight to protect.” — Floyd B. Olson, Minnesota Governor, 1930-1936

Minneapolis Labor Review

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SAINT PAUL — The fifth Annual Union Job & Resource Fair, originally scheduled for April 2, has been rescheduled to Thursday, June 4. The event will run from 3:00-6:00 p.m. at the IBEW Local 563 site in northeast Minneapolis. For more information, contact Peter Rachleff at 651-230-3294.

SAINT PAUL — The Minneapolis Regional Labor Federation’s community services arm, Working Partnerships, is preparing to provide direct financial assistance to union members who are being impacted by income losses and other emergencies related to COVID-19 disruptions. We’re asking the labor community and our allies for support for Working Partnerships’ Emergency Relief Fund.

Go to workingpartnerships.org and click the “DONATE” button. This link will lead to a form to make a donation via credit card. Our web fundraising vendor is waiving all processing fees during this crisis.

Our fund is housed at the Building Trades Credit Union. You also can donate by:

■ Making a funds transfer from your bank or credit union account. Each financial institution has different methods and may need different information from Working Partnerships for this option, so call Doug at 612-805-4236 or Andie at 612-805-9931 to coordinate.

■ Dropping off or mailing a paper check payable to “Working Partnerships Emergency Fund” at the Shoreview or Maple Grove branches of Building Trades Credit Union. Use the drive-thru or the after hours depository slot at each location.

For drive-thru hours: buildingtradescu.com/locations/ Mail or drop off checks to:

Building Trades Credit Union
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Thank you for your support!

Carpenters’ Pheasants Forever chapter postpones March 28 annual membership banquet until May

SAINT PAUL— Due to the COVID-19 outbreak, the Carpenters’ Pheasants Forever chapter has postponed its annual membership banquet scheduled for March 28. The event will be rescheduled to a Saturday in May, 2020. For more details on the rescheduled event, search Facebook for “Carpenters for Conservation Pheasants Forever Chapter 844.”

People who registered already will be contacted via email or telephone.

For more information, contact event organizers Janette or Michael Busch at 651-464-8963 or e-mail at busch1515@centurylink.net.

SAINT PAUL— The annual “Trades Night at Target Field” hosted by the Minnesota Twins will be the date for the annual Workers Memorial Day ceremony organized by the Minnesota State Building and Construction Trades Council.

In the case of inclement weather, the ceremony will be moved to the St. Paul Labor Center, 353 W. 7th Street, St. Paul.

December 29, 2020 will mark the 50th anniversary of President Richard Nixon signing the Occupational Safety and Health Act.

Emergency fund seeks donations for union members impacted by COVID-19

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SAINT PAUL— The fifth Annual Union Job & Resource Fair, originally scheduled for April 2, has been rescheduled to Thursday, June 4. The event will run from 3:00-6:00 p.m. at the IBEW Local 110 union hall, 1330 Conway Street, Saint Paul. The on-site hiring event will feature more than 35 employers. For more information, contact Peter Rachleff at 651-230-3294.

SAINT PAUL — Friday, April 24 will be the date for the annual Workers Memorial Day ceremony organized by the Minnesota State Building and Construction Trades Council.

Observed nationwide, Workers Memorial Day honors the memory of workers who lost their lives as a result of work-place accidents or work-related illnesses. The day is also a day to renew calls for stronger workplace safety protections.

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Events

Note: Given the unknown duration of the COVID-19 public health emergency, please check with event organizers about whether events have been canceled or postponed.

‘Fare For All’ cancels sales of discounted grocery packages at community locations through March

MINNEAPOLIS — Fare For All, which sells discounted grocery packages, has canceled its March sales dates at community locations due to the COVID-19 public health emergency.

Working Partnerships, the AFL-CIO community services program, hosts a Fare For All distribution site at the Linux Center on the University of Minnesota St. Paul campus.

April 10: Ticket sales will begin for annual ‘Trades Night at Target Field’ coming June 16

MINNEAPOLIS — The Minnesota Twins will face the Milwaukee Brewers Tuesday, June 16 for the annual “Trades Night at Target Field” hosted by the Minneapolis Building and Construction Trades Council. The game begins at 7:10 p.m. with a pre-game picnic at the Minneapolis Farmers’ market from 4:30-6:30 p.m.

Ticket sales are set to begin Friday, April 10 with a price range of $28-$50.

The COVID-19 public health emergency has led Major League Baseball to delay the start of the 2020 season, so game schedules may change.

To purchase tickets, or for more information, contact contact Luis at 612-659-3575 or luisbreazeale@twinsbaseball.com.

April 24: Workers Memorial Day ceremony will honor Building Trades workers killed on the job

The Trades’ event will take place from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at the Workers Memorial Garden on the southeast corner of the Minnesota State Capitol grounds, near 12th and Cedar Streets.

In the case of inclement weather, the ceremony will be moved to the St. Paul Labor Center, 353 W. 7th Street, St. Paul.

December 29, 2020 will mark the 50th anniversary of President Richard Nixon signing the Occupational Safety and Health Act.

Emergency fund seeks donations for union members impacted by COVID-19

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Thank you for your support!
Trades curtail office access, close training centers, but keep working

MINNEAPOLIS — Minnesota Governor Tim Walz’s executive order directing workers to “stay-at-home” March 27 through April 10 exempts the construction industry.

“Construction is hazardous all the time,” commented Dan McConnell, business manager of the Minneapolis Building and Construction Trades Council. With the current COVID-19 public health crisis, “this is a new hazard,” he said. “We need to educate ourselves. We need to take additional precautions. If we can’t do that, we shouldn’t work.”

While building trades workers will be reporting to job sites, local building trades unions have canceled union meetings and have closed their training centers during the COVID-19 crisis. In addition, many local building trades unions have stopped allowing walk-in traffic to their union offices. Business agents are connecting with workers via phone and e-mail and they’ve also cut out job site visits, except to address special problems or concerns.

Crisis: Stay home. Wash your hands.

continued from page 1

have sounded an alarm about the lack of personal protective equipment for health care workers and a lack of preparedness by the state’s hospitals (see story, page 1).

Union members not in the health care field but who interact closely with the public also suddenly have found themselves on the front lines of the COVID-19 public health crisis.

Grocery store workers, in particular, have emerged as unexpected heroes as they stay on the job during this unprecedented public health crisis to keep shelves re-stocked while Minnesotans stock-up on food supplies to weather the stay-at-home order and minimize their own public contact.

Janitors, bus drivers, letter carriers and human service workers who can’t retreat with their laptop computer to work from home also are on the front lines of providing essential services to the public — while at risk to their own health.

The unions representing workers still on the job, as well as unions representing workers who have been laid-off, have been advocating with employers and government at all levels for increased worker safety protections and for increased income protections (see stories in “Local Union News,” pages 9-10).

The Minnesota AFL-CIO, urging that the state “leave no worker behind,” sent a letter to Governor Walz March 19 outlining emergency policy priorities.

The letter included calls to protect frontline workers’ health, provide full wage support for all working people, continue pay for hourly school workers if schools remain closed, and mandate emergency time off.

In addition, the letter by Minnesota AFL-CIO president Bill McCarthy and AFSCME president Mary Turner said: “It’s the nurses and human service workers who can’t retreat into battle….”

“Now we have a new threat,” MNA president Mary Turner said. “It’s the nurses and the healthcare workers who are marching into battle…”

“We’ve all seen what’s happening in the news worldwide,” said nurse Kelly. “The tension in the hospital and the fear is heavy and thick.”

Turner said younger nurses are reporting, “my family members are begging me not to go to work.”

“We are prepared to do our duty,” Turner affirmed, but nurses need the government and the hospitals “to protect us, so we can do what we are called to do.”

Nurses: Public responds to call to donate masks

continued from page 1

Minnesotans step up to help

Two days following the March 18 news conference, the MNA put out a call to the public seeking donations of personal protective equipment (PPE), including new, unused N95 masks.

The response was nothing short of amazing.

Donations ranged from individuals donating a few masks to Co-op Partners Warehouse donating 3,500 particulate respirator masks to Sportsman’s Guide donating 40,000 N95 respirator masks. PPE donations also came from contractors and from local unions.

Teamsters Local 120 provided its semi-trailer truck to transport the donations.

MNA planned to coordinate distribution of the donations statewide with the State Emergency Operations Center.
MINNEAPOLIS — Construction unions are welcoming the U.S. Department of Labor’s final rule creating Industry Registered Apprenticeship Programs (IRAP), which exempts the construction unions’ long-established apprentice programs.

The Department of Labor released the final IRAP rule March 10, celebrating its “industry-led, market-driven approach… [which] will give employers and other stakeholders additional flexibility necessary to expand the apprenticeship model into new industries and to address the diverse workforce needs of different industries and occupations.”

Last year, construction unions mobilized members and allies nationwide to advocate for preserving their successful union apprenticeship programs — generating nearly 325,000 comments during the Labor Department’s rule-making process.

Unions argued that the new IRAP model would undermine the high standards established by union Registered Apprentice programs.

With the release of the final IRAP rule exempting construction, “we appreciate the Department of Labor’s support of the construction industry’s Registered Apprenticeship model,” said Jessica Looman, executive director of the Minnesota Building and Construction Trades Council. “Registered Apprenticeship means that we will have the safest roads and bridges, schools, and utilities because we have the best-trained workers with the highest level of skill.”

“We thank those in the Administration who supported the construction industry’s high-road training standards that empower workers to reach and remain in the middle class,” commented Sean McGarvey, president of North America’s Building Trades Unions. “We appreciate the time spent by all — especially our rank and file members — who petitioned their government during the public comment period. Together with our industry partners, we will continue to invest in high-quality training standards that promote the well-being of apprentices and meet the demands of the industry.”

Nationwide, McGarvey noted, “the Building Trades unions, working together with contractors, spend more than $1 billion per year funding a nationwide network of nearly 1,600 teaching centers. The industry understands the benefits of a skilled workforce and is willing to pay to teach its workers.”

In Minnesota, the Minnesota Building Trades Council reported, there are more than 50 construction Registered Apprenticeship programs with more than 10,000 Registered Apprentices training to be the state’s future plumbers, electricians, iron workers, crane operators, laborers, carpenters and other highly-skilled trade workers.

“The final IRAP rule exempting construction “is a tremendous win for the Building Trades,” said Jason George, business manager for Operating Engineers Local 49.

George thanked everyone who sent comments during the rule-making process, including nearly 1,000 Local 49 members. “You made the difference,” he said. “I also want to thank Republican and Democratic elected officials, including all Minnesota leaders from both parties and the entire [Minnesota] Congressional delegation for sending in a letter supporting our position.”

WASHINGTON — The National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) announced March 19 that it won’t conduct any union representation elections, even by mail, until at least April 3 — due to the coronavirus outbreak.

Just the day before, the agency had announced it would suspend in-person elections, but would still conduct elections via mail if a business and union agree. Because union elections require people to congregate, that made sense in the midst of an epidemic. But ending mail ballots, too?

The memo says the suspension is “to ensure the health and safety of our employees, as well as those members of the public who are involved in the election process.”

Workers at the U.S. Postal Service are still handling and delivering mail. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control says there have been no confirmed cases of COVID-19 as a result of touching mail, and that there is very low risk due to the poor survivability of coronaviruses on these types of surfaces.

But NLRB agents — except those needed to handle mail — have been teleworking since March 16, and the agency’s practice for counting ballots still requires some human contact. NLRB agents count mail ballots in front of observers from both sides; verifying ballots could be a challenge if they observe the CDC recommendation to maintain six feet of distance.

— nlaborpress.org

We’d love to see you, but at a distance. (For now.)

For the health and safety of our members and employees, we have temporarily closed our lobbies at all locations. However, our drive-ups remain open for you in Maple Grove and Shoreview, Monday through Friday, 9am to 5pm. For the latest updates, visit our website. Or to speak with us, call 763-315-3888. We look forward to seeing you and bumping elbows with you soon.

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March 27, 2020 • Minneapolis Labor Review • Page 5
MFT Education Support Professionals: ‘One job should be enough’

By Steve Share, Labor Review editor

MINNEAPOLIS — “One job should be enough!” That was the message of picket signs and chants during three days of informational picketing at the end of February by Educational Support Professionals who work for the Minneapolis Public Schools. ESPs went back to the bargaining table March 2 but no further negotiations were scheduled as of March 20.

“We need a contract that’s going to make a difference in the lives of our members and get them out of poverty,” said Ma-Riah Roberson-Moody, speaking at one of the informational pickets February 24 at Lucy Laney Elementary.

“We’re trying to bargain for what our members need, not what the district can afford,” said Roberson-Moody, St. Paul, who is an ESP at Roosevelt High School and has worked for the Minneapolis Public Schools for four years.

The Minneapolis Federation of Teachers Local 59 ESP chapter surveyed its members and found that two-thirds have at least two jobs. Three-quarters earn less than $29,500 per year. And yet ESPs must pay the same amount in their health insurance premiums as do other district employees who earn more than $100,000 per year.

“When ESPs are not paid enough, that falls on the community,” said 5th District U.S. Representative Ilhan Omar, who joined the picket line at Lucy Laney and spoke with the ESPs. “We have one of the highest disparities in education,” Omar noted. “This is about community. This is about family. This is about taking care of our most vulnerable.”

“We love these kids. We love what we do,” said Lia-Rasheedah Henry, Minneapolis, a district employee since 2002 and ESP at Harrison Education Center. “But, she asked, “how can we do our job 100 percent effectively… not knowing what we’re going to do to make ends meet?”

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“We love these kids. We love what we do,” said Lia-Rasheedah Henry, Minneapolis, a district employee since 2002 and ESP at Harrison Education Center.

But, she asked, “how can we do our job 100 percent effectively… not knowing what we’re going to do to make ends meet?”

“The district needs to wake up,” Henry said. “They wake up or we walk out.”

In the current round of contract negotiations — which have been going on since last summer — the school district was proposing wage increases of zero percent, one percent or two percent for different job classes for the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years. And, for the second contract in a row, the district wanted some of its lowest-paid employees to take a step freeze.

Over the years, ESP wages simply aren’t keeping up with living costs, said 38-year district employee Susan Joy Broman, ESP at Webster Elementary and first vice president of MFT Local 59’s ESP chapter. “People can’t make a living here,” she said.

On the informational picket line February 27 at Burroughs Elementary, Broman explained, “instead of a cost-of-living raise, they’ve done a raise of two or one or three percent which never matches it.”

Now, in the current labor market, the district is needing to pay new hires more to fill vacant ESP positions. And that’s leading to veteran ESPs earning less than the new hires they’re training.

“We have six steps… but we have people that are going on three or four years still stuck — because they froze the steps — on step one,” Broman reported.

“Then what happens is the district has had problems filling those positions so they hire people in on step two or step three and then the people that have been here for a few years and are still on step one have to train them in… Then we have the people that have been here for three years decide they’re going somewhere else.”

Broman said wage parity is another big issue. “The people that work with special ed children make $2 less than the people who work with general ed children. That devalues the kids and the people who work with them.”

“I believe in the kids,” Broman said, echoing the dedication and purpose expressed by many ESPs. “I enjoy seeing the kids do the best that they can and knowing that we’ve had a part of that.”

“We are the people that make school happen,” Broman said. “That’s another one of our slogans but it’s absolutely true.”
SEIU Local 26 commercial janitors vote unanimously to approve new contract

MINNEAPOLIS — Janitors with SEIU Local 26 voted unanimously March 14 to approve a tentative agreement for a new four-year contract that will cover 4,000 commercial janitors in the Twin Cities.

SEIU Local 26 president Iris Altamirano shared the excitement over the vote and the need for employers who still have open contracts to finalize deals so everyone can focus on addressing the COVID-19 pandemic.

“I am so happy the 4,000 janitors will immediately begin seeing the gains from this strong contract that was just ratified. Workers went on strike once and were ready to go again in the fight for what is right. Now they have wage increases, more paid sick days, green training programs and other protections,” said Altamirano.

“Now we need other employers to stop stalling and reach agreements with retail janitors and airport service workers,” Altamirano said. “Contractors like Prospect — who employ hundreds of passenger service workers at MSP Airport — need to stop playing games and reach agreements so workers can concentrate on keeping our airport and buildings safe. The people who have been on the front lines of making our economy boom for the last five years need to be protected as we deal with this crisis.”

The bargaining team for the union reached an agreement in the early hours of March 7 after four months of negotiations.

The final agreement came after a marathon 22-hour bargaining session that started at 9:00 a.m. Friday, March 6 and ended at 7:00 a.m. Saturday, March 7.

The janitors had gone on a 24-hour strike one week before the agreement, and were set to go on an open-ended strike if the agreement hadn’t been reached.

The contract won:

- Wage increases of $2.20 over the course of the contract for full time workers, with some part time workers going from $11.12 to $16 over the life of the contract.
- Moving all full-time workers to six paid sick days by the second year of the contract.
- Funding towards a Labor-Management Cooperation Fund that will work towards a green education initiative.
- Reductions in the cost of health insurance for individuals and families.
- Incorporating sexual harassment policies into contract.

The 4,000 SEIU Local 26 commercial janitors join the 2,000 SEIU Local 26 security officers who also won a strong contract in February.

That means 6,000 of the 8,000 SEIU Local 26 members now have settled their contracts, leaving retail janitors and airport passenger service workers as the two biggest groups still working to reach deals.

At the airport, two of the three main contractors have reached agreement, leaving only Prospect who is holding out on giving a new contract to the workers on the front line of keeping MSP airport safe and running.

The commercial janitorial workers are employed by over a dozen different subcontractors like ABM and Marsden to clean the MSP Airport along with corporate office buildings like IDS, Capella Tower, EcoLab, U.S. Bank, Wells Fargo, United Health Group, Ameriprise and many more across the Twin Cities.

SEIU members at HealthPartners ratify contract, averting strike

SAINT PAUL – Members of SEIU Healthcare Minnesota at HealthPartners ratified a new contract February 26 with a strong majority after 15 hours of voting.

The agreement came after members had passed a strike vote February 6 with 95 percent voting to support a seven-day unfair labor practices strike.

The strike was averted when a tentative agreement between the union and HealthPartners was reached early in the morning of February 18.

The union reported that the new three-year contract brings wage increases of 7.5 percent over the three years, protection of union members’ excellent “Classic” health plan benefits, and overtime pay provisions protected from all cuts and changes.

Angela Knutson, a nurse at HealthPartners and member of SEIU Healthcare Minnesota, shared why members are excited to win this contract and get back to providing quality care for all Minnesota families.

“We were able to win this contract, protecting our healthcare and increasing the pay for our important work, because we stuck together and were willing to go on strike to protect the care of thousands of Minnesota families,” said Knutson. “I am so proud of this group of dedicated caregivers who showed that we would do whatever it takes to win a fair contract that respects the frontline caregivers who make HealthPartners a world-class organization. We remain committed to standing up so that every family — no matter our job — has the healthcare they need to make sure our families are healthy and safe.”

The 1,800 SEIU members in the HealthPartners bargaining unit represent nearly all caregivers other than doctors. The bargaining unit includes RNs, dental hygienists, LPNs, CMAs, midwives, lab techs, physicians assistants, and over 80 different jobs in total.

They work at more than 30 HealthPartners clinics across the Twin Cities, providing award-winning care and helping to make our communities healthier.

Another 1,200 administrative employees at the clinics, members of OPEIU Local 12 — had been prepared to honor a SEIU Healthcare picket line. OPEIU Local 12’s contract with HealthPartners begins contract negotiations later this year.

Christina Bolk, a HealthPartners CareLine RN for six years, shared her thoughts following the agreement: “The members of our bargaining team want to express our deep appreciation for the support we have received from the public and our patients in this fight. It has been truly inspiring seeing how the whole community has come together to show support to HealthPartners caregivers. To other union members, especially fellow healthcare workers, we hope we have shown that by sticking together and organizing we can protect what we’ve won and win gains that allow us to get back to what we really want to be doing: provide world-class patient care to Minnesota families.”

SEIU HealthCare Minnesota members held a news conference February 7 to announce that 95 percent of members voting had backed a seven-day unfair labor practices strike against HealthPartners. OPEIU Local 12 member Kelsie Anderson (at microphone) said her union’s 1,200 administrative employees at HealthPartners were prepared to honor an SEIU picket line.

MINNEAPOLIS — Members of SEIU Healthcare Minnesota at HealthPartners ratifi ed a new contract February 26 with a strong majority after 15 hours of voting.

The agreement came after members had passed a strike vote February 6 with 95 percent voting to support a seven-day unfair labor practices strike.

The strike was averted when a tentative agreement between the union and HealthPartners was reached early in the morning of February 18.

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WASHINGTON (PAI) — As lawmakers construct a coronavirus aid package for consumers and businesses — worth $2 trillion or more — the Federal Trade Commission, a century-old consumer watchdog agency, is warning people not to fall for U.S. check scams.

That's because while news reports indicate the first checks of at least $1,000 each could come in April, scammers already are dangling promises that checks could be in your pockets within days — but only if you follow "rules" that will let the con artists fleece you in the future.

"As the coronavirus takes a growing toll on people's pocketbooks, there are reports the government will soon be sending money by check or direct deposit to each of us," Jennifer Leach, the FTC's associate director for consumer protection, said March 18. "The details are still being worked out, but there are a few really important things to know, no matter what this looks like."

"The government will not ask you to pay anything up front to get this money," Leach said. "No fees. No charges. No nothing. The government will soon be sending money by check or direct deposit to each of us."

So, remember: no matter what the amount or form of money is a scammer. Anyone who does is a scammer. These reports of government officials about a check or deposit attempt to fool you.

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ATU Local 1005: Union works with Metro Transit to improve safety for bus operators

Bus operators are among the public employees on the front lines serving their community during the COVID-19 crisis. Sadly, bus operators in other states have contracted the disease — and one has died — reported Ryan Timlin, president of Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1005.

Here in the Twin Cities, Timlin said Local 1005 has been working cooperatively with Metro Transit to implement safety measures to protect bus operators. “Right now, the company has been great,” he said. “They haven’t been resistant to trying to work with us, which thankfully has been the case.”

New safety measures include extensive cleaning of buses, trains and shelters and limiting the number of passengers.

In addition, “they’ve closed off the front of the bus and it’s rear-entry only to help reduce the exposure to our members,” Timlin said.

Workers with particular health vulnerabilities are being encouraged to get a doctor’s note and seek a COVID-19 leave. “Management is trying to work with people to protect them,” Timlin said.

With a decrease in ridership due to COVID-19 fears and limitations, Metro Transit has cut the frequency of bus and rail trips.

Despite those cuts, “everybody gets their 40 hours and the part-timers get 30 hours,” Timlin said. “They may have lost overtime but everybody is getting their regular rate of pay.”

“We’ve agreed that the drivers could do other things like cleaning buses and cleaning up things,” he said. “There’s also training going on in case they need to drive routes they’ve never driven before.”

“Our brothers and sisters are out there,” Timlin said. “They’re doing their best to help out… These are essential workers… It doesn’t get recognized until something drastic happens.”

Despite all the new precautions in the face of COVID-19, “because of the exposure, we’re expecting some of our members to catch it,” Timlin said.

AFSCME Local 34: Local 34 elections coming in April

Members of AFSCME Local 34 will be voting by mail in April in a contested election for Local 34 president.

The two candidates nominated in March for president were incumbent president Grace Baltich and Kay Powell, who currently serves as a member-at-large.

The vote will be by mail-in ballot. Beginning Monday, April 6, a ballot will be mailed to each member’s last known address. A self-addressed, stamped envelope and a balloting envelope will be provided to return the marked ballot.

Members will have until Monday, April 27 to return their marked ballot. Any ballots postmarked after April 27 will not be counted.

[Update: this timeline may be delayed due to COVID-19 disruptions]

All other nominees for Local 34 officers were elected by unanimous ballot at the March 4 general assembly. They included:

- Vice president: Tamika Hannah.
- Sergeant-at-arms: Ronisha Buckner.
- Co-chair steward: Remy Huersta-Stemper.
- Members Action Team coordinator: Yunuen Avila.
- Members-at-large: Kevin Chavis, Catherine McCoy, MiKayla Handley.

AFSCME Local 34: Hennepin County meets union requests for COVID-19 response

AFSCME Local 34, together with the five other Hennepin County locals, has successfully advocated with the Hennepin County administration and County Commissioners to win closing of buildings to the public and other steps to protect workers during the COVID-19 crisis.

“We really had to push for all these demands,” reported Grace Baltich, president of AFSCME Local 34, representing human services workers. “We think the County should have acted sooner than they did.”

The unions proposed closing public-facing buildings for the protection of workers and community members.

Result: As of March 17, all public-facing service buildings closed to the public through April 6.

The unions proposed immediate implementation of Emergency Pandemic Leave outside of employees’ accrued time for all employees who cannot work or who cannot work remotely due to illness, care for dependents through this crisis, or who are displaced from work due to building closures.

Result: The County will provide up to 80 hours of COVID-19 Leave when circumstances require an employee to be off work due to exposure or diagnosis of COVID-19 for the employee or one of their family or household members resulting in self-isolation or self-quarantine.

The unions proposed suspension of all non-critical face to face visits.

Result: All non-critical face to face visits have been suspended, and pre-screening criteria established.

The unions proposed all staff in non-critical jobs be allowed to work from home or work remotely.

Result: As of March 20, all workers except those in a list of critical jobs are working from home with pay.

Baltich remained concerned about the lack of personal protective equipment for child protection workers and adult protection workers, who still need to do emergency home visits, lacking even hand sanitizer and gloves.

AFSCME locals continue to push for additional safety measures (see below).

AFSCME Local 2822: Unions advocate for more protections for Hennepin County workers

As the Labor Review went to press, Hennepin County had closed all public-facing services at its human service centers, licensing service centers, and libraries through April 6 — in response to requests from the County’s six AFSCME locals (see above).

AFSCME Local 2822, representing clerical workers, and the other locals continue to urge Hennepin County Commissioners to approve strong worker protections, including:

- Double-time hazard pay for all workers who are essential and cannot work from home;
- Health screening, safety supplies and protocols for workers who are essential and cannot work from home;
- All subs and intermittent workers kept financially whole;
- All benefits, including medical insurance, to continue uninterrupted.

AFSCME locals also were demanding union representation on Hennepin County’s central COVID-19 Planning Committee and all COVID-19 Continuining Operations Planning Committees.

To contact your Hennepin County Commissioner to urge support for the proposals advocated by AFSCME, visit www.hennepin.us/your-government/leadership/find-commissioner.

Bakers Local 22:

Members classified as Tier 2 Emergency Workers in Minnesota

By the executive order of Minnesota Governor Tim Walz, food distribution workers are classified as Tier 2 Emergency workers, including members of Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers Local 22.

The BCTGM Local 22’s Facebook page commented, “while your kids’ heroes might be Batman or Superman, some of the real heroes these days are our very own hard-working Local 22 Members. They are working long hours making us all bakery products, pasta… to keep food on our tables.”

Local 22 also reported that several employers have stepped up to create action plans to keep production going as safely as possible, as well as coming up with ways to give members opportunities to be better equipped to financially handle a temporary shutdown situation until they get facilities decontaminated and back up running.

“Members have stepped up everywhere, working extra hours to ensure that they can supply food products everywhere that is needed to keep up with the demand driven by people stockpiling groceries,” Local 22 said. “It’s nice to see that they are getting appreciation from the employers.”

Boilermakers Local 647:

Monthly member meetings canceled for March, April, May

The monthly membership meetings for Boilermakers Local 647 have been canceled for March, April, and May by the direction of Boilermakers international president Newton Jones.

Jones noted that guidance from the Centers for Disease Control recommended that people not gather in groups of more than ten people.

Jones also advised, “you will receive further instructions on how to conduct the nomination and election of officers in a fashion which preserves the rights of our members to cast a secret ballot while also protecting their health. You will not be required to read the Election Instructions in March, April and May.”

IATSE Local 13:

COVID-19 theatre and event venue closings hitting union hard

Just a few months ago, members of Local 13 of the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees shared in a festive celebration the local’s 100th anniversary. “Last year we had over 1,200 people who made some money working under a Local 13 contract,” reported Matt Terwilliger, Local 13 business agent.

Then came COVID-19. “Thursday, March 12 we had the first show canceled for Friday the 13th,” Terwilliger said. “That was the domino that got it all started. Over the next 36 hours… every other show that had been scheduled canceled.”

Theaters across the Twin Cities as well as the Minneapolis Convention Center and major sports arenas have gone dark, putting almost all Local 13 members out of work.

“Everyone who works under a Local 13 contract is eligible for unemployment,” Terwilliger said. “Right now their job is to file for unemployment insurance.”

For Local 13 members, filing can be more difficult because “a lot of our workers might have as many as 25 employers in a year,” Terwilliger noted. “We can give them a list of everyone they worked for in the last 18 months.”

LOCAL UNION NEWS page 10

www.minneapolisunions.org
continued from page 9

But entering that information into the state’s online unemployment insurance application is difficult. Attempting that process, Terwilliger said, about one-half of his members have reported that the system crashes on them as they try to enter multiple employers. And, he added, “with the extra load on the system, it’s that much worse.”

Nobody knows at this time when shows and bands will start touring again or when professional sports will resume or when convention business will return.

“It’s going to be quite a while before we get back to our line of work,” Terwilliger said.

OPEIU Local 12: Members win workplace protections at HealthPartners

As the COVID-19 crisis grew more acute, members of Office and Professional Employees International Union Local 12 who work at HealthPartners clinics advocated for — and won — increased workplace protections.

The union’s Facebook page reported March 27: “Victory! After increased pressure from our members, co-workers and the community, HealthPartners has agreed to allow front-line staff to wear masks! Over 1,000 people have signed our petition to the CEO which made a difference. We have many remaining concerns (hazard pay, paid leave, and work at home policies among others) but this is a step in the right direction. When we fight, we win!”

Local 12 launched the petition drive on Facebook March 19, addressed to HealthPartners CEO Andrea Walsh.

The petition made seven demands, stating “we need our leaders to protect and support us.”

“Some workplaces are at risk of running out of supplies. And some co-workers are being told not to use gloves or masks,” said Kelsie Anderson, a HealthPartners employee and the vice president of OPEIU Local 12. “This is not the time to worry about the corporate bottom line, but instead our workers’ and patients’ well-being as we face this crisis.”

Pipefitters Local 539: Metro Allocation Meeting rescheduled to May 6

In response to the COVID-19 public health emergency, the Pipefitters Local 539 monthly union meeting and Metro Allocation Meeting planned for April 1 has been canceled. The new date will be May 6. The Residential and St. Cloud Allocation Meeting dates will not change. Information on all the allocation meetings has been sent out in the mail.

Twin Cities Musicians Union: Shutdown of music venues sidelines musicians and Minnesota Orchestra cancels tour to Vietnam, South Korea

From Orchestra Hall to the Hennepin Theatre District to local bars and nightclubs, COVID-19 closures have stopped public performances by members of the Twin Cities Musicians Union.

“The hardest thing is that it happened so fast,” commented Dave Graf, secretary-treasurer for TC MU Local 30-73. He described an “avalanche” of cancellations that took place in just a week. Some organizations — like the Minnesota Opera Orchestra — have canceled their entire season. The union is negotiating to get those musicians paid, Graf said. “A situation like this does not remove the responsibility of the employer to pay the members.

Members of the Minnesota Orchestra and St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, who are protected by their collective bargaining agreement, are still being paid. Graf said. The Minnesota Orchestra announced March 27 that it was canceling a planned tour to Vietnam and South Korea this summer. As the Labor Review went to press, the Minnesota Orchestra had canceled all local concerts through April 24. Apart from the region’s major orchestras, “it’s very hard because a lot of our members rely on a combination of lots of different jobs,” Graf said. “A lot of it is 1099 work, it’s not W2 work.”

“Musicians are a pretty creative bunch, they’re adapting to changing circumstances,” Graf said. Musicians who also teach private lessons are teaching their students via Skype and other online tools. Musicians are offering living room performances online and taking tips via PayPal.

No doubt, however, “it’s still going to be a challenging time,” Graf said. He’s also worried about some of the local music venues, both for-profit and non-profit. “I wouldn’t be surprised if we see some of them go out of business.”

With COVID-19 shutdowns looming, the Minnesota Orchestra performed March 13 at Orchestra Hall for a live broadcast on Minnesota Public Radio — with no audience attending. Visit minnesotaochestra.org for a link to listen to the concert, featuring works by Rachmaninoff and Shostakovich;

UNITE HERE Local 17: COVID-19 closings put almost all local hotel workers out of work

The Twin Cities hospitality industry is reeling from COVID-19 shut-downs.

“The vast majority of our hotel membership is not working right now,” reported Sheig Freeberg, secretary-treasurer of UNITE HERE Local 17. “Most of our folks are looking to unemployment.”

“Some of our hotels are completely closed,” Freeberg said, while a few are operating at a very reduced level, with maybe only one or two housekeepers still working. “All of the food and beverage [services] in our hotels are completely shut down,” Freeberg added.

“We have been asking the hotels to cover health insurance for the members,” Freeberg reported. Some hotels are agreeing but some are not, he said.

At the MSP airport, where Local 17 members prepare and deliver meals for in-flight meals, Freeberg said “about 90 percent of Skychefs has been laid off.”

Inside the airport itself, he said, “the airport still has food and beverage but its extremely limited. People are beginning to get laid-off.”

Additional help for hospitality industry workers who are filing for unemployment insurance also is in the works.

“We will be having a hospitality industry relief fund that will be partially staffed by our staff and run by Working Partnerships of the Minneapolis Regional Labor Federation,” Freeberg said. “We are working as fast as possible to get that off the ground for folks.”

The hospitality relief fund will be a joint effort by UNITE HERE Local 17, IATSE Local 13, and the MRLF.

For more information about the hospitality relief fund, e-mail Andie Whitaker at andie@workingpartnerships.org.

Sources: Minneapolis Labor Review and local union reporting.

Next deadline: April 8. To submit a story idea or news item, contact 612-379-4725 or e-mail laborreview@minneapolisunions.org.
**Office Moving**

Just a reminder that the Local 292 main office and hiring hall will be moving to our new location (6700 W. Broadway Ave., Brooklyn Park, MN 55428). The office will be closed and we will be moving Friday, April 24 and Monday, April 27. The office will re-open at the new location on Tuesday, April 28.

**Safety**

Brothers and Sisters, this is a reminder: don’t work on energized circuits or equipment unless it’s absolutely necessary. If you are required to or choose to work on energized circuits or equipment, please remember to wear the proper arc flash gear required by NFPA 70e. Following the NFPA 70e requirements and wearing the proper arc flash PPE can save you from a serious injury or even save your life. Be safe out there, not just for you, but for your co-workers and your family that wants to last Friday of each month.

**Wanted**

- Old coins, collections, bullion, paper money, gold coins, proof sets, mint sets, etc. Anything from pennies to paper. Best of all, I’ll pay cash and come to you. Please call Dick at 612-986-2566.
- Old and broken out-board motors, old gas engines and chainsaws, also engine-related items like old spark plugs, tools, gas and oil cans, etc. Tom, 763-785-4031.

Remember to send in your mailing label with your ad!
Women Building Success

Third annual awards ceremony celebrates women in the trades

By Steve Share, Labor Review editor

MINNEAPOLIS — Waiting for this year’s Women Building Success awards ceremony to begin, Sheet Metal Workers Local 10 member Cassie Stransky shared how joining a Building Trades union 20 years ago changed her life.

“Back then, Stransky was working in retail sales. But a friend of her dad was in the Sheet Metal Workers union, along with his three sons, and she learned that the union was beginning to recruit women, too.

“I’m one of the three women who started the women’s committee for the Sheet Metal Workers,” she said. At that time, she recalled, the union had a dozen women members. Now, she said, the number has grown to 40-50.

“I’m a single mother,” Stransky shared. “I have my own mortgage I’m paying for. I can take vacations. I have good benefits. I’m not worried about being a single mother. I can provide for my child. I don’t have to worry about living paycheck to paycheck.”

A roomful of women with their own stories about finding their way into a career in the Building Trades gathered at Surly Brewing February 26 for the third annual Women Building Success awards.

This year’s call for nominations resulted in 36 nominees from 15 different unions — the most nominations so far.

“We were flooded with so many nomination letters,” said Tasha Lawrence, member of Plumbers Local 34 and Women Building Success board member. “This shows we have a lot of great women in the industry.”

Representatives of the nominating unions introduced the award-winners and shared some of each woman’s personal stories and accomplishments.

The winners:

- For “Apprentice of the Year,” Megan Ringwelski, Sprinkler Fitters Local 417. An honorable mention award was presented to Rachel Malmer, IBEW Local 110.
- For “Journey Worker of the Year,” Clara Schiller, Pipefitters-Steamfitters Local 455. An honorable mention award went to Derra Range, Laborers Local 563.
- For “Advocate of the Year,” Connie Smallman, Operating Engineers Local 49. An award for honorable mention was presented to Amy Peterson, International Union of Painters and Allied Trades.

This year’s event featured remarks by special guests Peggy Flanagan, Minnesota’s Lieutenant Governor, and Nancy Leppink, Commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry.

“I do know what it’s like to be in a male-dominated field,” Flanagan confided. “You are the right woman for the job, no matter what people say,” Flanagan emphasized. “I am here to say, keep going, we need you in this work. We need you to bring other women into this work.”

She added: “I firmly believe rooms like this are going to change the world.”

Women Building Success encourages women who are working in the Building Trades to share their stories. Send an e-mail to sistersinthebrotherhoodmn@gmail.com.