Member mobilization, Cub strike threaten win contract gains for UFCW members

MAPLE GROVE – A last-minute settlement averted a two-day Unfair Labor Practice strike over the Easter holiday weekend at 33 UNFI-owned Cub grocery stores by 3,000 members of United Food and Commercial Workers Local 663. Union members voted overwhelmingly April 11 to ratify a new contract with UNFI-owned Cub stores, winning important gains for the grocery workers who kept working at great personal risk through the COVID-19 pandemic.

“The wins in the UNFI-Cub contract came after weeks of Local 663 members taking action, from informational picketing outside stores, to a 33-store walk-out, to marching on the boss in stores, to marching in the streets of Uptown in Minneapolis March 25 — a march that went from a Lunds & Byerly’s store to a Kowalski’s store and then on to a Cub store.

“This year’s contract campaign was like nothing I’ve ever seen,” said Dave Mueller, a produce worker at Cub’s Uptown store. “I’ve been on the bargaining committee six times, and we’re so much more powerful than we ever were before. This was the most encompassing rank and file experience I’ve ever had the privilege to be a part of.”

By the spring of 2024, the two-year UNFI-Cub contract will provide average raises of $2.50 to $3.50 per hour.

“ Raises are even bigger for more than 300 retail specialists like me, who will be converted to classified assistants,” said Sami Moll, a deli worker at the Chanhassen Cub Foods and bargaining committee member. “Some of us will be making $5 to $8 more an hour by this time next year, which is phenomenal.”

“Promises made, promises kept!” said Souad Sami, a deli worker at the Rockford Road Cub store in Plymouth. “We were able to make sure our pension and our retirement are secure.”

The UNFI-Cub contract includes no increases for worker healthcare costs and also establishes what the union called a “landmark” safety committee.

As the Labor Review went to press April 20, UFCW Local 663 negotiations continued with Lunds & Byerlys and also with Kowalski’s.

Saturday, May 13: Place bag of non-perishable food items by your mailbox for Letter Carriers food drive

MINNEAPOLIS — Mark your calendar for Saturday, May 13: That’s the date for this year’s “Stamp Out Hunger” food drive organized by the National Association of Letter Carriers.

If you can, fill a grocery bag with non-perishable food items and place it by your mailbox early that morning.

Your letter carrier or a community volunteer will pick it up and the food will be donated to a local foodshelf.

“The food pantries right now really need the support of our food drive,” said Latasha Mccaleb, who is food drive coordinator for NALC Branch 9 in Minneapolis.

Mccaleb, Richfield, also is a full-time letter carrier and seven-year member of Branch 9.

“The increased [grocery] prices are putting a weight on a lot of families,” Mccaleb said.

In addition, beginning in March, Minnesota households who received extra help with grocery costs during the COVID-19 pandemic from the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program saw their monthly benefits reduced to pre-pandemic levels.

“Food insecurity has ballooned nationwide in response to social inequity, COVID, inflation, and the discontinuation of COVID-related government support,” notes a new annual report by one local emergency food program.

Joyce Uptown Foodshelf.

The Minneapolis-area Letter Carriers food drive is coming back this year after a three-year interruption resulting from the pandemic.

The food drive this year will be much more decentralized, with local post offices collecting donated food and delivering it directly to local foodshelves.

“Volunteers are at the top of what we need,” Branch 9 food drive coordinator Latasaha Mccaleb said, adding that each local post office will host a barbecue May 13 for volunteers.

To volunteer, contact the NALC Branch 9 office at 612-781-9858 or contact Latasha Mccaleb directly at latasham9ncal.com.
Due to higher interest rates, workers are having a hard time accessing sustainable forms of borrowing.
May 1: March on International Workers Day for workers rights begins on E. Lake Street

MINNEAPOLIS — May 1 is celebrated across the globe as International Workers Day with protests, rallies and marches.

In Minneapolis, the Minnesota Immigration Rights Action Committee and Minneapolis Workers United plan a march.

To join the march, meet up Monday, May 1 at 4:00 p.m. outside the Minneapolis Public Schools Adult Education South Campus building at 2015 E. Lake Street.

A list of endorsing unions included: AFSCME Locals 2822, 3800, and 3937; Minneapolis Federation of Teachers; SEIU Healthcare Minnesota & Iowa.

For more information, visit facebook.com/MNWorkersUnited.

May 6: MN State Retiree Council plans annual ‘Fun(d)raiser’ with food, music, prizes, more

MAPLEWOOD — The Minnesota State Retiree Council’s 18th annual “Fun(d)raiser” will offer free food and music along with hourly raffles, a silent auction, and other ways to win prizes.

The all-ages event will be Saturday, May 6 from 3:00-7:00 p.m. at the Sheet Metal Workers Local 10 union hall, 1681 Cope Avenue in Maplewood.

Admission and parking are free.

Proceeds from the event will support the work of the Council to build retired workers’ power and to advocate for a secure and dignified retirement for all.

A drawing for major cash prizes will conclude the event. Winners need not be present to win that drawing. Three raffle tickets for that drawing cost $5.00 and can be purchased from Retiree Council board members or by calling the Council office at 651-227-7647 ext. 121.

The Minnesota State Retiree Council, AFL-CIO is the umbrella organization of union retiree clubs and local unions with retirees. It provides retired union members and spouse official representation within the Minnesota AFL-CIO and enables retired trade unionists to speak with a unified voice on public policy issues.

May 13: Put a bag of non-perishable food by your mailbox for Letter Carriers food drive

MINNEAPOLIS — Participate in the nation’s largest one-day food drive Saturday, May 13 by putting a bag of non-perishable food items by your mailbox early in the day. Your letter carrier or a community volunteer will pick it up.

Food collected will be distributed to local emergency food shelves.

For Branch 9 of the National Association of Letter Carriers in Minneapolis, the “Stamp Out Hunger” food drive is back as an in-person event this year for the first time since the COVID pandemic began.

Branch 9 has put out a call for volunteers to help with the food drive.

See story page 1 for more information about volunteering.

May 20: Join with Education Minnesota for a rally for public education at MN State Capitol

SAINT PAUL — Education Minnesota members from across the state will gather at the State Capitol Saturday, May 20 for a rally for public education.

The rally will begin at 1:00 p.m. in the Capitol rotunda.

With the legislature scheduled to adjourn May 22, the rally will be a final call to the legislature to fund education, solve the school staffing crisis and provide for student needs.

Education Minnesota members and their invited guests who register in advance can get a lunch provided.

Education Minnesota members can register at https://edmn.me/may20.

Sign-making and lunch for those who register will be available at 12 noon.

Education Minnesota members’ mileage will be reimbursed.

Rally organizers encourage people to wear blue!

For more information about the rally, contact Education Minnesota member mobilization specialist Paul Winkelaar at paul.winkelaar@edmn.org.

Hunt? Fish?

The July issue of the Labor Review will preview the annual Game Fair in Anoka County and continue our annual tradition of featuring union members discussing their love of hunting or fishing.

If you or someone you know would like to share stories and photos, please call editor Steve Share ASAP at 612-715-2667 or e-mail laborreview@minneapolisunions.org.

116th Anniversary Issue: May 27, 2023

Discounted ad rates available

FFI or to advertise:

612-715-2667 or laborreview@minneapolisunions.org

MINNEAPOLIS — May 1 is celebrated across the globe as International Workers Day with protests, rallies and marches.

In Minneapolis, the Minnesota Immigration Rights Action Committee and Minneapolis Workers United plan a march.

To join the march, meet up Monday, May 1 at 4:00 p.m. outside the Minneapolis Public Schools Adult Education South Campus building at 2015 E. Lake Street.

A list of endorsing unions included: AFSCME Locals 2822, 3800, and 3937; Minneapolis Federation of Teachers; SEIU Healthcare Minnesota & Iowa.

For more information, visit facebook.com/MNWorkersUnited.

May 6: MN State Retiree Council plans annual ‘Fun(d)raiser’ with food, music, prizes, more

MAPLEWOOD — The Minnesota State Retiree Council’s 18th annual “Fun(d)raiser” will offer free food and music along with hourly raffles, a silent auction, and other ways to win prizes.

The all-ages event will be Saturday, May 6 from 3:00-7:00 p.m. at the Sheet Metal Workers Local 10 union hall, 1681 Cope Avenue in Maplewood.

Admission and parking are free.

Proceeds from the event will support the work of the Council to build retired workers’ power and to advocate for a secure and dignified retirement for all.

A drawing for major cash prizes will conclude the event. Winners need not be present to win that drawing. Three raffle tickets for that drawing cost $5.00 and can be purchased from Retiree Council board members or by calling the Council office at 651-227-7647 ext. 121.

The Minnesota State Retiree Council, AFL-CIO is the umbrella organization of union retiree clubs and local unions with retirees. It provides retired union members and spouse official representation within the Minnesota AFL-CIO and enables retired trade unionists to speak with a unified voice on public policy issues.

May 13: Put a bag of non-perishable food by your mailbox for Letter Carriers food drive

MINNEAPOLIS — Participate in the nation’s largest one-day food drive Saturday, May 13 by putting a bag of non-perishable food items by your mailbox early in the day. Your letter carrier or a community volunteer will pick it up.

Food collected will be distributed to local emergency food shelves.

For Branch 9 of the National Association of Letter Carriers in Minneapolis, the “Stamp Out Hunger” food drive is back as an in-person event this year for the first time since the COVID pandemic began.

Branch 9 has put out a call for volunteers to help with the food drive.

See story page 1 for more information about volunteering.

May 20: Join with Education Minnesota for a rally for public education at MN State Capitol

SAINT PAUL — Education Minnesota members from across the state will gather at the State Capitol Saturday, May 20 for a rally for public education.

The rally will begin at 1:00 p.m. in the Capitol rotunda.

With the legislature scheduled to adjourn May 22, the rally will be a final call to the legislature to fund education, solve the school staffing crisis and provide for student needs.

Education Minnesota members and their invited guests who register in advance can get a lunch provided.

Education Minnesota members can register at https://edmn.me/may20.

Sign-making and lunch for those who register will be available at 12 noon.

Education Minnesota members’ mileage will be reimbursed.

Rally organizers encourage people to wear blue!

For more information about the rally, contact Education Minnesota member mobilization specialist Paul Winkelaar at paul.winkelaar@edmn.org.

Hunt? Fish?

The July issue of the Labor Review will preview the annual Game Fair in Anoka County and continue our annual tradition of featuring union members discussing their love of hunting or fishing.

If you or someone you know would like to share stories and photos, please call editor Steve Share ASAP at 612-715-2667 or e-mail laborreview@minneapolisunions.org.

116th Anniversary Issue: May 27, 2023

Discounted ad rates available

FFI or to advertise:

612-715-2667 or laborreview@minneapolisunions.org
May 24: Union Job and Resource Fair will include on-site interviews with employers

SAINT PAUL — The seventh annual Union Job and Resource Fair organized by the Eastside Freedom Library is set for Wednesday, May 24 from 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

The event takes place at the IBEW Local 110 union hall, 1330 Conway Street in Saint Paul.

The goal is to provide information about pathways to union careers and to connect individuals with potential employers. Job applications and on-site job interviews will be available.

Employers or vendors need to register for booth space by May 18.

Call 651-207-4926 or e-mail info@eastsidefreedomlibrary.org for more information.

June 1: Women Building Success plans annual awards night to recognize women in trades

WHITE BEAR LAKE — The annual Women Building Success awards night to celebrate women in the building trades is coming Thursday, June 1 from 4:00-8:00 p.m. at Kellerman’s Event Center, 2222 4th Street in White Bear Lake.

Awards will be presented for Apprentice of the Year, Journeyworker of the Year, and Women’s Advocate of the Year.

Nomination forms are due May 17. The June 1 program features social hour from 4:00-5:00 p.m., appetizers served at 5:15 p.m., awards ceremony at 6:00 p.m.

Individuals seeking tickets should reach out to their local union.

Visit womenbuildingsuccess.org for nominations forms and additional information.

‘Fare For All’ offers savings of 40 percent on groceries at monthly community pop-up sales

MINNEAPOLIS — Stretch your grocery dollars by visiting a community location for a Fare For All pop-up food sale, which offers discounted grocery packages.

Fare For All offers a savings of 40 percent on grocery items.

Fare For All’s regular offerings include a produce pack for $10, a mini meat pack for $11, a combo produce and mini meat pack for $20, a mega meat pack for $25. Other monthly specials also are available.

Fare For All is open to everyone and has no income requirements.

Cash, credit cards, debit cards, and EBT cards are accepted. Checks are not accepted. No need to call or register in advance — just stop in to shop!

Here is the schedule for May for Fare For All’s sites in the Minneapolis Regional Labor Federation’s seven-county region, listed alphabetically by city:

- Anoka, Thursday, May 25, 4:00-6:00 p.m., Zion Lutheran Church, 1601 S. 4th Ave.
- Blaine, Thursday, May 18, 3:00-5:00 p.m., Christ Lutheran Church, 641 89th Ave. NE.
- Bloomington, Friday, May 19, 11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m., Creekside Community Center, 9801 Penn Ave. So.
- Buffalo, Tuesday, May 9, 4:00-6:00 p.m., Zion Lutheran Church, 1200 Highway 25 South.
- Chaska, Thursday, May 25, 4:00-6:00 p.m., Crown of Glory Lutheran Church, 1141 Cardinal St.
- Fridley, Friday, May 26, 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 noon, Fridley Community Center, 6085 7th Street NE.
- Golden Valley, Friday, May 26, 11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m., Animal Humane Society, 845 Meadow Lane N.
- Hutchinson, Thursday, May 11, 3:30-5:30 p.m., Oak Heights Church, 1398 South Grade Road SW.
- Minneapolis, Friday, May 12, 11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m., Laborers Local 563 union hall, 901 14th Ave. NE. (one-half block west of Central Ave. on 14th Ave. NE).
- New Hope, Wednesday, May 17, 3:00-5:00 p.m., St. Joseph Parish Center, 8701 36th Ave. N.
- Norwood Young America, Thursday, May 4, 3:00-5:00 p.m., All Saints Lutheran Church, 511 Merger St.
- Richfield, Tuesday, May 23, 1:00-3:00 p.m., Richfield Community Center, 7000 Nicollet Ave. So.
- St. Louis Park, Wednesday, May 17, 4:00-6:00 p.m., Vista Lutheran Church, 4003 Wooddale Ave. So.

The Fare For All sale at the Laborers Hall in northeast Minneapolis is hosted by Working Partnerships, the community services arm of the Minneapolis Regional Labor Federation, AFL-CIO.

See www.fareforall.org for more information and dates for all 30-plus locations.

More Events
FLIGHT ATTENDANTS, TEAMSTERS, MACHINISTS COORDINATE DELTA ORGANIZING DRIVE

Delta is the only U.S.-based mainline carrier where flight attendants, fleet service workers and mechanics are not represented by a union — for now.

By Michael Moore, editor, Saint Paul Union Advocate

SAINT PAUL — The largest private-sector union organizing campaign in the world came to Saint Paul last month, as three unions seeking to bring together 45,000 Delta Air Lines ramp workers, mechanics and flight attendants rallied their supporters at the Saint Paul Labor Center.

The April 15 event drew international union leaders from the Association of Flight Attendants (AFA-CWA), the Machinists (IAM) and the Teamsters, as well as pro-union Delta workers from Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport and Delta outposts in New York, Atlanta and Detroit.

Delta pilots are unionized, but the remaining 80 percent of its workforce is not. Delta is the only U.S.-based mainline carrier where flight attendants, fleet service workers and mechanics are not represented by a union — for now.

“It is high time that we put a contract in the back pocket of every single Delta Air Lines worker,” said AFA-CWA president Sara Nelson, whose speech drew a thunderous ovation from more than 150 people inside the union hall.

Nelson’s union has supported organizing campaigns at Delta before, as have the Machinists and Teamsters. Sometimes those campaigns overlapped.

But last November the three unions announced an agreement to coordinate their efforts under the “Organize and Fly Together” campaign, with the Machinists supporting Delta fleet workers, the Teamsters supporting mechanics and AFA-CWA supporting flight attendants.

Teamsters Local 120 president Tom Erickson, who serves on international president Sean O’Brien’s executive board, said he believes a coordinated campaign — in any industry — offers workers a better chance of making collective gains.

“Coordinated bargaining is not a novel idea,” Erickson said. “Finally, we’re waking up as unions across the company. This coalition should have happened a long time ago. It’s what we used to do back in the 40s and 50s and 60s, and now we’re going to do it again.”

Nelson led the crowd in chanting “I’ve got your back!” as the rally drew to a close.

“We have a lot of differences, and that is what makes us strong,” Nelson said. “But what we have in common is what brings us together. We all need to take care of our families. We all need access to health care. We all need a dignified retirement. We all need to take care of ourselves and our families when we are sick, especially when we get sick on the job.”

Delta is earning massive profits, and its executives are pocketing more of those gains than at other, more unionized airlines. Delta CEO Ed Bastian’s pay was...
Governor Walz urges Paid Family and Medical Leave legislation

By Steve Share, Labor Review editor

SAINT PAUL — “We don’t know when, we don’t know why, but it is clear all of us will need time to care for ourselves or a loved one.” That was the message shared by Cathy McLeer, AARP Minnesota’s state director, as she emceed a March 21 rally in the State Capitol rotunda organized by Minnesotans for Paid Family and Medical Leave.

Passing paid family leave is one of the top legislative priorities for the Minnesota AFL-CIO, one of three organizations chairing Minnesotans for Paid Family & Medical Leave, a coalition of more than 70 organizations, including 20 labor organizations.

The legislation — House File 2 and Senate File 2 — was working its way through the legislature’s committee structure as the Labor Review went to press April 20.

The legislation would create a state-administered paid leave insurance program, funded equally by employer and employee contributions.

As envisioned, the program would provide up to 12 weeks of partial wage replacement for family leave and medical leave.

“This bill will change lives,” said Haylee Hilton, field director for the Minnesota AFL-CIO, addressing the March 21 rally.

“There is no reason this legislation shouldn’t have broad bi-partisan support,” said Governor Tim Walz, who spoke at the rally, calling the legislation “morally the right thing to do… but also economically.”

Currently, only 13 percent of private sector workers have access to paid family and medical leave.

And people of color are less likely to have access to paid leave as well.

Speakers at the rally included everyday Minnesotans who shared heart-wrenching stories about the impact of the lack of paid family and medical leave: someone who struggled to work and care for an elderly parent, a small business owner who tried to help a sick employee, a woman who had to go back to work soon after her baby was stillborn.

Senator Alice Mann (DFL-Edina), chief Senate author of the bill, who is also a physician, said “it’s going to improve the economic health of families across Minnesota.”

“Doing what’s best for our workers means we’re lifting everyone up,” said Representative Cedrick Frazier (DFL-New Hope), one of the bill’s House authors. “Everybody should have the opportunity not to have financial ruin if they get sick.”

For more information: paidleavemn.org

Labor-backed legislation continues moving forward in MN House and Senate

By Steve Share, Labor Review editor

SAINT PAUL — As the Labor Review went to press April 20, labor-backed legislation continued to move forward in both the Minnesota House and Senate.

“You might have noticed — things are getting done around here,” said Governor Tim Walz, speaking at a March 21 rally organized by Minnesotans for Paid Family & Medical Leave coalition.

“Paid Family and Medical Leave will get done,” Walz said. That legislation — House File 2 and Senate File 2 — is one of the top priorities for the Minnesota AFL-CIO.

Here’s a brief rundown of the status of other labor-backed legislation at press time — with the caveat that things can change quickly at the legislature:

- **Transportation Funding.** The Minnesota House passed a historic transportation funding bill April 19, providing $8.8 billion in funding for roads, bridges, and transit systems and creating several new dedicated sources of funding. The Laborers union in particular celebrated passing of this bill. In the Senate, however, some dedicated funding measures in the House bill — like a metro area sales tax and a fee applied to deliveries — appear to lack support and may be decreased or dropped.

- **Keeping Nurses At the Bedside Act.** This legislation, urged by the Minnesota Nurses Association, would give nurses a voice in ensuring safe staffing levels. The bill passed the Senate as part of the Health and Human Services Omnibus Bill.

- **Home Care Workers Contract.** In passing of the omnibus Human Services appropriation bill, the Senate also included funding for SEIU Healthcare’s historic home care contract that covers more than 20,000 home care workers across the state. “The contract includes a 25 percent increase of the wage floor to $20 per hour in 2025… and one-time $1,000 retention bonus to reward long-time caregivers,” SEIU Healthcare Minnesota and Iowa reported.

- **Unemployment Insurance for Hourly School Staff.** The Minnesota House has passed the omnibus education finance bill, which includes a change to state law so that hourly school staff who work in K-12 schools and college staff whose jobs don’t run through the summer are eligible for unemployment insurance. This fix to state law has been a top priority for SEIU Local 284, whose members struggle to survive in summer months.

- **Refrinery Safety.** This legislation, backed by Teamsters Local 120, passed the Senate floor April 17 with a bi-partisan vote of 39 yes and 27 no. The bill would require petroleum refinery workers to complete an apprentice and training program to ensure worksite safety.

- **Ban Private Prisons.** A priority for AFSCME Council 5, the House passed legislation to ban private prisons in Minnesota. The bill currently is in the Senate’s Judiciary and Public Safety committee.
Workers urge support for ban on ‘captive audience’ meetings

By Michael Moore, editor, Saint Paul Union Advocate

SAINT PAUL — After the pandemic hit three years ago, Patrick Kennedy and his co-workers at a local community mental health center became concerned about abrupt and unilateral changes management began making at their workplace.

Talk of forming a union soon turned into a full-fledged organizing campaign with Office and Professional Employees Local 12. Sixteen months later, workers were poised to vote in a union election, with public support from nearly 60 percent of the agency’s 130 workers.

That’s when the “mandatory information sessions” with their bosses began, Kennedy said.

“In one meeting we were told that wage increases were just about to roll out, but could be delayed another year if we were to unionize,” he said. “In another, the CEO assured us that a union would only harm our clients.”

The meetings, according to Kennedy, a licensed social worker, had a “shocking” impact on his co-workers organizing drive. By the time workers voted, support for unionizing had dropped to 42 percent, and the effort failed.

Testifying before a Minnesota House committee last month, Kennedy and other workers urged lawmakers to support legislation that would make it illegal for employers to compel their employees to attend meetings where bosses promote religious or political views, including views on collective bargaining.

“The person who signs your paycheck should not be allowed to force you, under threat of discipline or retaliation, to listen to their opinions about your legally protected right to choose whether to join a union,” Kennedy said.

The proposed legislation, which has passed through committees in both the House and Senate, has become a top priority for unions this legislative session, along with paid family leave, the infrastructure jobs bill, earned sick and safe time and fully-funded public services.

So-called “captive audience meetings” have come under scrutiny in recent years from policymakers and analysts looking to understand why union membership has remained flat despite polling that shows interest in forming unions at a near-record high.

Minnesota AFL-CIO president Bernie Burnham, head of the state’s largest labor federation, said captive audience meetings have become even more common during a recent surge in organizing activity both in Minnesota and across the U.S. — employers use them in an estimated 90 percent of union elections, according to one study.

“These meetings have nothing to do with the actual jobs that workers do for an employer,” Burnham told legislators. “In fact, many workers describe them as raw intimidation.”

Minnesota lawmakers are not alone in seeking to protect workers’ right not to listen to unwanted political or religious speech. Connecticut passed a ban on captive audience meetings last year, and Oregon had one on the books for over a decade.

The National Labor Relations Board may soon act, too. A recent memo issued by NLRB general counsel Jennifer Abruzzo urged members to reverse the board’s precedent of allowing employers to force their workers to listen to anti-union speech, calling it a “license to coerce” and a “fundamental misunderstanding of employers’ speech rights.”

The Minnesota bill’s lead House author, Representative Kaela Berg (DFL-Burnsville), said employers would still be allowed to encourage workers to listen to their political or religious views if her bill becomes law. “If the employer wants to have that discussion with the employer, that’s great,” she said. “This just says it cannot be required, and you cannot be punished if you say that’s just not for me.”

That’s a right Kennedy and other workers who have experienced captive audience meetings can only wish they would have had.

Nate Krantz, who went through an organizing drive while working as a certified nursing assistant at a local health care facility, said lawmakers he “noticed that my heart-rate tracker on my Apple watch showed a spike in my heart rate each time I had to sit through one of those meetings.”

Jeff Schreiner, a member of Teamsters Local 120 who helped lead a 10-year organizing drive at Sysco in St. Cloud, said regular captive audience meetings created a “psychologically stressful” work environment, pitted workers against each other and spread misinformation.

“It’s almost like there’s a script that companies follow,” he said after listening to testimony from workers in other industries.

“Employers use mandatory meetings to unfairly influence workers,” Kennedy said. “If the meetings didn’t influence workers, they wouldn’t be happening.”

Six largest educator unions file to negotiate together, urge lawmakers to fully-fund education

By Michael Moore, editor, Saint Paul Union Advocate

SAINT PAUL — Last year educators in Minneapolis and St. Paul, embroiled in separate contract negotiations with their school districts, filed notice of their intent to strike on the same day.

This year educators from Minnesota’s six largest school districts — St. Paul, Minneapolis, Anoka-Hennepin, Osseo, Robbinsdale and Rosemount-Apple Valley-Eagan — filed requests to begin collective bargaining on the same day.

The message is clear, union members said at a March 17 State Capitol news conference hours after filing for negotiations: educators everywhere are in the fight for the schools their students deserve, and they are in it together.

“As the largest locals in the state, we are ready to advocate for our kids,” Minneapolis Federation of Teachers president Greta Callahan said. “If we can file together, we can do anything together.”

Combined, the six largest local educator unions represent 15,000 educators who serve roughly 20 percent of Minnesota’s K-12 student population. All are affiliated with Education Minnesota.

A key factor in educators’ contract negotiations set to play out in districts across the state over the coming months will be state funding, which has failed to keep up with rising costs over the last two decades. State aid to public schools is 11.8 percent lower, when adjusted for inflation, than it was in 2003.

Educators at the news conference called on lawmakers to allocate full funding for public schools.

“Minnesota has underfunded public education for decades, and we’re hoping that this group of legislators and this governor can put public education back on the right track,” said Tom Snyder, a member of Dakota County United Educators who teaches elementary students in Rosemount.

Full funding means investments in smaller class sizes, English-language learners, special education and student supports like counseling and school nurses. It also means resources to keep students and staff safe, said Shantella Barnes, an educator at Journeys Secondary School in St. Paul and vice president of the St. Paul Federation of Educators.

Union members said state resources are also needed to attract and retain educators with good pay and benefits, and the supports they need to thrive in their jobs. Rosemount Middle School teacher Mike Larson said he has seen teachers’ workloads grow and become more complex over the course of his career. “I find myself in a profession where our young teachers are leaving after one to three years because they cannot believe how difficult this job has become,” he said.

“How can we compete in a society that demands more from our teachers but doesn’t give us the resources we need to do the job?”

State lawmakers appear poised to make the largest investment in public education in recent memory. The House omnibus education bill calls for an 11.2 percent increase in base funding over the next biennium, with $85 million set aside for student health supports and increased funding for school safety and special education supports.
Teachers, trades welcome win for Jordan school district referendum

JORDAN — With 876 “yes” votes and 660 “no” votes, voters in the Jordan school district approved a bond referendum April 11.

The vote result was welcome news for the district’s teachers union — Education Minnesota Jordan — and for local building trades unions, who worked along with a community group to help reach out to voters to urge support for the referendum.

The nearly $35 million bond referendum now will fund needed improvements for Jordan Elementary School and for Jordan High School, with the bulk of improvements at the elementary school.

“Education Minnesota Jordan members, along with a group of community members and other staff, participated in event tabling, making phone calls and a texting campaign. Additionally, we encouraged members to assist with getting district messaging out via social media,” reported Sara Sievers, Jordan resident, president of Education Minnesota Jordan and a special education teacher at Jordan High School.

The Laborers union took the lead among local building trades unions in helping to pass the referendum.

“LIUNA members volunteered, some for the first time, to call their neighbors in the Jordan area and were pleased most people were well-educated on the proposal and supported it,” said Adam Hutchens, local marketing director for the Laborers International Union of North America. “The Vote Yes committee did a great job connecting with the voters with calls, in-person events, and info flyers,” he added.

“We look forward to seeing family-supporting jobs and quality craftsmanship on this project, so the students and community can enjoy their facilities for years,” Hutchens said.

“A special thank you to our community for coming to the polls and supporting our students,” Sievers said.

“Also, thank you to Education Minnesota and the Minneapolis Regional Labor Federation for their support.”

In 2019, a bond referendum to build a completely new Jordan elementary school failed to pass. Construction for the newly-approved school improvements is expected to begin in spring 2024.

Delta organizing: Airline earns record profits, while CEO earns 26 percent more than peers

continued from page 5

An MSP-based Delta cargo employee, who attended the rally but asked not to be identified for fear of retaliation, said safety standards plummeted after Delta absorbed Northwest Airlines, which was heavily unionized, in 2008.

“When we had a union, they would actually train people to do things safely rather than be forced to work unsafe at Delta,” said the employee, who has 32 years of experience in the cargo department. “We get a lot more pressure now to just get the work done rather than to do it right.”

The safety net for workers who are injured on the job, he said, also disappeared after Delta took over.

“I’ve seen guys get hurt, and they’re forced to leave because they can’t do the work anymore,” he said. “With the union, guys would get rehab for their injuries, or there was a part of the contract where they would … put you into a different job. Now, there’s no such thing.”

“They don’t care about us,” the Delta employee said. “We’re a number.”

Scholarships

Apply by May 1 for MN AFL-CIO scholarships for high school seniors graduating in 2023

SAINT PAUL — May 1 is the application deadline for scholarships offered by the Minnesota AFL-CIO for high school seniors graduating in 2023.

Four scholarships of $1,000 each are available for students applying for college or university and one scholarship of $1,000 is available for students applying for vocational or technical school.

To be eligible, applicants must meet three requirements:

- be a union member or a dependent of a union member whose local union is affiliated with the Minnesota AFL-CIO;
- have a straight “B” average or better (2.0 in a 3.0 grade point system/3.0 in a 4.0 grade point system);
- attend a post-secondary institution located within the state of Minnesota.

Winners will be selected by the Minnesota AFL-CIO Education Committee. For more information or to download an application, visit https://mnafclio.org/about/scholarships-awards.

Apply by June 1 for Nellie Stone Johnson scholarships for racial/ethnic minority students

SAINT PAUL — June 1 is the application deadline for the Nellie Stone Johnson Scholarships offered to students who are members of a minority racial/ethnic group and who are a union member or the child, grandchild or spouse of a union member.

Scholarships range from $1,200 for part-time students and $2,500 for full-time students.

For more information, or to download an application form, visit nelliestone.org/scholarship-program.

Scholarship dinner: June 7

The 36th annual Nellie Stone Johnson Scholarship Dinner will be Wednesday, June 7 at the Doubletree by Hilton in Bloomington. Ticket purchase deadline is May 26. For more information, visit nelliestone.org/nsj-scholarship-dinner.
AFSCME Local 3937: President Mary Austin dies unexpectedly
Mary M. Austin, president of AFSCME Local 3937, passed away unexpectedly April 3.
AFSCME Local 3937 represents University of Minnesota Technical Employees, Austin’s “union family” at AFSCME locals 3937, 3800, 3801 and 3260 issued a statement on her legacy:

“Mary was a strong and powerful union leader, as well as a long-time leader on the Twin Cities campus, and sister campuses around Minnesota. She started working at the U in 1990 and has been both a clerical and technical employee in the School of Public Health Department of Epidemiology. Through her years in both bargaining units and both locals, she has touched many of our lives.

“For years, Mary would wear several different “hats” for the local, serving as president, treasurer, chief steward and contract negotiation team co-chair. She helped lead our union’s fight to protect the Child Development Center when the University Administration wanted to close it down. We not only kept it open, but expanded access. Mary has been on the strike line twice, and without fail, came up fighting. Mary was a fighter until her last breath — many of us had the pleasure of seeing Mary in-person at AFSCME’s Day on the Hill [March 28] and at a recent Member Action Team campaign planning meeting. Mary was committed not only to standing up for the rights of her fellow union members on the job, but was also a strong feminist and a passionate advocate for civil rights.

“Rest in Power, Mary. We will miss you. We will keep up the fight for everything you stood for, worked for and created.”

Bricklayers Local 1: Apprentice contest planned May 6
The local apprentice contest for Bricklayers and Allied Craftworkers Local 1 will take place Saturday, May 6.

The competition will run from 7:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., at the BAC Local 1 Apprenticeship Training Center, 5420 International Pkwy. in New Hope.

The contest will include brick, pointer-cleaner-caulkier (PCC), and tile apprentices competing against their peers for recognition as the top apprentice per year level and overall.

All members and their families are welcomed to watch the competition!

Carpenters Local 322: Apprentice Robert Alcure dies from injuries from fall
Carpenters Local 322 apprentice Robert Michael Alcure died from injuries from a fall at an Edina worksite February 21.

Alcure, 37, fell four stories at the Pentagon Village Apartments construction site at 4911 W. 77th St., according to news reports.

“Robert was halfway through his apprenticeship and had a gentle way and always seemed happy and grateful to be doing whatever he was doing,” commented Amanda Phillips, president of Local 322, in a Facebook post. “We are all collectively devastated for him and his family… The moment of silence honoring him at our local meeting… was sobering.”

Alcure, St. Paul, is survived by his mother Patricia Riceputo, his 13-year-old son, his partner Kaitlin Hughes, and his son’s mother Tara Alcure.

IATSE Local 13: IATSE Local 416 in Rochester merges with Twin Cities-based Local 13
Effective February 6, IATSE Local 416 in Rochester, Minnesota merged with Twin Cities-based IATSE Local 13.

“We’re looking to expand our membership base and our jurisdiction and to increase our signatories,” said Wendell Bell, Local 13 business agent.

IATSE — the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees — represents the workers who labor behind the scenes to produce live events at theaters, stadiums, convention centers and other event venues.

While the merger brought Local 13 only about 25 new members from Local 416, Bell reported, the merger is significant because Rochester is growing and both the Mayo Clinic and Mayo Civic Center are now IATSE Local 13 signatories.

Bell noted that the same company that manages US Bank Stadium in Minneapolis — ASM Global — also operates the Mayo Civic Center. “It’s very exciting to encompass that facility,” he said.

Workers will receive substantial increase in wages and improved working conditions, he said, while “we give the employer the best quality workers.”

Through the merger, Bell added, Local 13’s coverage now extends east to Eau Claire, Wisconsin and west to Worthington, Minnesota.

“We’ve created a ‘G List’ to accommodate Greater Minnesota,” he added, including north to Duluth and northwest to St. Cloud and even to Fargo, North Dakota.

As the live event industry recovers from the pandemic, “now is the time” for IATSE Local 13 to grow, Bell said.

IATSE Local 13:
Walker Art Center event staff ratify first-ever contract
After organizing with IATSE Local 13, the event staff at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis have ratified a “historic” first contract. “It’s the first contract Local 13 has ever had with the Walker after all the years both organizations have been around,” noted Wendell Bell, Local 13 business agent.

The impetus for event staff to organize came when the Walker Art Center’s LOCAL UNION NEWS page 10

Minneapolis Regional Retiree Council: Next meeting May 18
The next regular monthly meeting of the Minneapolis Regional Retiree Council, AFL-CIO will be a hybrid meeting — in person and by Zoom — Thursday, May 18 from 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Lunch will be provided for people in the in-person meeting after the meeting adjourns. The in-person meeting will be in Room 218 at the United Labor Centre, 312 Central Ave. SE, Minneapolis.

Parking will be reimbursed if you park in the Saint Anthony Public Parking Ramp (at the corner of 2nd St. SE and University Ave. SE), across University from the United Labor Centre building. Just park and when you come to the meeting we will give you a parking voucher.

To request the Zoom link for the May 18 meeting, or for more information about the Council, contact Graeme Allen, community and political organizer for the Minneapolis Regional Labor Federation, at 612-481-2144 or e-mail graeme@minneapolisunions.org.

ATU Local 1065 Retirees:
Meet first Wednesday of the month
The Southside Retirees of Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1005 are now meeting for breakfast the first Wednesday of the month at 8:00 a.m. at the Richfield VFW, 6715 Lake Shore Drive South, Richfield.

Carpenters Retirees:
Meet last Thursday of each month
Carpenters Retirees meet the last Thursday of each month at 10:00 a.m. at the North Central States Regional Council of Carpenters union hall, 710 Olive Street, St. Paul. Lunch follows the meeting.

IBEW Local 292 Retirees:
“Senior Sparkies” will meet May 9
The IBEW Local 292 Retirees — “Senior Sparkies” — will meet Tuesday, May 9 at IBEW Local 292’s union hall, 6700 West Broadway Ave. in Brooklyn Park. A buffet lunch will be served at 11:30 a.m. The meeting will begin at 12:30 p.m. We will have a guest speaker.

For more information, contact the IBEW Local 292 office at 612-379-1292.

IATSE Retirees:
Meet May 23 via Zoom and in-person
The Minneapolis Retired Teachers, Chapter 59: “Fazed Out Fitters” meet third Wednesday Pipetfitters Local 539 retirees — the “Fazed Out Fitters” — meet the third Wednesday of each month at 11:00 a.m. at Elsie’s, 729 Marshall St. NE, Minneapolis. New members welcome.

Pipefitters Local 539 Retirees:
Meet the third Tuesday of each month
All retired Plumbers Local 15 members are invited to attend retiree meetings, continuing the third Tuesday of every month at 12 noon at Elsie’s Restaurant, Bar & Bowling Center, 729 Marshall St. NE, Minneapolis.

State Retiree Council announces May 6 ‘Fun(d)raiser’
MAPLEWOOD — The annual all-ages “Fun(d)raiser” to benefit the political work of the Minnesota State Retiree Council will be Saturday, May 6, 2023 from 3:00-7:00 p.m. at the Sheet Metal Workers Local 10 union hall, 1681 Cape Avenue in Maplewood. The event will feature free food, music, hourly raffles for valuable prizes, a silent auction and other new ways to win prizes. Raffle tickets (three for $5) for a major cash prize are now available. For more information, contact 651-227-7647 ext. 121.

Sheet Metal Workers Local 10 Retirees:
‘Rusty Tinnies’ meet May 9
The Sheet Metal Workers Local 10 “Rusty Tinnies” retirees club will meet Tuesday, May 9 at the Maplewood union hall, 1681 E. Cope Ave. A potluck salad lunch will begin at 12:00 noon. The meeting will begin at 1:00 p.m. If available, one of our business agents or someone from our benefits office will give an update on union activities and answer any questions.

All retired Sheet Metal workers and spouses are welcome to our monthly meetings. We meet the second Tuesday of the month, September through December and March through May. For more information, contact Frank Costa at 651-484-1363.

U of M Facilities Management and Maintenance Retirees:
Meet last Tuesday of month
Retirees from the University of Minnesota Maintenance Department have resumed meeting the last Tuesday of each month at 9:30 a.m. for breakfast at Elsie’s, 729 Marshall St. NE, Minneapolis. New retirees welcome!

If your union retiree group wishes to share your regular meeting information or special announcements, contact the editor at labreview@minneapolisunions.org or 612-715-2667.

www.minneapolisunions.org

April 29, 2023 • Minneapolis Labor Review • Page 9
other staff chose to organize in 2020 with AFSCME (Labor Review, December 18, 2020). The event staff, however, wanted to align with a union that included workers performing similar work, said Jon Kirchofer, lighting supervisor and a Walker employee for 20-plus years.

The new contract covers five full-time workers and a list of about 30 “over-hires” who work on-call, including five from the list who work regularly. Kirchofer said the new three-year contract makes wage rates more consistent and provides for stricter enforcement of work rules protecting workers. “The biggest win was getting 10-hour turnaround instead of 8-hour turnaround,” he said. After 16 months of negotiations, however, he said workers did not win their main objective: shortening the current 12-hour threshold for earning overtime. That leaves “room for improvement in future negotiations,” Kirchofer said.

IBEW Local 160:
Membership meeting change approved, nominations set for May 4
Beginning in May, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 160 now will have only one general membership meeting each month. The executive board and the membership voted and approved to make this bylaw change. Meetings will take place the first Thursday of each month and the time of the meeting will change to 7:30 p.m.

The first general membership meeting under the new schedule will be Thursday, May 4, beginning at 7:30 p.m. at the union hall in St. Anthony.

Nominations for officers for Local 160 will be on the May 4 agenda.

IBEW Local 292:
Fishing trip planned June 9
IBEW Local 292’s annual fishing trip will be Friday, June 9. The event takes place at Twin Pines Resort on Lake Mille Lacs. Arrive by 9:00 a.m. for breakfast. The launch departs at 10:00 a.m. and returns at 2:00 p.m., with a banquet immediately following. The cost is $35. Transportation to Twin Pines and back will not be provided. For more information or to register, contact John Kriotos at 612-617-4244 or jk@ibew292.org.

NALC Branch 9:
President JoAnn Gilbaugh retires
JoAnn Gilbaugh is retiring May 7 as president of National Association of Letter Carriers Branch 9.

“My last official duties will be to run our Red and Gold banquet, our retiree banquet. It’s my favorite event of the year,” she said. “I couldn’t miss that!”

Gilbaugh began working as a letter carrier in August 2000. “It’s a great job, great benefits… you get to be outside… you get the pension,” she noted.

Gilbaugh has served as Branch 9 president since July 2022, when she succeeded Samantha Hartwig, who took a regional position with NALC. Gilbaugh previously served Branch 9 as executive vice president and recording secretary.

“The last 17 years of my life have been totally all unions,” Gilbaugh said. “It’s a little difficult imagining what it’s going to be like not picking up the phone to try to help someone stand up for their rights.”

“As union people, we’re fixers. We like to fix things for people,” she said.

“At the present time, with staff shortages at the Postal Service, letter carriers are working long, overtime hours with little time off and experiencing great degrees of stress. ‘It’s become very, very challenging under the circumstances,’ Gilbaugh said.

“No one seems to have an answer. They need to figure it out for us.”

“The life is too short,” Gilbaugh said, in deciding to retire. “I’ve had several losses of friends in the past few years.” She’s turning 62, she noted, “so it’s a good time.”

Branch 9 executive vice president Scott Bultena will become president upon Gilbaugh’s retirement. Gilbaugh had appointed him as executive vice president in July 2022. Bultena is an 18-year Branch 9 member, a former steward at the St. Louis Park station, and three years ago joined the Branch 9 staff as Formal A representative.

Bultena, 52, told the Labor Review, “I got involved as a union steward, being involved with the union, because I saw a lot of injustices… I wanted to get involved to help people.”

Bultena will serve as president until Branch 9’s next election, which is coming in fall 2024.

OPEIU Local 12:
VP Devin Hogan becomes president, Kelsie Anderson is new business rep
The retirement of OPEIU Local 12 union representative Lance Lindeman, effective March 31, set in motion several leadership changes.

With Lindeman’s retirement, Local 12 president Kelsie Anderson resigned and accepted the position as union rep. Local 12 vice president Devin Hogan, in turn, became Local 12 president.

The Local 12 executive board has appointed a new vice president, Spencer Olsen, who works at the HealthPartners Bloomington clinic.

Devin Hogan is the union sector representative for Local 12 and works at the Minneapolis Federation of Teachers where he is operations director and political organizer. Hogan has been a Local 12 member for five years.

The newly-installed officers will serve until the next OPEIU Local 12 election in February 2025.

SEIU Local 26:
Condo workers strike
Twin Cities condo workers employed by FirstService Residential walked off the job for a two-day unfair labor practice strike March 31 and April 1.

FirstService Residential workers in Minnesota have been pushing to form a union with SEIU Local 26 for months. Despite strong support from workers, including a significant majority of workers in the biggest highrises in the Twin Cities, the company has refused to commit to a vote free from intimidation. In fact, FirstService recently fired one of the leaders of the union effort, Kevin Borowksa, and his wife, and forced them out of their company-controlled home.

SEIU Healthcare:
More lab workers organize at Allina’s Mercy and Unity labs
The laboratory technical assistants at Allina Health’s Mercy and Unity Labs recently voted to join SEIU Healthcare Minnesota and Iowa.

The laboratory technical assistants joined the union after laboratory scientists, lab technicians, and lab assistants at the Mercy and Unity labs voted and joined the union last summer.

With the addition of the laboratory technical assistants, Allina’s Mercy and Unity Lab are now “wall-to-wall” union.

Teamsters Local 120:
Political director Paul Slattery to be honored with DFL’s Wellstone award
Teamsters Local 120’s Paul Slattery will be receiving the Minnesota DFL Party’s annual Wellstone Award for Life-time Commitment to Organized Labor.

Slattery has been the political and organizing director for Teamsters Local 120 since 2012. A 33-year member of the union, he is a former warehouse worker and truck driver. Since fall of 2022, Slattery also has served as DRIVE president for Teamsters Joint Council 32, leading the Council’s political program.

The Wellstone award will be presented at the Minnesota DFL’s Humphrey-Mondale dinner May 6 at the Minneapolis Convention Center.

Sources: Labor Review reporting, local unions. Next deadline: May 10.
Address Change?

Subscription Instructions?

Please let us know if your address will be changing, if your household is receiving more than one Labor Review, or if you would like to cancel your subscription.

Cut out or photo-copy your mailing label from the front page of the newspaper and mail it to us with your instructions:

Attn: mailing list
Minneapolis Labor Review
312 Central Ave. SE, Suite 542
Minneapolis, MN 55414

No phone calls, please, to report address changes, stop duplicates, or cancel your subscription. Thanks!

Are you on facebook?

‘Like’ the
Minneapolis Regional Labor Federation...

• News Updates • Action Alerts •
• Links • Photos of Union Events •

www.facebook.com/minneapolisunions

Minneapolis Labor Review
2023 Publication Schedule

The Labor Review will publish 10 issues in 2023. Note: NO issue published in January and NO issue published in June. The publication date normally will be the last Saturday or second to last Saturday of each month.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Deadline</th>
<th>Issue Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td></td>
<td>No issue published</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>Deadline: February 8</td>
<td>116th Anniversary Issue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>Deadline: March 8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>Deadline: April 12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>Deadline: May 10</td>
<td>116th Anniversary Issue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td></td>
<td>No issue published</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July</td>
<td>Deadline: July 5</td>
<td>Primary Election Issue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>Deadline: August 2</td>
<td>Labor Day Issue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>Deadline: September 6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>Deadline: October 4</td>
<td>General Election Issue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>Deadline: November 1</td>
<td>Holiday Shopping Guide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>Deadline: November 29</td>
<td>Holiday Issue</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Next Special Issue:
May 27, 2023 — 116th Anniversary Issue!
Discounted ad rates available

For more information, to suggest a story idea, or to advertise, contact the editor at 612-379-4725 or laborreview@minneapolisunions.org

IBEW Local Union 292
Minneapolis Electrical Workers

Drive with caution in work zones
Once again the dreaded road work season is starting. Remember to be patient and cautious in work zones. These work zones along roadways are dangerous places to work, so please slow down, pay attention and stay off your cell phone.
We worked hard with contractors and the State Legislature to get the new laws passed that increase fines associated with distracted driving in work zones. We want our members to make it home safe.

Brotherhood
The Local 292 Brotherhood Committee assists members in need or distress, either with a gift card from our Local 292 food shelf or teams of Brothers and Sisters helping around the house. If you need assistance or know of another member in need, please call our Brotherhood line at 612-617-4247 or send an email to brotherhood@ibew292.org.

Condolences
Brother Martin J. Wolle; Brother David P. Nicolson; Brother Justin L. Hoheisel; Brother James A. Schmidt.

See you at the General Membership Meeting, 5:00 p.m. on the Second Tuesday
Paid for by IBEW Local 292 • www.ibew292.org

Taking It to the Streets

Photo above: Members of IBEW Local 292 displayed a banner outside the Bloomington offices of tech company Seagate April 13-14. “Seagate is paying substandard wages for electricians in this area,” explained Jeff Heimerl, Local 292 business manager. A group of nine maintenance electricians at Seagate sought out IBEW Local 292 for representative and voted unanimously in a National Labor Relations Board election to unionize with Local 292, Heimerl reported. Negotiations for a first contract have been going on for more than one year. “The electricians want higher pay than they’re getting,” Heimerl said. The April 13-14 banner aimed only to inform the public, Heimerl said.

Photo left: “No contract, no coffee!” Workers went on strike at three Twin Cities Starbucks coffeehouse locations March 22 as part of a national day of action, including the Starbucks at 4712 Cedar Ave. in Minneapolis. The workers are organizing as part of Starbucks Workers United. Despite an anti-union campaign by Starbucks, workers at 300 Starbucks locations across the country now have organized — but none have won a contract. “They hope to wear us down,” said Starbucks worker and first-time striker Rev Beeby, “but all this does is get us fired up.”
Transit workers seek Cost of Living Adjustment plus one percent

By Steve Share, Labor Review editor

MINNEAPOLIS — Members of Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1005 rallied April 18 outside the offices of Metro Transit, with speakers and signs calling for a Cost of Living Adjustment equal to the rate of inflation plus one percent.

Inside, representatives from the union and the agency were in negotiations for a new contract.

“We deserve a wage increase above inflation,” said Adam Burch, the MC of the rally, and bus operator for eight years. “Metro Transit, the Met Council, depend on us to actually run the transit system… We move the city.”

“The money is there,” said rally speaker Veronica Carter, also a bus operator for eight years. She cited the state’s $18 billion budget surplus and expectations that the legislature will this year provide a dedicated source for transit funding.

She also said that Metro Transit — which the union says has 300 unfilled operator jobs and 50 unfilled maintenance jobs — needs to pay more to attract workers to fill those positions.

“We want to expand public transit,” Burch said. “We can’t do that if we continue existing in this current staffing crisis.”

Safety issues on Metro Transit buses and trains and at transit stations also need to be addressed, both for workers and for the riding public, Carter said.

Workers need a strong contract, Carter added, if Metro Transit wants to fulfill its promise to provide quality services to the public. “The pandemic proved we are essential workers.”

Alec Johnson, a 17-year Metro Transit employee who coordinates the agency’s bus operator apprentice program, came outside on a work break to speak at the rally. “This is not a low-skill job,” he said. He praised Metro Transit for working with the union to develop the bus operator apprentice program but said, “you can’t refer to something as a skilled trade and not give skilled trade wages.”

Representatives of groups advocating at the legislature for increased transit spending also shared their support for increasing transit worker wages.

“We need to make sure when we’re investing in public transit that we’re also investing in the workers who are the backbone of the transit system,” said Abby Hornberger, Minnesota policy organizer for the BlueGreen Alliance.

“The Twin Cities needs better, faster buses for more people,” said Julie Johnson, senior community organizer for MOVE MN. Noting the vacant Metro Transit positions, she added, “without a full force of transit workers we can’t improve the system.”

“The strength of a union contract is just a reflection of the strength of the union,” Carter said to the crowd of about 60 ATU members and supporters, urging members to continue to come to future rallies and open negotiation sessions.

“Organized workers that are strike-ready have shown that they can win,” Burch told the crowd, pointing to the recent local example of UFCW Local 663 grocery workers, who were ready to go on strike but at the last minute won a new contract with important gains. “We have to be strike-ready,” Burch urged.

In the past, Burch told the group, ATU Local 1005 did have Cost of Living Adjustments in its contract — up until 1984. “The time is right — we want it back. Now!”

ATU Local 1005’s current contract with Metro Transit expires August 1.