



# Local 1277

# News

February, 2017

1744 North Main Street • Los Angeles, CA 90031 • (323) 222-1277

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## OUR ALL-INCLUSIVE FAMILY

## WELCOME TO ATU LOCAL 1277, OUR GREAT UNION, AND ALL THE BENEFITS OF MEMBERSHIP!

*By Douglas Kurowski, Board Member-at-Large*

I am proud and pleased to welcome every new ATU Local 1277 brother and sister (over 100 of you) to our great Union. Over the past few years, our membership has steadily grown at our properties; your new membership in our Union proves that.

Many of you new members, wherever you are represented by Local 1277, may not be familiar with unions and the important work they do for all of you. ***And with the new, very anti-union, anti-working families administration now in Washington, D.C., it is even more important that you fully understand what being in a union means and why it is so vital that you support it and participate in our activities.***

A good number of you new hires may only know about unions and the union movement from casual conversations, or what you have heard from men and women who already are members. *You may not yet fully understand or appreciate how secure union membership makes you and your families, once you have completed your probationary period at your property.*

All right, you might ask, just what does membership in Local 1277 mean—for me, my career, my family, and my long-term future and security? Fair enough. You *should* know, and I will explain. Your union membership means:

**A guaranteed 40-hour work week worth of good wages.** You may think that all working men and women are assured of a 40-hour work week. *Not true.* Non-unionized workers are at the mercy of management when it comes to almost everything at the jobsite, including how many hours you work a week.

**Solid, affordable medical coverage for you and your family,** as long as you have passed your probationary period, and as long as you are not terminated. And don't kid yourselves, brothers and sisters: Too often, management and its in-house doctors show their contempt for your hard work and basic dignity by forcibly retiring or transferring healthy employees because of "uncompassionate" (and often ignorant) excuses.

**Assured paid vacations,** with no loss of seniority or job status.

**Not only sick leave, but guaranteed time off under various legislative-mandated programs,** including the School Partnership Act, the excellent Family Medical Leave Act, and the provisions of Section 233 of the State Labor Code, which allow you to take as much as half of your accrued yearly sick leave to care for an ailing loved one. Once you pass probation, be sure to talk to your Shop Steward or a Union officer about the specifics of these programs.

**A financially solid, reliable pension,** available at most of our properties, which *absolutely* will be there for you and your family when you retire.

**Strong, effective, and determined representation** by your Shop Stewards and Union officers whenever you have a beef or grievance with management, or whenever the need may arise. In fact, the five members of your Union's Executive Board have more than *100 years* of combined service in both the mass-transit field and service to all of the members they represent.

### **A History of Achievement**

The Amalgamated Transit Union was formally established in July 1941, growing out of the old Amalgamated Association of Street and Electrical Railroad Employees of America. For more than 75 years, the skilled, hard-working and dedicated brothers and sisters of the ATU—across this country and Canada, with a total membership of nearly 200,000—have served countless millions of mass-transit-dependent riders in our cities, large and small. They have served through boom and bust times, through peace and war, and through revolutionary changes in public-transit coaches, technology and job descriptions.

***We have also served through state and federal political administrations that were pro-union and working people, or against our needs and agenda. The current administration in Washington, D.C. may turn out to be one of the worst ever. Beyond an ignorant, arrogant, thin-skinned new President, consider his nominee for Secretary of Labor, supposedly the federal government's watchdog for workers' rights, safety and jobsite conditions.***

***Andrew Puzder, a fast-food multi-millionaire, is on record as opposing the minimum wage, the concept of overtime pay, most jobsite safety protections and, in general, just about all of the progressive and needed pro-worker regulations approved by the President Obama!***

***This is the man the new President wants to head up the governmental department that is supposed to look out for us! Talk about the fox guarding the henhouse!***

But, the good news is that you are joining an elite professional work force, brothers and sisters. You are joining an experienced, proud and cutting-edge Union that has helped make MTA both a national leader in the field and a champion in the "mass-transit rodeos" and American Public Transportation Association competitions. And all you new members in our non-MTA units: your Union, ATU Local 1277, has helped make them the reliable and well-used local and regional mass-transit leaders that they are today.

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# UNIONS AND THE MIDDLE CLASS

**By Errol Frazier, Vice President, Local 1277**

Something to think about as the reality of a Trump Presidency sinks in....

The Middle Class is struggling. The great, solid working Middle Class that was built by the union movement is in peril. Union membership and union strength is declining. Over the past several decades, typical workers' wages have remained stagnant—certainly when compared the obscene salaries and perks enjoyed by management.

Working Middle Class—union and non-union—household debt has been spiraling out of control, and income inequality (the canyon between what working people *earn* and what the bosses *give* themselves) is now at a record high. This can be directly traced to the loss of union membership and influence. Anyone concerned about fairness in wages, earning power, income equality, or the unequal economic relationship between rich and the poor, can rest assured that there is a positive correlation between a strong, expanding and optimistic Middle Class (the backbone of our democracy, and strongest bulwark against dictatorship) and the strengthening of the union movement.

To quantify what is considered the Middle Class, consider what Heidi Shierholz of the Economic Policy Institute, and Rick Newman, in his article, "How the Middle Class is Shrinking", have discovered. They analyzed Census Bureau data back to 1967. Adjusting for inflation, they simulated a one-for-one comparison from year to year, and computed the monetary Middle Class as somewhere between \$35,000 - \$99,999 annually. The latest census data from 2009 showed that 43.7% of U.S. households within that range. That number has been slipping from 1969, down from a peak figure of 53% of households. *That's about a 15% decline.*

"The U.S. economy has grown significantly in recent decades. However, unlike in previous eras, workers today are *not* receiving their fair share of the economy's gains. *Since 1973, productivity—the amount of output per worker—has grown about eight times as fast as the typical worker's pay. While today's workers are more productive than ever, Middle Class wages are not growing appropriately to reflect this fact,*" the authors note in an article, "Unions Help the Middle Class, No Matter the Measure", on the web at [www.americanprogressaction.org](http://www.americanprogressaction.org).

The article continues, "When union workers are compared to non-unionized counterparts, analysis typically shows union wages to be 10 – 20% higher. The union wages premium is even larger for some demographic groups that, on average, receive lower pay, including workers of color and those without a college education. And these estimates may *underestimate* the overall impact of unions on all workers' pay due to the union "threat" effect, which occurs when union workplaces put upward pressure on wages at nonunion firms. *When unions represent a significant percentage of workers in an industry, non-union firms often raise their wages to union levels to match the standard in the industry, and to discourage their workers from joining a union*".

## **Beyond Just Wages**

The benefits that union affiliation have contributed to the Middle Class goes far beyond just that of the aforementioned monetary gains. Union workers, because of their "power in numbers", have negotiated quality health insurance with a reasonable deductible, or out-of-pocket expense, retirement plans and paid sick leave, among other valuable benefits. The 2015 National Compensation Survey data show that only 65% of non-union workers have a retirement plan as opposed to 94% of union workers. Family leave policies and other workers' rights are among other benefits that were fought for and won by unionized labor.

It is worth noting (please see Brother Adolfo Soto's article in this paper) that your very important *Weingarten Rights* are yet another benefit of union membership at a union jobsite.

Studies have shown that children of non-college educated union members are **28%** more likely to go to college themselves, as compared to the offspring of those who are *not* affiliated. In areas that have a large number of union households, statistics prove that the high school dropout rate is *lower* and the economic indicators (upward-mobility possibilities) point *higher*.

*In 1968, when unions were at their height, representing about a third of American labor, the Middle Class held 53% of our nation's income. Today, the wealthiest Americans now capture 70% of the country's economic growth.*

Many studies have shown that this wealth inequality has affected the ability of the unions to level the economic playing field and cut down the advantages of those who are at the top of the economic heap. Bruce Western of Harvard University and Jake Rosenfeld of the University of Washington found that *the decline of unions from 1973 to 2007 explains income inequality for about a one-third of working men and one-fifth among working women. Many other studies have similarly reached the conclusion that declining union strength is a key contributor to rising wage inequality.*

As these studies show, as the rich get richer, the poor will get poorer, and the Middle Class will continue to decline—with all the economic, social and political negatives that comes with such a loss. *It is incumbent upon union members to support each other, brothers and sisters, in our fight to preserve our way of life and the vital Middle Class of our country.*

**Especially, as this new, very uncertain, and possibly very disturbing and dangerous political and economic era dawns.**

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## **WELCOME TO ATU LOCAL 1277, OUR GREAT UNION, AND ALL THE BENEFITS OF MEMBERSHIP!**

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So welcome to our Union. *Your Union*. Rest assured that all through your careers in service to the mass-transit-dependent public, your Union will negotiate the best and strongest Collective Bargaining Agreements (CBAs) and Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) on your behalf and that of your families and future.

All you have to do is show up for work, do your job carefully and well, and Local 1277 will be there to help and serve you in *any* way you need. Your hours of work are guaranteed, your classifications are assured, and your careers and future are in excellent hands. **Welcome!**

## **A Special Note for MTA-Unit Members**

Because of the recent and welcome passage of Los Angeles County Measure M, MTA will be seeing a steady and significant infusion of funding for operational uses, including our salaries. That's good. *But while the Authority is rolling in money, we must continue to be very careful that it doesn't spend some of that funding on outside subcontractors—thereby taking away some of our jobs and threatening the careers and families of our brothers and sisters. Keep a sharp eye out, folks, for any sign or appearance of outside, non-union subcontractors. Be vigilant! The job you save may be your own!*

## KNOW YOUR RIGHTS AS A UNION MEMBER!

### YOUR WEINGARTEN RIGHTS ARE A HARD-FOUGHT BENEFIT FOR UNIONIZED MEN AND WOMEN

*By Adolfo Soto, Financial-Recording Secretary*

Elsewhere in this paper, you will find a special greeting from Brother Doug Kurowski to all incoming members of ATU Local 1277. I join in welcoming all our new brothers and sisters to both union membership and long, productive and rewarding careers in the service of the increasingly larger mass-transit-dependent public throughout Los Angeles, Riverside and San Bernardino Counties.

All new hires at *all* of our properties, and current members of Local 1277, should know that there may come a time at work when you may be told by a supervisor or manager that they would like to speak to you, either in their office or, for example, in a drivers lounge. For a maintenance employee, a proposed meeting may be out at a shop or in the field.

*A supervisor or manager may want to speak to you about anything; it could be something minor, or it could just as easily be about something more.*

If this situation arises, you should **never** feel scared, nervous or intimidated. There is always communication between supervisors and managers, and employees during a work shift. You may be asked how things are going, or if you need help, or simply if you have any questions concerning anything to do with work.

*But there is one very important thing to remember if the conversation ever starts to go in a direction (or towards a topic) which may cause you to feel that the discussion is heading to a point where you may be facing any kind of disciplinary action. **This is exactly the moment when you need to invoke your Weingarten Rights.***

#### Your Weingarten Rights

Under your vital *Weingarten Rights*, you, as a union member, have **the absolute right to say, "If this discussion can in any way lead to my being disciplined or terminated for cause, and have any effect on my personal working conditions, I respectfully ask for assistance from my Shop Steward."**

*Never, ever forget this!* If you feel that a supervisor's or manager's questions could lead in *any* way to *any* kind of discipline or, worse, you should stop answering questions *immediately* and ask for your Shop Steward. *This is your undeniable right as a union member!*

Your Weingarten Rights are similar in a way to the right of someone being questioned by the police. At the instant the person being questioned

asks for an attorney, the police must stop any questioning until an attorney is present. *This is a fundamental part of our judicial system just as the exercise of your legitimate Weingarten Rights is a fundamental part of the labor-management relationship at unionized properties.*

Don't let a manager or supervisor fool you or "lull you to sleep" with softball questions! Management may well tell you that it is just asking some simple questions or a particular issue. Maybe. Maybe not. But why take a chance?

*If you have any slightest doubt about anything that has been asked of you, just stop the conversation there and then, and say that you would like to have your Shop Steward with you.*

Every veteran Local 1277 brother and sister knows that their Shop Steward is a loyal, valuable and important resource. But I want to emphasize this point for our new members, who still may be on probation, but hopefully will have long careers in public-transit and a rewarding membership in our Union: ***Your Shop Stewards are a priceless benefit of union membership. They have experience, knowledge of the worksite and its rules, and their sole purpose is to assist you in any way that they can. Whatever you may think of your Shop Steward, with respect to personality or demeanor on the job, he or she is your first line of defense against any potential negative action against you by management, and also your authority on your property's rules and regulations.***

Never mind if a manager or supervisor tells you that you don't need your Shop Steward because, "we just want to get some information" or words to that effect. *Don't listen to them! **Further, and this is very important: If you have asked for your Shop Steward to be present at this point, and you are denied this request, you simply say, "Without proper and rightful representation present, I choose not to continue this discussion."***

Your Weingarten Rights are a fundamental right and benefit for you as a union member. Note that emphasis: *As a union member*; non-unionized employees do not enjoy this significant privilege. This right has come about after a long, hard and sometimes bitter fight by organized labor on behalf of the members it represents.

Know your Weingarten Rights and know them well! Always be ready to use them if you ever have to. If you have any doubts, simply clip out this article and carry it with you on the job. *ATU Local 1277 veterans and new hires have this extremely valuable benefit if ever needed!*

## PLEASE VOTE YES ON COUNTY MEASURE H ON MARCH 7!

On Tuesday, March 7, voters throughout Los Angeles County will have a golden chance to help thousands of less-fortunate people who live among us. Passage of County Measure H is both necessary and a strong, much-needed expression of humanity at the start of the depressing and negative Trump era.

The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors has correctly launched a sweeping plan to stamp out homelessness in our region. This is an overdue and very welcome action. The Board has developed a comprehensive, county-wide plan to end to end the scourge and tragedy of homelessness. Already, it had allocated \$100 million to get this effort up and going.

Measure H, if approved, will raise \$350 million a year for the next 10 years by increasing the county-wide sales tax by  $\frac{1}{4}$  of cent. *That's all:  $\frac{1}{4}$  of a penny.* That comes to about \$1 a month, or **three cents a day!**

The new funding will go for expanded services to the homeless and housing for the far-too-many individuals and families who have no roofs over their heads. What can be kinder or more life-affirming than paying out a few more pennies a day so that people can have the safety and dignity of shelter while they try to put their lives back together?

Please vote Yes on Los Angeles County Measure H on March 7! Those who are economically challenged and reduced to living on our streets deserve all the understanding and help we can give. And please get your friends, families and neighbors to join you in this excellent effort. *Thank you!*



## AN EXCELLENT OPPORTUNITY

# EDUCATION AND TRAINING: YOUR KEYS TO CAREER ADVANCEMENT AND PRIDE

By Art Aguilar, President, Local 1277

Once again, and for the most important of reasons, I am pleased to repeat myself and remind you: **Education and training are the stepping stones to better, more rewarding careers in your chosen field of work.**

Continuing its history of teaching and service, Los Angeles'—and organized labor's—famed Trade Tech is again offering a series of excellent classes this spring, starting February 6 and running until June 5.

I strongly urge every ATU Local 1277 brother and sister who wants to get ahead professionally, or who simply wants to broaden his or her knowledge and better understanding of the trade-union movement, to consider signing up for this very valuable instruction.

Courses are generally divided between into three-unit evening classes during the week and one-unit weekend classes.

LABOR STUDIES CLASSES		3-UNIT ONLINE CLASSES		1-UNIT WEEKEND CLASSES		<div>Los Angeles Trade-Tech College</div> <div>The Labor Center</div> <div>(213) 783-7129</div> <div><a href="mailto:laborcenter@lattc.edu">laborcenter@lattc.edu</a></div> <div><a href="http://college.lattc.edu/laborcenter">http://college.lattc.edu/laborcenter</a></div> <div>JOHN MCDOWELL, JR., DIRECTOR</div> <div>KATHLEEN YASUDA, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR</div> <div>VIVIAN DE LA TORRE, ASSISTANT</div> <div>OLGA GARCIA, ASSISTANT</div>
FALL 2016		*Conducted completely online		8:30am to 5:00pm		
Start August 29 and End December 17, 2016 (16 weeks)		LS 21 – Working Class in Cinema* Section 7860		All classes at Trade Tech Aspen Hall Room 221		
All Labor Studies classes are transferable to CSU.		See course description under Tuesdays 3-unit evening class.		Free parking in the Olive Street parking structure (between Washington St. and 21st St.) for weekend		
3-UNIT EVENING CLASSES 6:00 to 9:10PM		Instructor: Ericka Wills, United Steelworkers District 12		Labor Studies classes during class hours		
Off campus classes in union halls, free parking		LS 20 – Workers' Rights** Section 7864		Parking on Sundays in Oak Hall roof lot (enter on Flower St.)		
MONDAYS		*LS 20 is a pre req to LS 24 Enforcing Workers' Rights		LS 136 – When the Paycheck Stops Section 0440		
LS 5 – Grievance and Arbitration Section 3254		Basic legal rights for workers, including: wage and hour laws, overtime, leaves, workplace privacy including e-mail and computers, accommodating disabilities, including pregnancy, and combating employment discrimination.		Learn how to counsel members when the paycheck stops due to strikes, layoff, or plant closure. Overviews services such as retraining, food banks, unemployment, and negotiating with landlords, mortgage companies, utility companies and other creditors.		
How to identify, investigate, write and present grievances and handle arbitrations. Emphasis on participants' own contracts, grievance procedures and experiences.		Instructor: Joshua Young, Gilbert and Sackman		September 10 and 17		
Instructor: Tanya Akel, Teamsters Local 1010		LS 4 – Labor in America* Section 7862		Instructor: Armando Olivias, AFL-CIO Community Services		
Teamsters Local 630, 750 S. Stanford Ave., Los Angeles 90021		The role of unions in creating and maintaining the middle class standard of living for all workers. Labor's impact on issues such as wages, benefits and job security, and economic justice issues such as public education and social security.		LS 122 – Framing the Message for Labor Section 0441		
TUESDAYS		Instructor: Ericka Wills, United Steelworkers District 12		Students examine the language of labor and progressive action and learn to sharpen the message to broaden public support, build power, and gain political results.		
LS 7 – Labor and Political Action Section 3251		*LS 4 and 21 meet GE requirements at Trade Tech, CSU, and UC		September 24 and October 1		
Politics is critical to labor's survival. Skills needed to tackle political issues affecting your members, including lobbying, electioneering, member mobilization, campaign laws, monitoring legislation and holding elected officials accountable.		3-UNIT CLASSES AT TRADE TECH		Instructors: Caroline O'Connor, Screen Actors Guild Foundation and Mary Hodge, Political Campaign Consultant		
Instructor: Chuck Adinolfi and Matt Hart, UFCW Local 324		3-UNIT DAY CLASS		LS 127 – Workers' Compensation Section 0442		
UFCW Local 324, 8530 Stanton Ave., Buena Park 90622		Mondays and Wednesdays, 8:35am to 10:00am		A basic understanding of Workers' Comp. covers types of injuries and disabilities – temporary and permanent benefits – medical care, rehabilitation and financial support, and procedures for filing a claim and appeals.		
LS 21 – Working Class in Cinema* Section 3252		Class Location: TBA		October 15 and 22		
Examines film portrayals of the working class and labor unions. Students learn to evaluate popular culture dramatization of workers' rights struggles, and analyze how the movies have shaped public perception and values.		LS 20 – Workers' Rights** Section 0431		Instructors: Scott Ford and Cheryl Wallach, Ford and Wallach		
*LS 21 meets GE requirements at Trade Tech, CSU, and UC.		*LS 20 is a pre req to LS 24 Enforcing Workers' Rights		LS 126 – Issues in Labor Arbitration Section 0443		
See course description under 3-Unit Online Classes.		See course description under 3-Unit Online Classes.		An overview of the two major issues in arbitration: discipline and discharge; covering just cause, absenteeism, insubordination, substance abuse, theft/dishonesty, and standards for interpreting language in contract interpretation cases.		
Instructor: Steven Holguin, Holguin, Garfield, Martinez and Quinonez		Instructor: Jim Varga, IATSE International, West Coast Counsel		October 29 and 30		
ILWU Local 13, 630 Centre St., San Pedro, CA 90731		3-UNIT DAY CLASS		Instructor: Lou Zigman, Arbitrator		
THURSDAYS		Mondays and Wednesdays, 10:10am to 11:35am		LS 118 – Employee Benefit Plans Section 0445		
LS 7 – Labor and Political Action Section 3255		Class Location: TBA		Explores employee health and retirement benefits: how they work and how they are funded; labor's role in bargaining and preserving benefits, and the issues and political forces driving the debate.		
See course description under Tuesdays, 3-unit evening classes		LS 24 – Enforcing Workers' Rights Section 0432		December 10 and 17		
Instructor: Jim Walker, Labor Educator and Consultant		Skills needed to investigate, prepare, and present cases enforcing workers' rights and to work in the State Labor Commissioner's office.		Instructors: Kathy Rallings, CTA and Sharon Hendricks, AFT Local 1521		
Teamsters Local 1932, 433 N. Sierra Way, San Bernardino, CA 92410		Instructor: Jim Varga, IATSE International, West Coast Counsel		3-UNIT WEEKEND ONLY CLASS		
		3-UNIT DAY CLASS		Saturdays and Sundays, 8:30am to 5:00pm		
		Tuesdays and Thursdays, 10:10am to 11:35am		Trade Tech, Aspen Hall Room 221		
		Class Location: TBA		Free parking in the Olive Street parking structure (between Washington St. and 21st St.) for weekend Labor Studies classes during class hours		
		LS 4 – Labor in America* Section 0430		Parking on Sundays in Oak Hall roof lot (enter on Flower St.)		
		See course description under 3-Unit Online Classes.		LS 11 – Labor in the Public Sector Section 0444		
		Instructor: Lou Siegel, Labor Communications Specialist		Public sector unions, workers and services are under attack. How to protect and defend your members, your union and collective bargaining now and for the future.		
		3-UNIT EVENING CLASS		November 5 & 6, November 19 & 20, and December 3 & 4, 2016		
		Wednesdays, 6:00 to 9:10pm		Instructors: Jody Klipple, SEIU Local 721 and Jim Walker, Labor Educator and Consultant		
		Class Location: TBA				
		LS 4 – Labor in America* Section 3253				
		See course description under 3-Unit Online Classes				
		Instructor: Mindy Chen, AFT Local 1521				
		*LS 4 meets GE requirement at Trade Tech, CSU, and UC				

➡ Develop Union Leadership Skills

➡ Earn AA Degree or Certificate in Labor Studies

➡ Network with Other Union Activists and Leaders

Enroll Early

By mail, online at [www.lattc.edu](http://www.lattc.edu), or on site on the first day of the class

Fees checks payable to LATTC

\$46/unit; \$1 ASO fee/semester

\$11 health fee/semester (excepted for Labor Studies classes held off campus)

Max Mont Scholarships

Scholarships are available for Labor Studies classes.

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**Brothers and sisters, this is an excellent professional and personal educational opportunity. I warmly encourage you to do as I did, and take advantage of these quality courses and experienced teachers!**

**Here are the upcoming Local 1277 membership meetings for February and March. Please make every attempt to attend the meeting for your unit. It's your Union, and we need your participation at our meetings!**

**Tuesday, February 7:**

L.A. Building Trades Council, 1626 Beverly Blvd., Los Angeles.

**Tuesday, March 7:**

**Morning Session:** 10:00 a.m. **Evening Session:** 5:00 p.m.

**Wednesday, February 8:**

1074 E. La Cadena Drive, Riverside.

**Wednesday, March 8:**

**Morning Session:** 10:00 a.m. **Afternoon Session:** 1:00 p.m. **Evening Session:** 6:00 p.m.

**Thursday, February 9:**

Cathedral City Branch Library, 33520 Date Palm Drive, Cathedral City.

**Thursday, March 9:**

**Morning Session:** 10:00 a.m. **Afternoon Session:** 4:00 p.m.

Machinists Hall, 319 W. Broadway, Long Beach.

**Morning Session:** 10:00 a.m. **Afternoon Session:** 3:00 p.m.