



# Local 1277

# News

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## President's report

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# *Safety First! For You, Your Family, And the Riding Public We Serve*

By Art Aguilar  
President, Local 1277

Brothers and sisters—active and retired—as we do our very best to cope with the fast-moving spread of the Coronavirus (COVID-19), *it is absolutely imperative that you know that our International Union is taking this crisis very seriously, and is doing everything possible to protect you, your families and the mass-transit riding public we serve.*

*Here are the main points from a bulletin from IP John Costa concerning jobsite safety. Since, by now, you are aware of personal hygiene tips for you and your family, I want to share with you our International Union's timely and detailed suggestions concerning worksite safety. Until and unless management at our properties asks that our members stay home in order to prevent illness and the spread of the Coronavirus, these are literally life-saving steps for you to follow.*

### *Routine Disinfecting of Vehicles and Facilities*

- Disinfect buses, train cars, vans, garages and transit stations *at least daily.*
- Vehicles serving high-risk riders (para-transit van, school buses) should be disinfected more often than once a day, when possible.
- Use electrostatic sprayers, when possible, which more effectively coat surfaces.

### *Disinfecting Contaminated Vehicles and Facilities*

- The affected agency should immediately remove the vehicle from service, or close the infected facility area.
- Doors and windows of infected vehicles and facilities should be left open to allow for circulation of air.
- ***Thoroughly clean and disinfect the entire contaminated vehicle or facility area.***
- Remove and launder all clothing of personnel who may have come in contact with a contaminated individual.

### *Pre-shift Disinfecting of Vehicles*

- Ensure drivers' workstations are disinfected prior to the start of any shift.
- High-touch areas (steering wheels, controls, fare boxes, grab rails) should be wiped down with an EPA-approved disinfectant.
- Operators should be provided with a) disposable gloves and disinfecting wipes, and b) sufficient time to perform the work, dispose of gloves and wipes, and wash hands.

### *Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)*

- Transit agencies should provide cleaning staff with PPE *and* training on the proper use of PPE *prior* to assigning cleaning tasks.
- Where there is suspected Coronavirus, cleaning staff should wear disposable gloves and gowns for all cleaning tasks, including handling/disposing of trash.
- Other PPE, N95 masks, and face shields should be worn where there is a splash risk from cleaning chemicals/bodily fluids.
- *Gloves and gowns should be removed carefully.*
- Wash hands thoroughly after cleaning and removal of PPE.
- Report any breach in PPE (like glove tears), or any possible exposure to a supervisor.

**Face Masks and Gloves for Non-Cleaning Personnel**

- Many transit agencies are opposing the routine use of face masks and gloves for individuals who are neither thought to be infected with Coronavirus nor involved in cleaning or disinfecting work.
- ***While such masks provide only limited protection, the ATU International believes that employers should make N95 masks and disposable gloves available to employees, and allow them to wear them when working, if they so choose. Agencies should train employees on the proper fitting and use of N95s along with distribution of the masks.***
- Even when employers resist allowing employees to wear masks and disposable gloves, our Union is demanding that agencies procure N95 masks and disposable gloves so that they are available if ever needed.

***For our LACMTA members: If you need to stay home because your child's school or day-care center is closed, first inform your supervisor. You will receive a Request for Time Off Due to School Closure Form. Complete it and return to your supervisor. You may be able to change your shift times or get time off with pay—if approved by management. Also, please note that we have made several attempts to negotiate a non-chargeable leave policy with management at SunLine, Riverside, Long Beach and Metrolink.***

***Brothers and sisters, we all know that this Coronavirus epidemic is the most serious health concern we have ever faced. It is very bad, and most likely will get even worse before we manage to bring it under control. Be smart and safety-conscious. Follow these procedures to the letter! Your health, and that of your family depends on it. SAFETY FIRST!***



**ATU Local 1277 President Art Aguilar greets likely Democratic Party Presidential candidate Joe Biden in Los Angeles.**

# Knowledge is Power, but Time is Precious

By Mauro Varela - Treasurer, Local 1277

Greetings, brothers and sisters. It has been brought to your Executive Board's attention that there is some confusion about what classes qualify for the Joint Apprenticeship Committee (JAC) program. I want to clarify a few things. *First and foremost, I will never tell anyone that they wasted their time taking a class.* Because knowledge is power, and no one can ever take that away. However, I understand that everyone's time is very valuable, as we all have personal matters we need to tend to, or time we want to spend with our families. So, the best thing we can do is to make sure that we use our time wisely.

We don't want you *ever* to get discouraged and stop your education or pursuit for promotions because one of your classes did not count towards the required 24 units for the JAC programs. We've heard the words, "Just take any class with electrical or electronic." have been floating around out there. That's not entirely true: there are classes that one can take that have electrical or electronic in it, yet do not qualify for the 24-unit requirements. Like I said before, we want everyone to use your time wisely and focus on what will qualify for the program and give you the knowledge that is expected of you as a JAC candidate.

When choosing your classes, there are a few things to focus on. *Not all "electrical or electronics" classes will qualify for the 24 units required.* That said, what should you focus on? Keep in mind that 24 units is the equivalent to basic electrical knowledge. Register for classes that will give the basic concept and grasp of electrical fundamentals. Classes like AC and DC theory and fundamentals are a good starting point. Applied AC and DC calculations are also great to have on your transcripts.

The purpose of having the 24 units is *not* to hinder anyone from promoting into the JAC programs, it is so that the apprentices have a good basic understanding and grasp of the fundamentals of electricity. This is one of the key differences between the JAC program and the Mechanic OJT program. Those entering into the Mechanic OJT are *not* expected to have any knowledge of mechanical theories and principals. In the Mechanic OJT, candidates start their foundation from the ground up.

## ***Basic Electrical Theory Required***

On the other hand, in the JAC program, you are expected to have knowledge of basic electrical theory when you apply. The reason for this is, time spent in a JAC class is for familiarizing and focusing on specific equipment and practices at the agency. That said, how do you choose your classes so that they count, and so you use your time wisely?

Well, when choosing an "electronic or electrical" class, make sure that the focus of the class is electronic-based and *only* electronic-based. This means, *not* a split class. For example, a class at Los Angeles Trade Tech College (LATTTC) with the code **DIESLTK 142 Diesel Engine Overhaul and Electronic Engine Control** is a great class. However, as you can see by the title of the class, its focus is split between engine overhaul and *electronic* engine control. Now, as I said, this is a great class, and I would encourage any of our bus mechanics, or anyone wanting to promote to mechanic, to take it. It is more geared towards equipment with a Diesel/CNG engine. However, the focus of the class is *not* solely electrical theory or practices; therefore MTA's side of the committee has deemed this class as not eligible for the required 24 units.

Now, LATTTC has developed a set of classes specifically designed with MTA's JAC program in mind. I understand that because of the course code, it can be a little confusing, but the series of classes under Rail Maintenance (course code DIESLTK 401, 402, 403, and 404) are four (4) 10-unit classes that would satisfy the requirement for the JAC program at MTA. I know that these classes require a lot of sacrifice and time, and are not offered every semester. However, do *not* let that stop you from taking other classes—even at other colleges. Just keep in mind that not all colleges offer the same classes or number of units per class.

## ***Accreditation***

Another issue that members have been having is a problem with "accreditation." Many of you have gone to private colleges or trade schools, and I applaud you. However, keep in mind that when applying to the JAC program, *all 24 units must be from an accredited college, university, or trade school.* Some members have applied with transcripts from private colleges or trade schools where they show 24 units or more, however those schools are not accredited. Therefore, their units do *not* count for the JAC program. If you have any questions about your schools accreditation, or you completed your classes outside the U.S., you can contact the National Association of Credential Evaluation Services (NACES.org), have them evaluate your units, and submit their report with your application.

Last, but not least, when the JAC committee reviews applications, it is looking to see if applicants can follow directions. Please read and fill out all boxes in the application, along with submitting sealed "*Official*" transcripts. Applications have been denied for the simple reason of not being able to follow directions. There have been numerous times when applicants were denied because their applications were incomplete or missing transcripts, or were turned in with printouts of transcripts. You have put a lot of time and sacrifice, so please don't let your effort be in vain because of an incomplete application.

If you have any questions about how the JAC or Mechanic OJT works, look no further than your MTA/ATU contract. You can find and read up on both programs, if you look under Article 8, Sections *F & G*. Your Union has worked hard to negotiate these programs into our contract, and encourages all our members to take advantage of these career advancement opportunities.

When in doubt about enrolling in a particular class, feel free to contact me via phone or e-mail, or even to set up a quick one-on-one meeting to review your units. I can be reached at [mvarela@atu1277.com](mailto:mvarela@atu1277.com) or 213/210-7353. You can call or text or leave a message. Just make sure to leave your contact info so I can return your call, if need be. I thank you for your time, and I hope that this has cleared up some questions regarding the JAC program at MTA.

For our members at agencies in the Inland Empire (IE), keep your eyes open, because the IE Central Labor Council is working to develop its own Apprenticeship programs in partnership with Riverside Community College. I will follow up on this as developments happen.



# We Must *Always* Be Politically Vigilant!

By John DiRito - Executive Board Member-at-Large

Good morning, afternoon, and evening brothers and sisters, I hope this finds you and your families well and off to a great start in 2020. As we look forward to the Presidential election this year, the house of labor must always be vigilant and at the ready to defend itself. We must also be ready to support our political friends and fight our foes. We made excellent strides in 2019, in the effort to protect workers' rights and expand union representation.

We saw the minimum wage increase in California to \$12.00/hour for larger companies and \$11.00/hour for smaller ones. We also saw Overtime Laws be defined and enacted for agricultural workers in workplaces of 26 or more employees. It would seem ridiculous that—in 2019—hard-working men and women would still have to fight to earn overtime wages, but there you are!

But it's the same old, depressing story, isn't it? Big business constantly tries to do more with less, all on the backs of workers. If it can squeeze workers' wages, benefits, safety standards and pension contributions even more tightly—all in the name of fattening an already-bloated "bottom line"—then that is *exactly* what corporate America and its political stooges will do. Again and again.

## Case in Point

Here's a pretty outrageous example: As far back as 2014, an *eight-dollars-an-hour* employee at McDonald's in Philadelphia, started a drive to a) raise the minimum wage for workers at the national chain, and b) bring in a union to represent the working men and women. For his courageous—and correct—action, this employee was *fired* by McDonald's, then the second-largest private employer in the *world*.

The large and influential Service Employees International Union (SEIU) took up this case, along with hundreds of other cases in which employees had been disciplined or fired for either seeking a higher minimum wage or asking for union representation. SEIU took the case to the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), the supposedly independent body created in 1935 to protect workers' right—including *their right to organize*.

McDonald's claimed it was a franchised operation, a business model that allowed the parent company to distance itself from nearly 900,000 employees by claiming—ridiculously—that it hadn't fired the Philadelphia employee, *its franchise owner had*. Therefore, it could not be held liable for the dismissal of someone fighting for a higher minimum wage and a union.

The company brought in anti-union consultants and "expert witnesses," who defended the shielding of the parent company. SEIU argued that McDonald's itself was directly involved in efforts to keep the minimum wage as low as possible, and keep its employees from unionizing.

McDonald's, like all greedy corporate giants, dragged out the case as long as it could, hoping that mounting legal fees—which it could afford more easily than SEIU—would make the case go away. Finally, in 2017, a *Trump-appointed* NLRB general counsel—someone who had spent his career fighting unions on behalf of big business—offered a "settlement" that was so tremendously unfair to the workers that they immediately rejected it and went to court.

In July 2018, the trial judge rejected the settlement, saying it was not at all reasonable, based on the facts of the original case. McDonald's realized if the judge's ruling stood it would have to a nationwide union drive for representation at all its outlets. *But the NLRB had the right to overrule the judge, and with two new long-time violently anti-union Trump appointees put on the five-person panel, it did just that.*

## A Great Idea is Being Trashed

The NLRB grew out of the Depression-Era's National Labor Relations Act (NLRA). This very-much needed bill, signed into law by President Franklin Roosevelt in 1935, was a strong and correct response to rampant corporate *misbehavior* across the country. During the Depression, Corporate America used its muscle to gut unions, make sure workers didn't join one, and break up picket lines.

As desperate working people staged strikes across the country, some progressive senators finally were so repelled by business anti-worker tactics that they enacted the NLRA. Through the NLRB, it gave workers the right to organize and bargain collectively. It investigated companies' interfering with organizing and certified union elections. For a dozen years, the NLRB ensured a growth in union membership and—literally—the creation of a strong, vibrant working middle class.

But in 1947, Corporate America struck back—hard. Anti-union *Republicans* pushed through the Taft-Hartley Act, which very negatively amended the NLRA. *Passed over the veto of Democratic President Harry Truman*, Taft-Hartley let employers hold anti-union meetings on company time, banned sympathy strikes and boycotts, and allowed states to pass dreadful "right-to-work" laws, which banned mandatory union dues, even for workers who benefited from union representation.

Though badly hurt by these unfair, repressive regulations, unions held their own into the 1980s. Private-industry union membership declined, but public-sector union membership grew rapidly. But during the Reagan Presidency, the air controllers' union was decertified following a strike, and private industry saw a chance to jump on the anti-union bandwagon in its continuing effort to grind down working men and women.

Unions struggled—and continue to struggle to this day. Outsourcing of union jobs and outsourcing of entire plants and industries cut deeply into organized labor's membership, clout, and political influence. And now, under the current administration in Washington, D.C., the NLRB has more or less become a *corporate tool*. The agency designed to *protect* workers' and unions' rights has been *hijacked* by pro-corporate interests and agenda.

Maybe—just maybe—things can be turned around back in favor of working people with a new administration in Washington. The *right* President can make the right appointments to the NLRB. The *right* President can make his Department of Labor once again a voice and fighter for working men, women and families. The *right* President, brothers and sisters.

As always, your Executive Board does its best to inform you about the absolute importance of upcoming elections, key issues, and our role in the political process. And since this is a Presidential election year, with so very much at stake, we will keep pointing out the major issues and the candidates' views on them. *But, ultimately, it will be up to you to keep informed, tell others what you have learned, and vote.* There's a lot at stake here this year, brothers and sisters!

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

**Tuesday, Apr 7:** Los Angeles area members:  
**Tuesday, May 5:** L.A. Building Trades Council, 1626 Beverly Blvd., Los Angeles. Morning Session 10:00 a.m. Evening Session 5:00 p.m.

**Wednesday, Apr 8:** Metrolink Unit members:  
**Wednesday, May 6:** Union Offices, 1744 North Main Street. Morning Session 11:00 a.m.

**Wednesday, Apr 8:** Riverside area members:  
**Wednesday, May 6:** 1074 E. La Cadena Dr., Riverside Morning Session 10:00 a.m. Afternoon Session 3:00 p.m.

**Thursday, Apr 9:** Palm Springs/SunLine members:  
**Thursday, May 7:** Rebirth Temple of Faith, 1243 Gene Autry Trail, Room 115, Palm Springs Morning Session 10:00 a.m. Afternoon Session 4:00 p.m.

**Thursday, Apr 9:** Long Beach:  
**Thursday, May 7:** Machinist Hall, 319 W. Broadway, Long Beach Morning Session 10:00 a.m. Afternoon Session 3:00 p.m.