



# Local 1277

**News**  
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## President's report

### **In a Time of Historic Crisis, ATU Members Continue to Serve!**

*By Art Aguilar - President, Local 1277*

As our region, our state, our nation, and indeed the entire world, is engulfed by the fast-spreading, still incurable coronavirus (Covid-19), mere words almost cannot express my awe and admiration for the heroic, unselfish and determined response to this pandemic on the part of ATU brothers and sisters across this country and in Canada.

Our members—along with those from many other great, involved and caring unions, representing working people in many professions—are true heroes. *They—you!—symbolize the very best traits in our society: Reliability, determination, commitment, sharing, professionalism, and confidence that things will get better.*

Your dedication and service are beyond praise! But—and it grieves me to have to report this—your efforts have come with a heavy price.

As of evening, April 15, **21** outstanding ATU members across the country have died from exposure to the virus. We all hope and pray that that awful number will not increase too much. Here is a list of ATU members who have given their all in serving others:

- **Jason Hargrove**, Local 26, Detroit, Michigan, 3 Years, 6 months of Service, Operator
- **Henry Gaffney**, Local 26, Detroit, Michigan, 30 Years of Service, Operator
- **Kimberly Henderson**, Local 241, Chicago, Illinois, 2 Years of Service, Operator
- **Darrell Jones**, Local 241, Chicago, Illinois, 20 Years of Service, Operator
- **Andrew Wong**, Local 589, Boston, Massachusetts, 21 Years, 11 months of Service, Operator
- **Gary Hahn**, Local 627, Cincinnati, Ohio, 30 Years of Service, Retired Maintenance
- **Dennis Wallace**, Local 788, St. Louis, Missouri, 20 Years of Service, Operator
- **Philip Dover**, Local 819, Newark New Jersey, 24 Years of Service, Operator
- **Tolbert Furr**, Local 819, Newark, New Jersey, 34 Years of Service, Light Rail Operator
- **Lionel Hogan**, Local 1056, Flushing, New York, 3 Years of Service, Operator
- **Marvin Snowden**, Local 1091, Austin, Texas, 17 Years of Service, Master Mechanic
- **Hugo Gutierrez**, Local 1179, New York, New York, 12 Years of Service, Operator
- **Sung Truong**, Local 1179, New York, New York, 8 Years of Service, Supervisor

- **Gregory Graham**, Local 1179, New York, New York, 5 Years of Service, Maintenance
- **Sylvester Palmer**, Local 1560, New Orleans, Louisiana, Instructor
- **Scott Ryan**, Local 1576, Lynwood, Washington, 4 Years, 9 Months, Shop Steward
- **Segundo Lecaro**, Local 1614, Dover, New Jersey, 40 Years of Service, Bus Operator
- **Phillip Deberry**, Local 1700, Richmond, Virginia, 46 Years of Service, Operator
- **Joseph Madore**, Local 1763, Rocky Hill, Connecticut, 2 Years of Service, Operator
- **Harold Pogar**, Local 1764, Washington, D.C., 17 Years of Service, Operator
- **David Dudley**, Local 1764, Washington, D.C., Operator

### ***Rest in Peace!***

While the loss of any of these fine brothers is an unmitigated disaster, the case of Brother Hargrove stands out as an example of humanity at its *best—and worst*.

*Jason Hargrove, a Detroit Bus Driver since October 2016, had diligently and ably served the city's mass transit-dependent public. In March of this year, with the virus a deadly factor in our lives, a woman passenger on his bus coughed a number of times and had no protection on her. Brother Hargrove—rightly!—posted a video denouncing the complete disrespect shown by this woman as he was serving the public at a risk to his own health.*

*"We're out here as public workers, doing our job, trying to make an honest living to take care of our families," he said. "But for you to get on this bus, and stand on the bus, and cough several times without covering your mouth, and you know we are in the middle of a pandemic, that lets me know that some folks don't care."*

Brother Hargrove was, of course, right (the best of us) in dressing down that uncaring rider (the worst of us). *Ten days after posting his video, Brother Hargrove, 50, father of six, died from complications of Covid-19.*

His video, now seen by nearly a million people, is his memorial, his statement of values, and a reminder of the dangers that transit employees and other blue-collar workers face. The mayor of Detroit, Mike Duggan, saluted Brother Hargrove: *"He knew his life was being put in jeopardy—even though he was going to work for the citizens of Detroit every day—by somebody who just didn't care, somebody who didn't take this crisis seriously."*

Brother Hargrove was an active member of ATU Local 26. On his Facebook page, he posted this under a picture of himself on his bus, wearing a mask: *"I cannot stay home. I'm on the road 4U."*

*No finer epitaph can sum up the courage, dedication and life of Brother Jason Hargrove.*

# IP Costa's Strong Words Of Support and Warning

ATU International President John Costa minces no words in commenting on the virus pandemic. ***"We will not sit back and let transit workers be treated like cannon fodder. Too many transit agencies are not providing Personal Protective Equipment for their employees, endangering the lives of our members and the families they go home to."*** He is right!

President Costa went on to say, ***"We are prepared to take whatever aggressive action is necessary in order to protect our members and their families. Nothing is off the table. Dying is no way to make a living!"*** Referring to the deaths of ATU members, Brother Costa noted, ***"These are a tragic loss of heroic front-line workers."*** He is damn right!

President Costa likens this fight against the virus to open warfare: ***"We are first-line responders. We're trying to keep the economy going. This crisis, right now, is like a war."*** And throughout it all, ATU brothers and sisters keep clocking in to provide public transit across our country and in Canada.

IP Costa and I have demanded this earlier in the crisis, and we demand it again: ***Transit agencies—here in Southern California and across the United States and Canada—must supply their employees with N95 masks and gloves. They must ensure repeated disinfecting of vehicles. They must enforce social distancing among riders. They must provide line-of-duty (hazardous) wages and benefits, and pandemic leave.***

It is very much worth noting that along with the selfless dedication and heroism of ATU brothers and sisters in Operations, Maintenance and Information Technology, other big unions are doing their very best to fight this pandemic. Often their members are putting their lives on the line in this battle. I warmly and fraternally salute the brothers and sisters—and leadership—of TWU, TCU, SMART-UTU, Teamsters SEIU, UFCW, Retail Clerks, Utility Workers, Hospital Employees, Letter Carriers, and first-responders like Police, Fire and EMT professionals. ***You do the organized labor movement and yourselves proud!***

## Looking Back—and Ahead

The current coronavirus pandemic is often compared to the 1918-1919 global outbreak of influenza that claimed anywhere between 50,000,000 and 100,000,000 lives. That worldwide catastrophe was unlike anything humanity had ever undergone, and hopefully will ever face.

Here's a quick snapshot of how the ATU reacted to the crisis: In November, 1918, the year World War 1 ended. \$50,000 in claims (that was a lot of money then) had been filed with the Union. The International's General Executive Board, realizing the need to help its struggling members, assessed every ATU brother and sister \$1.00 (again, a lot of money then), so that it could pay out claims. Bottom line: The nation and the world survived the pandemic, and the ATU not only survived, but thrived, growing into the force it is today. ***We will do so today!***

Looking ahead, there is good (even though it is non-medical) news: The ATU, along with organized labor and most Americans, applaud passage of the \$2 trillion Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act. Now signed into law, CARES provides some \$25 billion in emergency mass-transit funding. This funding—destined largely for operations, which includes wages and benefits—will keep transit workers on the job and help provide security for our riders.

Your Union—both the ATU International and Local 1277—is constantly and diligently on the job for you, especially during this coronavirus crisis. It is good to be in a union, to be among brothers and sisters who care about you and your families, your health and your future.

Your Executive Board is on the job, daily and at all hours, if needed. Every morning, we conduct a video meeting with our legislative arm, the California Conference Board, discussing key health and work-related issues. Our International Vice-Presidents, International Representatives, Attorneys and Lobbyist are all involved. LACMTA has been having bi-weekly meetings with the unions on the property. Following the meetings, we have been having zoom meetings with the Shop Stewards from LACMTA.

As for the other properties we have asked for meetings weekly but that has not happened. Riverside Transit has been working with the ATU via letters and individual calls. Sunline Transit has been working with the Shop Stewards and officers assigned to the property. Metrolink has had conference calls to fix some issues. Long Beach has worked with the Board and Shop Stewards on temporary issues. We have set up weekly meetings with the stewards via zoom. Every Friday the International has a conference call with all the Presidents in the U.S. and Canada. We report our findings to our Shop Stewards, who then get the information out to you—at all our properties.

Our International Union has set up a Covid-19 Command and Response Hotline. If you have any questions or comments about the on-going crisis, you can call 855-610-8946 or e-mail to [coronaviralert@atu.org](mailto:coronaviralert@atu.org)

***This damn virus is everywhere, brothers and sisters, and—unfortunately—this local, national and global crisis is likely to get worse before it gets better. But the ATU fighting spirit and can-do commitment will get all of us—and our families—through this.***

A final thought on the dedication and vision of our heroic members: Edmonton, Canada, Coach Operators of ATU Local 569 have volunteered to transport homeless citizens in their city to "Covid-19 safe" shelters. As one Brother, Derek Bailey, put it, ***"When the coronavirus is finally over, I want to be able to look back and say I did what I could when I was asked."***

***Brothers and sisters, with that kind of strength and caring among our members, no damn virus is going to beat us! God bless you all!***

## Lives and careers at stake

### **Do Not Let Coronavirus Lead You To Depression, Drink or Drugs!**

*By Jeff Shaffer - Financial-Recording Secretary*

Look, it's now a worldwide fact, an indelible imprint and impact on our lives and those of our families. This coronavirus (Covid-19) is ravaging our society, our professions, our everyday thinking and actions. *This pandemic, brothers and sisters, may well be the single-greatest crisis (health or otherwise) that we, as individuals and the human family, will ever face in our lifetime.*

That's the world view, and it is chilling. But I want to frame this crisis in terms of our Union, our careers, ourselves, our families, and our futures. *We are going to get through this.* I don't know how long this state of emergency will last, I can't guess what the final cost—human, economic and social, will be, but we will survive this.

But I find myself worrying about the toll this pandemic might be taking on individual members of ATU Local 1277. I think about usually active men and women like yourselves, many of whom are being forced to “self-quarantine” at home, because of both governmental directive and plain common sense. I think about your new reality, your very valid concerns about your families and friends, your possible financial and professional uncertainty, your frustrations and feelings of helplessness in the face of a completely new and dangerous and invisible unknown factor in your lives.

*Simply put, I worry that a negative combination of fear, a feeling of helplessness, and depression might lead to artificial—and dangerous—“remedies” to your concerns.*

What am I referring to? Excess drinking, use of drugs. Anything to take that “edge” off your day-to-day concerns. **Brothers and sisters, I cannot over-emphasize this: Do not allow yourselves to regard alcohol and drugs as solutions that will get you and your families through this crisis! They won't, and abuse of either will only make your situation worse—both at home for now and, quite possibly, on the job when we finally return to our important work!**



## **DRUG & ALCOHOL FREE**



### **There is Help Available**

If you are afraid that you might be unduly tempted by either alcohol or drugs, they are programs that can help you avoid the pitfalls of overindulgence. Here are three good ones:

- Through your Union, the **Employee Assistance Program (EAP)** is available for your use. Do not hesitate to take advantage of this proven, confidential support resource. If you have any questions about the EAP, or wonder if it can help you, please reach out to your Shop Steward or any Local 1277 Executive Board member for advice or just to talk.

- Similarly, the **Substance Abuse Program (SAP)** is available for your use. Like the EAP, it is a proven, confidential support resource. As with the EAP, do not hesitate to reach out to your Shop Steward or any Local 1277 Executive Board Member for advice or just to talk.

- **The Browning Therapy Group** has a record of success in helping men and women who has alcohol, substance (or other personal and family) abuse problems overcome destructive habits and actions that are so harmful. As with EAP and SAP, all sessions are *strictly* confidential. As with the other programs, reach out to your Shop Steward or an Executive Board for advice.

Help is there, brothers and sisters, if you need it. All you have to do is reach out for it. There is no shame—*none*—in seeking help during this (or any) serious crisis. And crises don't get any more serious than this one! In fact, it seems to me that it is a very positive sign of self-awareness that a person realizes a) he/she needs help and b) has the strength to ask for it.

Look at it this way: If you need some help in getting through this crisis, then your own health, your families' well-being, your careers and your future *certainly* are good enough reasons to reach out. *It is the right thing to do.*

We *will* get over this! I just want every active Local 1277 brother and sister to be fully functional and clean whenever we are called back to work.



## **It still matters a lot!**

### **Census Reminder**

*By Mauro Varela - Treasurer, Local 1277*

Dear brothers and sisters, I fully understand the many worries this Covid-19 pandemic has brought to everyone. I also get it that the 2020 Census is probably one of the last things on your mind right now, and that may be understandable. I am sure many of us missed Census Day on April 1st. ***However, unlike this pandemic, the 2020 census will have far greater and longer lasting consequences if we don't count everyone.*** In fact, considering the current state that we are in, had we counted everyone during the 2010 census, we might have possibly been better prepared for this pandemic.

How you ask? Well, as I stated in my January 2020 article, the census helps determine funding for new hospitals and the staff to run them. During the 2010 census, it is estimated that nearly *one million* people were not counted in Los Angeles County alone. Again, I know that we may be preoccupied with helping our children navigate online learning, or making sure we have the necessary supplies to keep our families safe. However, this is not an excuse for us not to complete the census. *It is simple and should not take you more than 15 minutes to complete, and it is conveniently online.*

By now, every household in the country should have received a postcard in the mail regarding the census. The card will have a unique code for your address. Simply take your postcard and go to **2020census.gov**, enter your code and answer the questions. If you have lost your postcard or the dog ate it, don't panic. Just go to the website. You will have to enter your information manually and answer the questions.

*Again, please do not wait and do not forget! This is extremely important. We all need to do our part and get counted.* Not to beat a dead horse, but remember: Union households were considered among the "hard to count" group during the 2010 census. Let's not repeat that under-count again! If you would like more information on the census, please visit **2020census.gov** or the Los Angeles Federation of Labor's website at <https://thelafed.org/take-action/census-2020/>

*Thank you for taking the time to fill out your census form, even in the middle of the health crisis we all face.*

***Due to the Coronavirus,  
all Local 1277 unit meetings  
have been postponed until the time  
when it will be safe to hold them.  
All members will receive  
credit for these meetings.***

# **PLEASE STAY SAFE!**