



Local 1277

News

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President's report

The Terrible Count Keeps Climbing

By Art Aguilar - President, Local 1277

As the deadly Coronavirus pandemic continues to spread, and the federal government continues to show a lack of real leadership, it is my sad duty to report that 23 more ATU brothers and sisters have fallen victim to this plague. This brings our terrible total up to 77 fine ATU members who have left us far too early. States that "opened up" far too soon have found out the hard way that they should not have done so.

- **Mariano Quintanilla Erazo**, Local 1764, Washington, D.C., Utility Worker
- **Mike Winkler**, Local 587, Seattle, Washington, Operator, 30 years
- **Eugene Presley**, Local, 732, Atlanta, Georgia, 5 Years, Bus Operator
- **John Luna**, Local 1091, Austin, Texas, 6 Years, Operator
- **Louis Arleo**, Local 1181, New York, New York, School Bus Operator
- **Robert Edmond**, Local 1181, New York, New York, School Bus Operator
- **Yves Lafond**, Local 1181, New York, New York, School Bus Operator
- **Diego Choute**, Local 1181, New York, New York, School Bus Operator
- **Anathol Desamours**, Local 1181, New York, New York, School Bus Operator
- **Claire Bien-Aime**, Local 1181, New York, New York, School Bus Operator
- **Ivan Peter**, Local 1181, New York, New York, School Bus Operator
- **Marise Micial**, Local 1181, New York, New York, School Bus Operator
- **Rosita Estinfil**, Local 1181, New York, New York, School Bus Operator
- **Durocher Sylvain**, Local 1181, New York, New York, School Bus Operator
- **Yira Diaz**, Local 1181, New York, New York, School Bus Operator
- **Cesar Cruz**, Local 1181, New York, New York, School Bus Operator
- **Peter Michael Costa**, Local 1181, New York, New York, School Bus Operator
- **Conceptione Fuentes**, Local 1181, New York, New York, School Bus Operator
- **Steve Rannazzisi**, Local 1181, New York, New York, School Bus Operator

- **Marie Jacques**, Local 1181, New York, New York, School Bus Operator
- **Pablo Cruz**, Local 1181, New York, New York, School Bus Operator
- **Rigoberto Ochoa**, Local 1433 Phoenix, Arizona, 13 Years, Bus Operator
- **Alberet E. DeRubis**, Local 1336, Bridgeport, Connecticut, Operator



Rest in Peace!



Big Honor for ATU International President John Costa

I am happy to report a good piece of *non-coronavirus related news*: In mid-June, ATU International President John Costa was appointed to the influential Executive Board of the *National AFL-CIO*. This is a prestigious position within the house of labor, and gives our International Union a stronger voice in American worker-management and political affairs.

In accepting this appointment, President Costa said, "*I am humbled and honored to serve on the AFL-CIO Executive Council. This is a pivotal moment in the labor movement and our country for advancing economic, racial and worker justice. I look forward to joining the Executive Council and representing the more than 200,000 hard-working sisters and brothers of our Union.*"

Congratulations, Brother Costa! I know you will do both the ATU and organized labor proud as a member of the Executive Council.

An Early Heads Up!

Brothers and sisters, we all know just how critically important the upcoming Presidential and Congressional elections are. Tuesday, November 3, is really that vital to our future.

But aside from the partisan races, I want to alert you really early (and I'll remind you again in September and October) to the absolute importance of defeating the unfair and anti-union State Proposition 22! This corporate power grab would overturn the

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progressive, pro-union AB 5, which was signed into law and which brought basic rights to thousands of Uber and Lyft drivers in California. Basic rights like health insurance, pensions, overtime pay and, yes, possible union representation.

Organized labor poured its heart and soul—along with money and volunteers—into securing passage of this landmark legislation. We must not—and will not—allow big business and its bottom-line-first mentality to repeal a law that is good for thousands of working people and their families!

More on the fight to defeat Proposition 22 and save the AB legislation in September.

Notes from the Front Line

Our timely and very necessary *Ride Safe Campaign*. I am pleased to report that ATU local unions throughout California are teaming up with community leaders to *demand* that transit agencies provide resources, support and safe working conditions that are needed to keep transit workers and riders safe.

In order to get ATU members and our allies involved in this important effort, our sister local, 1555 in Oakland, has had its brothers and sisters place thousands of phone calls around the state to support the Ride Safe Campaign. You can support this worthy effort by signing and on-line petition. Simply log onto <https://bit.ly/CARidesafe>

ATU Pushes for Safer Airflow on Buses

In light of the continuing—and still unchecked—Coronavirus pandemic, our International Union is demanding even *more* protection for transit workers and riders. Unfortunately, we must keep demanding these improvements because, for far too long, many transit agencies have refused to take the obvious lead in protecting their workers and passengers.

Airflow on buses is an important factor in both spreading the virus and containing it. It is a major safety concern. In response to this concern, the ATU has developed a range of ways for coach Operators and riders to be protected, including re-directing airflow and installing glass shields around drivers. These and other pro-active precautions will ensure a safer environment for Operators and riders—all for a relatively minor, cost-effective outlay by transit agencies.



Proposed Coronavirus Aid Package Would Include \$15 Billion for Transit

With ridership understandably down sharply on mass transit across the country because of the on-going Coronavirus pandemic, transit agencies—our employers—are facing economic disaster. Losses are spiraling into the *billions* of dollars, and there appears to be no end in sight.

As you can imagine, our International Union is leading the effort to secure badly needed funding from a federal government that not only doesn't want to support us, *but still seems to think there isn't that much of a health crisis at all!*

In May, the *Democratic*-controlled House of Representatives passed a coronavirus aid package that included an additional \$15 billion in funding for cash-strapped mass-transit agencies (*once again, our employers*). Well, you guessed it: The aid package has been stalled in the *Republican*-controlled senate.

Democratic Senator Bob Menendez (N.J.) is leading 25 of his colleagues in urging the GOP senate leadership to include \$32 billion in aid for public transit in the next Coronavirus aid package that the senate is scheduled to consider in early August. The Democratic senators noted, *"We must recognize the true costs of the Coronavirus on our transit systems. Decreased fare box revenue has continued longer than we anticipated two months ago, and the reduction in other revenue sources such as local sales taxes are deeper than anyone predicted."*

Newsflash: *Republican* senate leaders have agreed to consider a new Coronavirus aid package, but have already said that any package will be *far narrower than the previous round of relief*. Transit leaders across the country—labor and management—are warning Congress that the longer it waits to act decisively, the deeper the effects will be on bus, rail and subway systems. And the worse, of course, it will be for the mass transit-dependent riding public!

Bottom line: Democratic legislators recognize the crisis American mass transit is facing, while Republican lawmakers seem to be, at best ignorant or, worse, uncaring.

Strike for Black Lives

On Monday, July 20, tens of thousands of unionized working men and women staged a mass walkout from work to remember and protest systemic racism and police brutality in our country.

The Strike for Black Lives brought fast-food, ride-share, nursing home and airport workers—just to name some of the employee groups—together for this important cause. They left their worksites for almost *nine minutes*, the amount of time Minneapolis police choked George Floyd to death in May. The social action also included worker-led marches and mass rallies.

Strike organizers demanded sweeping action by corporations and government at all levels to confront systemic racism and economic inequality. They called for guaranteed sick pay, better and affordable healthcare, and jobsite safety improvements for employees who cannot work from home and must come to their jobsites.

Commenting on this mass strike and protest, ATU International President John Costa said, *“A global health pandemic, an economic depression, and continual structural and systemic racism have converged in a ‘perfect storm’, and the lives of middle-class people of color have never been more at risk. The ATU proudly stands in solidarity with our sisters and brothers who are striking for black lives on July 20.”*

Amen to that!

Please don't forget!

The Census is an Important Political Tool for Us

By Mauro Varela - Treasurer, Local 1277

Brothers and sisters, as I noted in the January and May newspapers, the federal census is an important tool for organized labor, as it works to bring much-needed governmental funding to underserved families and communities throughout Southern California.

As a reminder: *During the 2010 census, it is estimated that nearly **1,000,000** people were not counted in Los Angeles County alone!* Think about the lost political clout here: An accurate counting of Los Angeles County residents back in 2010 would have meant that the politicians and bureaucratic decision makers would have been forced to acknowledge the needs and goals of so many more people like us—and do something constructive about them.

The continuing—and still spreading—Coronavirus pandemic is another reason that the census is so important: ***Currently, governmental help and funding to battle the virus is based on 2010 census data.*** Because of the vast undercounting from that year, far too many families and communities are not receiving the assistance they need. A truly accurate count this year will go a long way towards remedying this unfair situation.

Furthermore, many of the incorporated cities within our area have already begun to form district commissions based on 2020 census data. This is important because these commissions set spending priorities, and we need our families and communities to be accurately counted and have a voice in those decisions.

By now, of course, you have received a postcard regarding the census. This card will have a unique code for your address. It's simple. All you have to do is take that card and go to **2020census.gov**, enter your code and answer a few questions. This shouldn't take more than 15 minutes. And if you've lost that card, no crisis; just go to the website and enter your information manually. That's it.

Please do not wait, and do not forget! This is extremely important. We do *not* want to be undercounted or relegated to “hard to count” this year! Numbers matter. The stakes are very high. Our needs and goals are too important.

Thank you for taking the time to fill out your census form, even in the middle of this on-going health crisis facing us all. I know you have many important things on your mind, but I assure you that filling out the census form is very much worth your time.

COO Award to Division 9!

Quick Thinking Brothers Save Fellow Employees' Life

By John DiRito - Board Member-at-Large

Here's a really upbeat, positive story in the middle of the out-of-control Coronavirus pandemic.

On May 29, in the early afternoon, a number of LACMTA Division 9 brothers acted quickly and correctly, and in doing so, saved the life of a fellow employee and union member! They found our member unconscious in front of the Division 9 building annex. Our members showed *outstanding* leadership, along with superb function as a team. They took charge of a very stressful situation that required immediate and proper attention and they responded quickly to the emergency.

Displaying skill and training, they administered first aid to the stricken employee, using the Heimlich maneuver to prevent choking, CPR and the use of a defibrillator. They calmly secured the scene, called emergency services, and—above all—*knew exactly what to do while waiting for EMT professionals to arrive.*

As a result, our quick-thinking members bought enough time for the paramedics to take charge of the situation. Our members' active participation in the Metro Safety Training/First Aid, Division Safety Tailgate meetings allowed them to play a *major* role in saving that employee's life. The lesson here: *The right response in an emergency can mean the difference between life and death.* They made the right response!

The life-saving team consisted of: Lance Valenzuela (71064); Alejandro Leano (86344); Armando Soto (83487); Pete Baeza (24114); Tony Sanchez (24757); John Popoff (24906); Supervisor Adam Lopez (ATU, Retired), and Division 9 Director William Roebuck.

Congratulations!

Pride, jobs and unions

Why Buy American?

By Errol Frazier - Vice President, Local 1277

In mid-July, our candidate for President, Joe Biden, unveiled a massive economic recovery plan. It is designed to get our economy going strong again, get Americans back to work, and increase our productivity. It is a strong, necessary package of ideas. One of Biden's main points is *Buy American*. With that in mind, let's remind ourselves: Why Buy American?

I have asked myself that question many times, and of course I have heard and know the standard answers: "It saves jobs" and "It helps our economy". But I really wanted some rock-solid facts to back up my answer to this important and often-asked question. You, brothers and sisters, deserve nothing less, so I thought it over and took the time to do a little research, which I'd like to share with you.

During the past 10-15 years, some **5.5 million** manufacturing jobs have been lost in this country. *Five and a half million!* Just think about how many individuals and families have been negatively affected by that staggering statistic. And that's not the total disastrous picture: During that same gloomy period, more than **30 million** jobs, in total, have been lost.

Now, it is true that a recent economic uptick has helped lower the national unemployment rate to a 50-year low. But—and this is a big but—how many of those new jobs are either a) high-tech gig jobs that are non-union and so overpaying that they simply widen the already-ridiculous income-equality gap, or b) low paying, non-union, minimal (if any) benefits, dead-end *McJobs*?

What Was Then, What is Now

Up until the mid-to-late 1970's, America was a manufacturing powerhouse nation. We supplied much of the world with a lot of their essential goods. Our economy was thriving, jobs were plentiful and well paying—and *largely unionized*.

But beginning in the 1980s, however, and pretty much carrying on through the end of the 20th Century and the first couple of decades of this one, that trend has changed. *We are now a consumer nation—buying the goods produced in other countries*. There's the really depressing irony: More and more, American consumers are buying up the same essential products we used to make in abundance and send overseas! *And be very clear about this, brothers and sisters: A lot of these goods we import are made in countries that either have no labor laws to speak of (10-year-old kids making our Nikes, anyone?), or completely stand against every human and social value we cherish (how about all those "Made in China" items you have lying around?).*



To make things even more economically dangerous, we are *increasing* our favor for, and dependence on, foreign-made goods. Items that run from the most ordinary (maybe your dog's feeding bowl or your pocket lighter) to expensive specialty goods (like cars and electronic devices). *"Over this same last 10-15 years, the United States has lost out on approximately \$2 trillion in cumulative trade deficits with China alone"*, stated economist Roger Simmermaker in an on-line article *"Building by Buying American"* in *The New York Times*. He goes on to say, *"The \$2 trillion of forfeited production would have generated \$600 billion of national revenue and created millions of jobs in the U.S."*

Think about how many of those jobs (many of which would have been union) could have been created just by rebuilding our nation's crumbling infrastructure—roads, highways, bridges, ports, airports and the like! Think about how many American families could have been made more financially secure because of good-paying jobs and adequate benefits!

The website *AmericansWorking.com* estimates that for every *one* manufacturing job, there are *five* other jobs that are created; for example, truck driver, accountant, research & development and clerical. The website also gives a few more examples of the effects of what buying American-made products can help to conserve or preserve—including benefits to the environment, human rights, fairer social and economic equality and democracy itself.

The Bottom Line

So, there it is, brothers and sisters. The bottom line, which I believe provides the answers and supporting facts to the question, *"Why buy American?"* I really hope that I have given every one of you enough reasons from here forward, to be a "patriotic consumer" when you open your wallets and purses. The trade imbalance we can help lower will boost our economy and create jobs. A stronger economy means better jobs, many of which may well be union, since more and more American working people are realizing the importance of banding together at the worksite. And—the prosperity, freedom, opportunity, and the country we save will be our own!