



Local 1277

News

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President's report

A positive trend

Some Gains for Organized Labor

By Art Aguilar - President, Local 1277

After four disastrous years under the previous administration, organized labor—the union movement that we are all a part of—is starting to score some significant gains. *And it's about time, brothers and sisters!*

President (“I’m a union man!”) Joe Biden may be the strongest out-and-out pro-union leader we have ever had. His Secretary of Labor, Martin Walsh, is the former head of the Boston Building Trades Council. His Secretary of Transportation, Pete Buttigieg, has stressed his commitment to working people and families, in a position that greatly affects our jobs and careers. His appointments to the boards and agencies that regulate and rule on labor-management and jobsite issues come from the ranks of experienced pro-union backgrounds. He has signed legislation that secured *tens of billions of dollars* to help stabilize union pension funds.

Equally encouraging, more and more working men and women—in professions as diverse as Amazon warehouses, Starbucks outlets, and even the medical field—are realizing the value and *importance* of forming unions and collectively bargaining for the wages, benefits and security that they need both for themselves and their families and their futures. The general public is now also much more supportive of unions.

Here are some recent items that show that organized labor is back!

On **February 7**, the Biden Administration released a report outlining *several dozen* steps it intends to take to promote union membership and collective-bargaining rights among public and private-sector employees. The report was the work of a Presidential task force, which recommended almost 70 steps aimed at increasing union membership and influence—all of which President Biden accepted!

The task force had two major goals: Enact policies for federal agencies and contractors that *encourage* unionization and promote those policies for employees in public and private fields.

Many of these proposals make it easier for federal workers and contractor employees to unionize. They include: Ensuring that union organizers have access to employees on federal property (not always the case); preferences in federal grant and loan programs for employers who have strong labor standards; *preventing employers from spending federal contract money on anti-union campaigns*, and making employees fully aware of their organizing rights.

With that last right in mind, it is worth noting that the federal government generally cannot deny contracts to companies it regards as anti-union. *But, under the new guidelines, it may be able to consider a company's attitude towards unions and factor that into contract considerations.*

President Biden recently signed an executive order requiring that “project labor agreements” (deals between construction unions and contractors that set wages and working conditions) must be in force on federal construction projects worth more than \$35,000,000. This order will positively affect some 200,000 working people. A previous executive order he signed raised the minimum wage for federal contractors from \$10.95 to \$15.00 an hour.

The President truly is “a union man” and he is showing it!

On **February 9**, a federal appeals court *upheld* a union-backed California law that bars government officials from discouraging their employees to join unions and pay union dues.

The law was originally passed in 2017 and designed to prevent state and local agencies and officials from discouraging or out-and-out preventing employees from joining a union of their choice and paying fees to unions. This last provision is aimed at stopping “free riders”, employees who benefit from union representation and contracts but do not support them financially with monthly dues.

In reaching its *unanimous* decision, the Ninth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals rejected a claim by several municipal and school-board officials who said the law violated their free-speech rights. The court said that the 2017 law did not apply to individuals, just agencies.

A nice, overdue win!

ATU brother to the rescue! If President Biden needed any more proof of the bravery and quick thinking of union members, he got it in Pittsburgh. In late January, the President visited the Steel City—a key voting area in the very important 2022 battleground state of Pennsylvania—to promote his excellent and much-needed infrastructure package. Just *how much* it is needed soon became apparent.

Shortly before he arrived, a dangerously aging and much-used bridge in Pittsburgh *collapsed* with many cars and buses on it. Ten people were injured, some seriously. An ATU Local 85 Bus Operator, along with some first responders, leaped into action, joining a human chain to help rescue coach passengers. The bus itself was dangling at the edge of the bridge! “A miracle that no one was killed,” said Local 85 President Ross Nicotero. “This was a tragic, unfortunate situation that could have been a heck of a lot worse.”

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President Biden visited the site of the collapse and talked about how funding from this bill is critical in order to prevent similar disasters in the future. This is simply further proof that massive, necessary spending on an entire range of mass-transit and transportation-infrastructure projects (roads, bridges, ports, airports, mass-transit systems) is critically needed!

Safeguard your families!

Keep Savings for a Rainy Day!

Brothers and Sisters, when is the last time we had a labor dispute here at ATU Local 1277? Fortunately, it has been 19 years. Yes, back in 2003 we went on strike over medical benefits. Now, I am not saying we are going to have issues this year, but my next question is this: ***Have you saved any money for in the event of a labor dispute? If your answer is no, well what are you waiting for?***

Please make—and update as necessary—a list of your basic priorities: Utilities; various insurance policies; auto payments, rent or mortgage, etc. Add up your total *yearly* debt. Divide it by 12. Now start putting that amount away every month. If you do not touch that money, then you will have two, possibly even three months' worth of savings for a potential labor dispute.

Now, even if we do not have a labor dispute at your respective property, and even we get a new contract, please continue to save. If during your employment lifetime you do not have to face the stress of a labor dispute, you will potentially be able to have a nest egg that will help you during your retirement. So, it is a win-win situation—work stoppages or not. If for whatever reason we *do* have a labor dispute, you will be ready for the long haul. Remember, if a sanction strike line is up, we—as loyal union brothers and sisters—***never cross that line!***

Please keep in mind that at LACMTA, SMART and UTU are in negotiations. Also, TEAMSTERS at SunLine are in negotiations as well.

Many new members are correctly relying on those of us with tenure to light the way and teach what is supposed to be the 'right' way to maintain our working environment. If we fail to hold management to a just standard (or even make sure it adheres to our contract!) then those new workers will be accustomed to a lower quality of work life. *And that is something that organized labor is always dead set against!*

Contract after contract, we strive to improve our work conditions so that they become much safer and more productive than before. So, even though you may not be working shoulder to shoulder with a member, or he or she may not even be in your same classification, you can still educate and guide that person if you know there is an issue being handled incorrectly in their department. In fact, I would challenge anyone who witnessed something happening *counter* to any work or contract standards, to immediately contact their Shop Steward and report the issue.

Furthermore, I would challenge everyone to *not* let this lesson end only at the workplace! Who better to understand that life is fraught with hazards and debt-incurring career and personal choices than the working class? If you have been fortunate enough to get a union job that helps bring stability to your family life, then take the time to teach your family what rights they should have as workers and citizens. Pass on to them the knowledge of what it takes to have a job with longevity.

Working a career job doesn't mean it should be handled as a short sprint race, but rather, a marathon. The future generations can learn from both mistakes and victories from the past, and who better to tell those stories than the members who lived them?



A form of "continuing education"

Pass on What You Have Learned

By John DiRito - Executive Board Member-at-Large

Good morning, afternoon, and evening brothers and sisters. I hope this newsletter finds you and your family well—and *healthy*. As we all continue to press on, and deal with these world changing issues, it is important to also remind ourselves that we need to learn from our past.

Your Executive Board team continues to work with all agencies with regards to the pandemic, and to not only keep members protected, but advocate for having the safest workplace possible. While it may not seem like much is being accomplished immediately, there is always work happening! And remember, the men and women who are the 'boots on the ground' workers, provide the best way to get immediate results. While one member's objection may be seen as a complainer, *several* workers raising the same issue will be an issue that cannot be ignored.

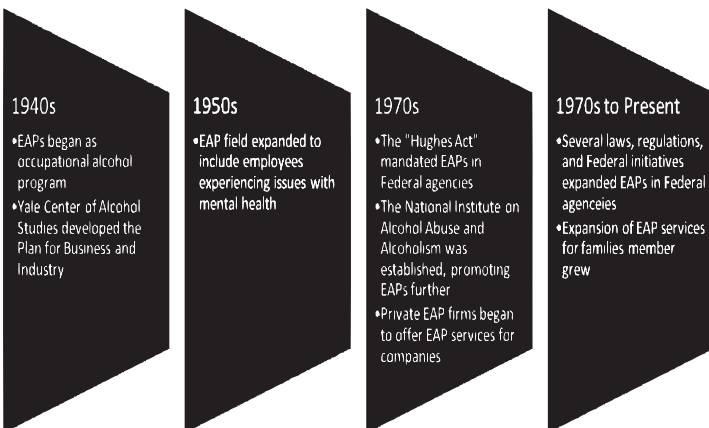
An Excellent benefit!

The History of Federal EAPs

By Jeff Shaffer - Financial Recording Secretary

Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) have a long history in the United States, tracing back to the 1940s. They originally began as occupational alcohol programs to address the negative impact that the misuse of alcohol has on productivity and organizational performance. The focus of these programs expanded as organizations recognized that alcohol was not the only issue affecting employees at work. Current EAPs address a wide range of issues, such as workplace conflicts, family matters, financial challenges, mental health, and so on.

In the 1970s, EAP-related legislation began to be passed, institutionalizing EAPs in Federal agencies. Review the Guidance & Legislation section for details on EAP laws, regulations, and Governmentwide initiatives. Another significant change to the EAP field in the 1970s was the formation of private EAP firms. These organizations began to offer EAP services via contracts to employers. As a result, Federal agencies can have one of four different EAP models: Internal, External, Hybrid, and Consortium. More recently, EAPs in Federal agencies have continued to expand their services and sustain their essential role. Many Federal EAPs now offer services for family members of employees.



Local 1277's EAP Provider

The ATU Local 1277 has our own provider in "The Browning Therapy Group". There are things covered in our Union Plan that may not be covered by most Employer EAP Programs and Healthcare Plans.

Here are the personal/professional issues that are covered:

- **Personal & Family relationship problems**
- Domestic Violence
- **Marriage & Partner counseling**
- Family therapy
- **Family or relationship crises**

- Parenting/co-parenting counseling
- **Blended family issues**
- Divorce adjustment
- **Problems related to DUI & stress from legal issues**
- Workplace stress & conflicts
- **Retirement adjustment issues**
- Crisis intervention

All services are available to eligible active and retiree members of ATU and their immediate families.

With most EAP programs provided by the Employer, privacy and confidentiality of your counseling is limited and cannot be guaranteed, since the outcome may be shared with your employer, or become part of your permanent employee records.

On the other hand, under your Union Plan you receive care from professional and highly skilled therapists with the assurance of total confidentiality. Everything that takes place between you and your counselor at Browning Therapy Group can never become a part of your permanent employee records. This information will not be shared with any outside person, governmental agency, insurance company, EAP group or your employer. In addition, the comprehensive Mental Health and Substance Abuse services provided to you and your family under your Union Plan are not available through EAP services, nor any other typical healthcare insurance plan.

If You Need Help

If you or a family member need any of these services, please reach out to Browning Therapy Group.

Browning Therapy Group - A Professional Family Counseling Corporation
5122 Katella Avenue, Suite 305
Los Alamitos, CA 90720

For information, or to set up an appointment, call:
800-4-YOU-NOW
562-596-2142
714-662-1212

Website: www.BrowningTherapy.com

E-mail: info@BrowningTherapy.com

Brothers and sisters, please be very clear about this: *There is no—repeat NO—stigma attached to seeking professional help with any number of personal or professional problems you and/or your family may experience! There is nothing wrong with facing a problem and then reaching out for assistance. You are not—repeat NOT—any kind of a lesser person or transit professional because you are facing a serious crisis and realize that you need some impartial, experienced professional help! This is what EAP is and what it can do for you and your family and career. If you need that kind of assistance, take it! You and your family and your future will be all the better because you took that first brave step!*

OFFICIALLY retired

Fifteen Local 1277 Members Retire from Careers at MTA

Fifteen Local 1277 members have retired from MTA after long and productive careers. They all were hardworking employees and loyal members of our Union.

Pieter Van Soelen, Mechanic A, Division 15, 31 years, September 1, 2021; **Justo Rogel**, Master Mechanic, Division 5, 24 years, September 22; **Dennis Wesolowski**, Mechanic A, Division 13, 23 years, September 23, September 23; **Jose E Perez**, Mechanic A, Division 5, 32 years, September 30; **David Santillanez**, Master Mechanic, Division 3, 19 years, October 1; **Antonio R. Sanchez**, Mechanic A, Division 9, 23 years, October 30; **Douglas Hirtz**, Track Inspector, Track Department, 29 years, November 2; **Russell Rotunno**, Electronic Communications Technician, Revenue Collections, 17 years, December 11; **Jose F. Melendez**, AC Technician, Facility Maintenance, 10 years, December 16; **Leslie Davison**, Laborer A, Stops and Zones Department, 33 years, January 3, 2022; **Peter T Nguyen**, Maintenance Specialist, Blue Line, 28 years, January 4; **Juan Jauregui**, Mechanic A, Division 13, 33 years, January 5; **Manuel Cortez**, Facility Systems Technician, Facility Maintenance, 15 years, January 20; **Keith Maceo**, Mechanic A, Division 18, 35 years, January 22, and **Mario Bernabe**, Mechanic A, Division 18, 35 years, January 31.

Local 1277's Executive Board and members wish these brothers and sisters long, enjoyable and healthy retirements. They will be missed!

Fifteen More Local 1277 Members Contribute to Vital ATU COPE Fund

Fifteen members of our Union have generously contributed to the important ATU COPE Fund. As you know, our International Union amasses this war chest in order to support our political friends and causes, and fight the enemies of working people and families. We are proud to present Union pins and jackets to those members who have realized how vital the ATU COPE Fund is for expanding labor's influence in Congress and advancing our agenda.

Charonne Ray; Normandy Villacorta; Willie Brooks; Ruben Ramirez; Antonio E Hernandez; Richard Hendricks; Jaime Nava; Hilario Rendon; Moses Carranza; Oscar Tun; Erich Guidry; Miguel A Romero; Brian Douglas; David J Vargas, and Ambrose Lew.

To earn a jacket, one must contribute \$12.50/month, for a total of \$150.00/year. Congratulations to those members for their public-spirited and timely action. The ATU COPE Fund is very important. Please contribute whatever you can to it! Thank you.

Here are the upcoming Local 1277 membership meetings for 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, Tuesday, April 5:	Los Angeles area members: L.A. Building Trades Council, 1626 Beverly Blvd., Los Angeles. Morning Session 10:00 a.m. Evening Session 5:00 p.m.
Wednesday, Wednesday, April 6:	MetroLink Unit members: Local 1277 Office, 1744 North Main Street. Morning Session 8:30 a.m. Evening Session 5:00 p.m.
Wednesday, Wednesday, April 6:	Riverside area members: IELC Building, 1074 E. La Cadena Dr., Riverside Morning Session 10:00 a.m. Afternoon Session 3:00 p.m.
Thursday, Thursday, April 7:	SunLine area members: Hilton Palm Springs, 400 East Tahquitz Canyon Way, Palm Springs Morning Session 10:00 a.m. Afternoon Session 4:00 p.m.
Thursday, Thursday, April 7:	Long Beach area members: LBFA Local 372, 2201 Cherry Avenue, Signal Hill CA 90755 Morning: 10:00 a.m. Afternoon: 3:00 p.m. Evening: 6:00 p.m.