



Local 1277

News

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President's report

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My final report to you

By Art Aguilar
Former President, Local 1277

Elections at the ATU International Convention

At the 60th ATU International Convention, which was held September 19–23, in Las Vegas, several elections have altered the leadership of our great Union.

International Executive Vice President (IEVP) Javier Perez, along with International Vice Presidents (IVPs) Janis Borhardt, Bruce Hamilton, and Chuck Watson, retired. Significantly, Yvette Trujillo became the first Latina International Executive Vice President. Congratulations to Sister Trujillo and lasting thanks and appreciation to the retiring ATU leaders.

Fourteen current IVPs were re-elected, including our own James Lindsay. I was honored to be elected as a IVP on a white ballot. I was nominated by Brother John Courtney, President of ATU Local 265, San Jose, and seconded by Brothers Bob Bean, President of ATU Local 1433, Phoenix, and Tomas Fret, President of ATU Local 1181, New York City.

Thank you, Every Wonderful Local 1277 Member!

It's been the privilege—no, the *honor*—of a lifetime to have served you and our strong Union as an officer since 2004 and as an active member since 1989. Except for my own family, ATU Local 1277 and its active and retired members, and their *own* families, is the center of my life, the reason I wake up every morning and work as hard as I have done.

Nothing—*nothing*—has been more important to me than negotiating the best-possible contracts for every member, guaranteeing safe working conditions, adequate and affordable healthcare, increasing our Union's political and social influence, and securing a safe, healthy, and enjoyable retirement for all of you.

It's been a labor of love, and I have been so very blessed to serve you and our Union.

Now, through great fortune, I have been given the opportunity to serve not only our local, but the ATU International at large. I know I am joining the ranks of hard-working, dedicated, and experienced international officers who crisscross this country and Canada on behalf of more than 200,000 outstanding transit professionals and their families. I can think of no greater honor. And no greater responsibility.

I unequivocally pledge the commitment and determination I exercised on behalf of ATU Local 1277 to the important tasks that await me as an IVP. I look forward to these challenges: Organizing, representing, and negotiating on behalf of my brothers and sisters in the ATU. I cannot imagine finer, more important work.

I may physically be leaving ATU Local 1277 and you, but I will carry our memories and the goals in my heart, and I will never—*never*—forget the solidarity and achievements that bind us together for a lifetime. You brothers and sisters and families will *always* be in my thoughts and will be the continuing inspiration for everything I do in the future.

God bless every Local 1277 active member, retiree, and family! And please, always, *always* remember: **"In Union There is Strength!"**

Warmly, fraternally, and gratefully,

Arturo

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Approval for Unions Is at Its Highest Rate in Almost 60 Years

We saw it coming, didn't we, brothers and sisters. Because of 1) out-of-control income inequality, 2) greedy, scandal-ridden corporate executives, 3) declining lifestyle for the backbone of our country: the working middle class, 4) an anti-union, anti-working families administration *before* pro-union President Joe Biden, 5) courts and governmental agencies openly hostile to our interests and goals, and 6) a tragic, needless gutting of access to adequate, affordable healthcare, quality education, environmental priorities, social civility and cooperation and just plain fairness, *something had to change!*

And it has. Dramatically. ***The union movement—the driving force behind the effort needed to root out and change the above-mentioned rot that is threatening our country—is now recognized, in the public eye, as the best***

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ATU “Stronger Together”

As you know, we just had the 60th International Convention in Las Vegas. It is an honor and a privilege to be part of the ATU, a Union that is fair and offers equal opportunities to everybody regardless your race, sex or nationality. During those five days, I had the opportunity to learn more about our Union and how important our jobs are. "We Move the City": Mechanics; Utilities; Drivers; Dispatchers, and all the other transit agency positions. Now I understand how strong these words are: **“Together We Fight, Together We Win.”**

I'm glad to be part of the ATU, one of the biggest Unions in the U.S. and Canada. We had the opportunity to meet with Shop Stewards from different places, and I learned that no matter how much we think we know, there is always something new to learn!

Maria Miller
Shop Steward, SunLine MCOs

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First and foremost, I would like to take the opportunity to thank all my brothers and sisters from ATU Local 1277 for blessing me with another opportunity to be a delegate to the 60th Amalgamated Transit Union International Convention. As representatives, we were able to nominate and elect the future leadership of this great union, who will in turn lead us into the future.

One of the biggest takeaways from this convention was the solidarity among our membership in great times and in tragedies. How we come together to forge ahead and prosper. This was a beautiful thing to experience. Hopefully, in time each member will get a chance to attend a convention and experience what we delegates had the opportunity to do and know that as ATU we are **Stronger Together!**

Victor Rodriguez
Shop Steward, LBT Operations

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As an active member of ATU Local 1277 and the Riverside Transit Agency, I am happy to have had a chance to attend such a family-orientated event like the 60th Annual International Convention. I met so many people and learned so many things going on, around the world and with our ATU family. As a Puerto Rican woman, I am proud to have witnessed the first Latina Woman voted in as International Executive Vice President, Yvette Trujillo. Also, congratulation to our own Local's President, Art Aguilar, on his election to International Vice President #15.

Listening to Teresa Romero, the first Latina and immigrant women to become president of a national union (UFW) in the U.S., was also a great honor. Listening to her talk about the struggles that farmworkers face today was heart wrenching, but with the assistance from John Costa, our International President, and the backing of our Amalgamated brothers and sisters from all corners of the U.S. and Canada, I am certain that she will help bring them the fairness and equality

that they deserve. I am proud to be a member of such a powerful organization and I truly believe in our theme, **We are Stronger Together!**

Josephine Garcia
Former Shop Steward, RTA Operations

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Thank you for electing me to represent you in our ATU 60th International Convention. It's the first time I attended a union convention, and I want to thank you again for voting for me for delegate 10. The convention was a five-day event. Our days started at 8:30 a.m. with a prayer on the convention floor. On day one, we heard an opening speech from our International President, John Costa. Mr. Costa remembered those we lost in this pandemic and the tragedy in Santa Clara. He emphasized the importance of organizing on the local level, the future of democracy, and urged all of us to get out and vote. **“ATU! STRONGER TOGETHER!”**

We had many great and inspirational speakers all week long. The speaker who stood out the most was, on day three, Marty Walsh, the U.S. Secretary of Labor. He described himself as a card-carrying union member. Brothers and Sisters, this is why we need to get out and vote and donate to the ATU-COPE Fund, so we can keep leaders like Mr. Walsh in office, a man who believe in unions.

It was a great honor to vote for Yvette Trujillo for ATU's first female and Latina International Executive Vice President. And I want to congratulate our Local President, Art Aguilar, on being elected as an International Vice President. The Convention was jammed- packed full of activities, and it was a great experience to participate in. I encourage all of you, at the next election for delegates, to run and participate in our union's next convention.

Julian R. Torres
Shop Steward, MTA CMF-B

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I would like to express my appreciation for the opportunity of becoming the first person from Riverside Transit to get voted in as a Delegate to an ATU International Convention. The International Convention was held in Las Vegas, Nevada for five days. Each day started at 8:30 a.m. We heard many different speakers talk about being **“Stronger Together”** and **“Together We Fight! Together We Win!”** throughout the convention.

International President John Costa spoke about the loss we have suffered from the pandemic and the tragic event that happen at Local 265, in Santa Clara. I also had the honor to see the first Latina women voted as International Executive Vice President, Yvette Trujillo. I would like to say congratulation to my Local President, Art Aguilar, for being elected to IVP seat #15. I'm very thankful that I was given the opportunity to come to the convention, and learn, and be a part of a family that truly cares and is willing to fight for everyone.

Michelle Santa Cruz | Shop Steward, RTA Operations

Here are the upcoming Local 1277 membership meetings for November. 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, Nov. 1:	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, Nov. 2:	Metrolink Unit members: Local 1277 Office, 1744 North Main Street. Morning Session 8:30 a.m. Evening Session 5:00 p.m.
Wednesday, Nov. 2:	Riverside area members: IELC Building, 1074 E. La Cadena Dr., Riverside Morning Session 10:00 a.m. Afternoon Session 3:00 p.m.
Thursday, Nov. 3:	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, Nov. 3:	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.

The delegates vote on proposed union rules and bylaws. The International Convention is held every three years, so your own ATU Constitution and General Bylaws booklet is updated. This is because some rules and bylaws get changed at the convention. How are they changed? *Strictly by a democratic vote by all of the delegates!* As rule or law change is proposed, every delegate has a chance to speak on the issue if they wish, and then they have a duty to vote. Some rules may be approved by simple majority, others may require a 2/3 majority.

What gets voted on? Well, all kinds of things, but more importantly issues that our International will take up on behalf of all its members across the U.S. and Canada. Issues can range from politics (like who we will endorse or oppose), to social rights and activism. From the future of mass transit to remembering those who have come before us, honoring their legacy, and protecting what they've fought for. This is where we tell our GEB the direction we want to go as a union.

I certainly don't want to forget the most important votes: *For our International officers and GEB!* That said, it was no surprise that International President John Costa was re-elected. Brother Costa has not only moved our International Union forward since taking over, he is the first International President to travel up and down the West Coast in a long time. He is forward-thinking when it comes to his membership and is leading the union-political effort to secure legislation to reduce and hopefully stop and prevent Operator assaults. He's taken steps to make sure that no one get left behind in our country regardless of race, sex, or creed. He is making sure that everyone has their voice heard and their rights protected. Oh, and it doesn't hurt that Brother Costa is a friend of Joe Biden, the most pro-union President ever! No wonder then when asked if there was any other nomination for International President, a loud "**Hell No!**" echoed throughout the Convention Center!

We Make History

We also witnessed history with the White Ballot nomination of Sister Yvette Trujillo as the first woman and Latina Executive Vice President to our International Union. We elected Brother Ken Kirk, on another White Ballot, as International Secretary-Treasurer; he had replaced Oscar Owens when "Double O" passed away unexpectedly. Some International Vice President (IVPs) retired after many years of service, and because of that, our own James Lindsay has moved up to being the #5 IVP!

I would like to take a personal point of privilege here: A very special new IVP means something important to me. If it were not for this man, I probably wouldn't be writing this. He challenged me to step and make a difference. He challenged me to not only talk about change, but to actually *be* the change. Sisters and Brothers, it is my great pleasure and honor to have served as the Treasurer under Local 1277 President Arturo Aguilar. ***Yes, sisters and brothers, my brother, my mentor and friend, Arturo Aguilar, was nominated and elected as the 15th IVP of our International Union. I wish Art a long and prosperous career helping***

others across the US and Canada just as he has helped us here at home. Brother, you will be missed!

The changes to the Constitution and General Bylaws will all be listed in your new book. Lastly, let me gratefully acknowledge the praise heaped on our International Union by a series of video appearances on the last day of the Convention. Our friend President Biden spoke, as did his strong Secretary of Labor, Marty Walsh. The President of the Canadian Labor Congress, Bea Bruske congratulated our Union's work. Finally, there were memorial tributes to the ATU members we have lost to covid, the brothers who were killed in Santa Clara on May 26, 2021, and the late, beloved Oscar Owens.

Brothers and sisters, this convention recharged my batteries and helped me remember why and how we got here, and our responsibilities as *your* representatives. So, from the bottom of my heart, I thank you for allowing me the honor and privilege of being your Treasurer and delegate to our International Convention.

* * * Local 1277 Shop Stewards Share Their Convention Experiences

The energy and brotherhood of the ATU International Convention is truly motivating and exhilarating. I have now been a delegate to the last two ATU conventions, in 2019 and again this year. Both times, the electricity on the convention floor was very noticeable and contagious.

At this year's convention, I witnessed the true power of the union and the cooperation between local unions, ATU International Vice Presidents, and ATU-appointed specialists, who all worked together to aid in union matters. At both conventions, I also served as a member of the Maintenance, New Technology, and Workforce Development Committee. This committee focuses on the changes in technology in the transit industry. Because it also deals with maintenance issues, many of the same committee members serve from convention to convention, just as I did, so we can make progress on specific issues.

At the 2019 convention, for example, ATU Local 241 brothers on our committee were very upset about the conditions at their shop, including unfair treatment, unequal pay, and other matters. Between that convention and this year's gathering, the ATU International worked with their local union to start to solve many of these issues. In this year's committee meetings, the members from Local 241 seemed to be very appreciative of the help. One member in particular seemed to be much happier. When I spoke with him, he said they are on the way to fixing many of the issues he was unhappy with. It was truly inspiring.

The ATU International Convention is a lot of things: Inspiring; informative; hard work; fun, and interesting. But most important of all, it is a place where working people can network and put their heads together to create a better work environment for us all. What I saw in my committee meetings, from convention to convention, made that very obvious to me. After all, what is brotherhood if not helping someone when they need you? And that is what unions are all about. Brotherhood is what makes us ***Stronger Together!***

***Aaron Williams | Shop Steward, MTA Division 7
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instrument to bring about the changes we so very much need!

More than 70% of the American public, as reported by the highly respected Gallup Poll in August, now strongly approve of labor unions and the agenda we have for working people and families! This is the highest support for unions across the country since 1965!

This is very encouraging news, and it comes out of a series of union victories this year in previously anti-union corporations like Amazon and Starbucks. There's still a long way to go at both these companies and others, but the early wins point to more unionized men and women in the national workforce.

Some very positive statistics that reflect the growing importance and influence of unions:

- The National Labor Relations Board reports a 57% increase in union-election petitions across the country
- **About one in six Americans now live in a union household, defined as a home with at least one union member**
- Union membership has risen not only among traditional "front-line" and production workers, but also among *non*-traditional employers in healthcare, social services, and administrative/ service industries
- **More than 40% of union members now say membership is "extremely important to themselves and their families"**

Gallup also reported some more meaningful insights concerning the attraction of unions and the priorities of union members themselves:

- Two-thirds of those polled said better pay and benefits were the main reason they joined a union
- **Almost 60% said it was to improve employee rights and representation**
- More than 40% said it was about stronger job security
- **About a third cited the need for better pensions and retirement benefits**
- About a quarter of those polled mentioned better jobsite environment and fairness at work

Bottom line: Unions *work*. They provide working men, women, and families with the lifestyle they both need and deserve. Unions are a *positive force*. They spearhead the drives for income equality, expanded healthcare, better education, environmental change, job creation, and a more just society, with respect to economic and social equality and civility.

Your Union, ATU Local 1277, serves you in every way possible, and through the efforts of our International Union and all the other great national unions that represent working people, we are working ceaselessly to make or society, our country, as better and fairer place for us all!

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Clarifying Local 1277's Browning Therapy Group

In the March 2022 newsletter, Local 1277 Financial-Recording Secretary Jeff Shaffer laid out in detail the

excellent benefits of the Employee Assistance Program (EAP). This is a worthy help plan that can assist Local 1277 active and retired members, as well as their families.

Local 1277 has its own assistance provider: The Browning Therapy Group (BTG). *It is very important for all LACMTA ATU Local 1277 members and families to know that this experienced professional counseling company is a benefit provided by your Union, not by MTA or any other agency! This is just part of Local 1277's continuing effort to support your mental and emotional health.*

Please note: Any and all visits are confidential! And although this benefit is paid for by our medical plan, be assured that it is NOT the same EAP Program that MTA offers.

BTG offers counseling in matters of personal and family relationships, among them: domestic violence; family therapy; marriage & partner advice; divorce adjustment; workplace stress, and problems relating to DUI and legal issues. BTG is reachable at 800/4-YOU-NOW, 562/596-2142, and 714/662-1212. Or E-mail: info@BrowningTherapy.com Or its Website: www.BrowningTherapy.com

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California Closer to Mental Health Support Services for Transit Workers

Spearheaded by ATU Local 265 (San Jose), California is thankfully a step closer to providing mental-health support services for transit workers across the state. Governor Newsom has ok'd SB 1294, which will establish wellness centers for transit workers and their families.

"This bill has the potential to save lives," said Local 265 President John Courtney, who has led the fight for its passage. He noted that better mental-health support and counseling might have prevented the mass-shooting tragedy that struck his local on May 26, 2021, when nine ATU workers were slain by a disturbed gunman. *Brother Courtney is absolutely right when he says that mental-health support and services part of every discussion on workplace safety and worker protection. No such counseling was available prior to the VTA shooting.*

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60th ATU International Convention Report

*By Mauro Varela,
Treasurer, Local 1277*

For the third time, I had the honor and privilege to representing you and our Union at the 60th ATU International Convention in Las Vegas. This was a full week of guest speakers, committee work, and elections to the General Executive Board (GEB).

Let me explain what happens at the International Convention and why it matters to you. This is where the delegates who represent ATU members across the U.S. and Canada vote on new International officers and the recommendations of the various policy committees. All ATU locals send delegates, and the bigger the local, the more delegates it sends.