



# Local 1277

# News

September, 2023

1744 North Main Street • Los Angeles, CA 90031 • (323) 222-1277

Website: [www.atu1277.com](http://www.atu1277.com)

© 2023

## **A win-win idea** **Labor-Management Partnerships**

By Mauro Varela  
Treasurer, Local 1277

There is a term that when spoken sounds like a bit of an oxymoron: *Labor-Management Partnership*. This concept can be hard to grasp because of the decades-long struggle between labor (unions representing employees) and management (employers). Despite these often bitter and even violent struggles, there has sometimes been—surprisingly—a hopeful thought: *Why don't labor and management try to work together?*

Even though there will always still be issues that need to be bargained for, at least “we” (labor and management) can work on something that can be beneficial to both sides. There are things like mentorship and apprenticeship possibilities out there that help build upon those partnerships. In starting and maintaining these mentorships and apprenticeships, both sides can help to promote upward mobility and promotions for our members while, at the same time, helping the employer fill sometimes difficult and specialized vacancies.

With that in mind, I am pleased to inform you about ATU Local 1277's first true Labor-Management Partnership. For the last year and a half, we have been working with Riverside Transit Agency's (RTA) management to get in place what we hope to be the first of many mentorships across all the properties we represent. It is called RAMP 22, and it is surging along this long road towards developing a mentorship program for our brothers and sisters in both maintenance and operations at RTA.

### **RAMP 22**

What is RAMP 22? Well, it stands for *Riverside Transit and ATU 1277 Mentorship Program*. The 22 because it was founded in 2022. What does it do? Hopefully soon, under the direction of the labor-management committee—which is made up of RTA's CEO, CASO, Directors of Maintenance and Operations, and Local 1277's Treasurer, Maintenance and Operations Stewards, and a former steward/member—it will provide training for the first group of mentors in both maintenance and operations.

Who are the mentors and what do they do? Mentors are seasoned veterans in both maintenance and operations who will be there to provide guidance, the wisdom of their experience, and encouragement to newly hired members. They

will act as “support systems” to help them get through what most of us veterans know can be a difficult learning process. *I know, from my own experience, that had we had mentors when I first started at MTA, some of those road calls I was sent to with very little guidance or information would have been less stressful.* That, simply, is the goal of this mentorship program: Lower the number of stressors to make it a more comfortable and pleasurable work environment for newbies. And veterans, too, because their work is made easier and their stress-levels are lowered when the new hires have a better grasp of what they are supposed to do.

Out of all the properties we represent, RTA has taken the lead in making the steps and strides to work productively with Local 1277. With RAMP 22 on pace to start training mentors soon, other transit agencies are taking notice and are now reaching out to our Union to start talks about bringing a program like RAMP 22 to their own yards and shops.

### **RAMP is Only a Beginning**

A mentorship program Like RAMP is only the beginning. We are holding on-going conversations with other locals throughout the state and the country which already have programs in place. We discuss the lessons learned and the pitfalls that other programs have experienced in helping their members better themselves professionally, safely, and in health. In getting RAMP 22 off the ground and moving to where it is today, we visited other partnerships to get an idea of what is needed to get the ball rolling.

We were fortunate enough to observe the partnerships between ATU Local 265 and VTA, ATU Local 192 and AC Transit, and ATU Local 1575 and Golden Gate Transit. I thank our sister locals—officers and members—as well as the agencies that opened their doors, allowed us to see how they operate, and shared their experiences. Because of that cooperation, we were able to get an idea of how to better serve our members at RTA.

Our goal is to one day not only have a mentorship program consistently going, but to start full apprenticeship programs to allow for promotions. I applaud RTA for taking the leap into the unknown and working with our Union for mutual benefit. For our RTA brothers and sisters, and the rest of our brothers and sisters in the properties we serve, we look to you to take the lead in establishing similar programs. ***So be proud and proactive and lead us into tomorrow!***

If you have any questions about how you can be involved in starting or participating in a mentorship or apprenticeship program at your location, please do not hesitate to reach out to me at [mvarrela@atulocal1277.onmicrosoft.com](mailto:mvarrela@atulocal1277.onmicrosoft.com) for further information.

## Know Your Weingarten Rights!

By Victor Rodriguez  
Executive Board Member-at-Large

Your Weingarten Rights are both important to you and very much worth understanding. *They assure you of union representation during any investigative meeting with management.*

In the past, some ATU Local 1277 brothers and sisters unknowingly have forfeited their absolute right to have a union representative with them during a confrontational meeting with management. For example, some supervisors may approach our members and begin a casual conversation. During this “friendly” chat, the supervisor might ask you questions about a whole range of things, including job performance, safety rules, attendance, attitude, insubordination, drinking, drug use, falsification of records, theft, or sabotage.

Some supervisors feel that they can intimidate you because of their position or intimidate you by continuing to ask you questions. You may feel compelled to answer, to defend yourself, and perhaps become augmentative. A word to the wise: *Don't ever think such potentially entrapping*

*conversations can't take place! They can. And do.*

**If you have the slightest feeling that this conversation could lead to discipline, you can demand a union rep. Demanding a union rep completes the situation, ends the conversation/interview right then and there. Simply put, disciplinary interviews need union representation, conversations that do not lead to discipline do not need it.**

*As an employee, you must make it clear that you are requesting union representation. This request must come before or during the conversation/interview. You can ask for a union Shop Steward, and you should point out that you have every right to the presence of a Shop Steward at this point. Further, be sure to state that you will not answer any questions until you have either a Shop Steward present or union representative.*

## A Possible Unfair Labor Practice

If you are denied the right to any kind of union representation, and the interview continues, be sure to state that continued conversation may well be classified as an unfair labor practice. *Your employer may not discipline you for*



## It's Game Time!

Please join us for an all-star party celebrating  
our wonderful ATU Local 1277 retirees!

An always fun-filled time of dining, drinking,  
music, nostalgia, catching up with friends, and our exciting, great-fun raffle!



Saturday, October 28, 2023

10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

at the

Carson Event Center, 801 East Carson Street  
Carson, CA 90745



**Retirees: Please RSVP only if you are able to attend**

If you wish to bring any additional guest,  
they may attend at \$80.00 per person.

This year's theme is: *Game Time!*

We encourage you to wear your favorite  
sports team's jersey, shirt, and hat!



**RSVPs will be mailed out in September.  
Invites will only be sent to retirees who have paid their Union Dues.**

*refusing to answer.* However, you may *not* choose to have another union member at your jobsite to represent you. You *must* be represented by either your Shop Steward or a Local 1277 rep.

Be sure to contact your Shop Steward if you are uncertain about a line of questioning that could lead to disciplinary action. Your Shop Steward is your first line of defense; he or she has experience in handling these situations. Your Shop Steward has the right to question the subject matter of a conversation as it pertains to you.

He or she has the right to meet with you in private and discuss your situation. Your Shop Steward should be present during all meetings/incidents—from verbal warnings all the way to termination—and during *any and all* discussions with management pertaining to discipline. If you give up your rights to management at any point, it could cost you your job in the long run.

## Invoking Your Weingarten Rights

When you feel the need to claim your Weingarten Rights, it will help you to have a copy of the following words

on you at all times while you work. You can produce this passage and read it to your supervisor.

**An employee has the legal right to say, if this discussion could in any way lead to being disciplined or terminated, or cause and affect my working conditions: “I respectfully request that my union representative be present at this meeting. Without representation present, I choose not to participate.”**

It would also be a good idea to have with you the business card of one of Local 1277’s Executive Board officers.

Your Weingarten Rights are a very important and hard-fought benefit that you have. Hopefully, you may never need to invoke them, but please be sure to understand them and how to exercise them if you have to do so.

\* \* \*

## Thinking about “our” holiday

### The Labor Movement: A Brief History

By Errol Frazier  
Vice President, Local 1277

As you dig into mouth-watering barbecue and share the nice weather with family, good friends, neighbors, and co-workers, I hope you take a moment to think about what Labor Day means and celebrates.

Oh, and before I forget: The three-day Labor Day weekend. ***It was the union movement that created the weekend in the first place, fighting for and eventually bringing management around to the idea that working people needed—and well deserved—some time off from their labor!***

Unions have been around in one form or another since *before* our country’s formal birth in 1776. The labor movement began and grew because of the need to protect the workers. For their members, organized labor has fought long, hard, and sometimes violently for reasonable working hours, better wages and benefits, and safer working conditions. The union movement has benefitted the greater good—our communities and American society as a whole. The union movement built and now sustains the great working middle-class, the backbone of our—and any —stable democracy.

*Simply put, unions mean a better life for us all.*

The arrival of the pilgrims at Plymouth Rock in 1620

was the foundation of the labor movement in colonial America. Carpenters, shoemakers, cabinet makers and other working craftsmen of that time and society were some of the first to arrive. Many of these workers played a large role in the fight for independence and the “pursuit of happiness” through shorter hours and better pay.

The very first strike (see *History.com/Labor Movement-Facts & Summary*) occurred in New York City in 1768—*eight years before our Declaration of Independence!* The strike was called in protest against a wage reduction for journeyman tailors.

Around the 1820s, the few organized labor groups that existed started a push to reduce the regular working day from a very long 12 hours down to a “more manageable” 10 hours. This is around the time that the steam engine was invented, and the use of water power to operate heavy machinery was starting to flourish. In effect, this was the infancy of the industrial revolution in America. This was the beginning of the big factory system. This was the era that would produce great wealth for the few and dehumanizing poverty for many.

## Organized Labor Gets Rolling

This is also the period that organized labor would start to make its greatest gains with respect to the numbers of members. In many cities across the nation, unions would join together to form federations. Such a federation, formed in 1866, was the National Labor Union. It was able to persuade Congress to pass a law that would make eight hours the

*Continued to page 4...*

standard workday for federal workers. The eventually would become the standard working day for all American working men and women.

Almost 50 years later—in 1911—on New York City’s lower East Side, the Triangle Shirtwaist Company building caught fire. Almost all of the 150 employees, mostly young women, died horribly. Some burned, but many jumped to their death. They perished because all of the fire escapes had been locked shut—allegedly to “prevent theft”! This and many other tragedies like it became the battle cry, the rallying demand of organized labor: **Improve workers’ safety!** This early fight brough about long-overdue and much-needed changes and paved the way for significant reforms in industrial standards for jobsite safety in all professions.

All of the gains that can and should be attributed to the fight by the labor movement have been enjoyed by *all* working

people. The standard eight-hour working day, improved jobsite safety and oversight (like OSHA), the right to organize unions, pensions and healthcare, family and medical leave, and fair opportunities for training and promotion.

Further, it is a fact that increases in wages won by organized labor raised the average compensation in crafts and industries across the country. Vacations and the amount of service time accrued (seniority) are also benefits that have been enjoyed by *non-union* workers through the efforts of unions.

I really hope you enjoy your long, well-earned weekend, but let’s never forget that any—if not all—of the advantages we benefit from were won by brave people who came before us and fought long and hard (and often violently) for them. And for the many who will come after us, it is now *our* time to proudly carry the torch for the labor movement. *Our labor movement!*

\* \* \*



*Have a Happy and Safe Labor Day*

Here are the upcoming Local 1277 membership meetings for September & October. 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, Sep. 5:	Los Angeles area members:
Tuesday, Oct. 3:	L.A. Building Trades Council, 1626 Beverly Blvd., Los Angeles. Morning Session 10:00 a.m. Evening Session 5:00 p.m.
Wednesday, Sep. 6:	Metrolink Unit members:
Wednesday, Oct. 4:	Local 1277 Office, 1744 North Main Street. Morning Session 8:30 a.m. Evening Session 5:00 p.m.
Wednesday, Sep. 6:	Riverside area members:
Wednesday, Oct. 4:	IELC Building, 1074 E. La Cadena Dr., Riverside Morning Session 10:00 a.m. Afternoon Session 3:00 p.m.
Thursday, Sep. 7:	SunLine area members:
Thursday, Oct. 5:	Hilton Palm Springs, 400 East Tahquitz Canyon Way, Palm Springs Morning Session 10:00 a.m. Afternoon Session 4:00 p.m.
Thursday, Sep. 7:	Long Beach area members:
Thursday, Oct. 5:	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.