



Local 1277

News

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 203

Especially now!

The Vital Importance of Immigration Status

By Mauro Varela
Treasurer, Local 1277

Brothers and sisters, it's unfortunate that over the past year I've had to handle several cases where our members lost their jobs *due to their immigration status*. You've most likely seen headlines about DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals). You've probably heard claims that undocumented immigrants are taking jobs—along with other misleading, prejudicial and demoralizing narratives. Let me tell you, right now, and in no uncertain words: ***Those claims are false. If they were true, I wouldn't be standing here today sharing the real struggles our members have faced.***

To be brutally honest, given the results of last month's Presidential election, the entire matter of immigration is not only back on the front burner, it is boiling over. Our new President campaigned on "border security" and "stopping *them* from 'invading' us." He rode that particular horse back to the White House, even as your Union constantly reminded you of the importance of voting and the direct impact it can have on your personal life.

Just this year, I handled *five* termination cases related to work eligibility. Four out of the five involved members working under DACA protections. In dealing with these cases, I had to learn quite a bit about immigration law. Thankfully, I had some room in my brain to pick up new things! The good news is that we were able to get all five members back on the job, though each case had its own unique conditions.

Here's the situation: Metro, as a public agency, *is required to hire only those who are legally authorized to work in the United States*. This includes people with work visas, permanent residents, and individuals protected by DACA. If you don't fall into one of these categories, or aren't a U.S. citizen, you cannot work in the country—at least not legally.

The Origin of DACA

DACA originated through the 2001 DREAM Act (Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors). It allows individuals *illegally* brought to the United States as

children to work as adults, provided they follow strict rules to maintain their status. Unfortunately, one issue we've been facing here at Metro is the challenge of keeping work permits valid and current.

While representing our members, I learned that the Department of Homeland Security and the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services office are severely backlogged, simply overwhelmed by the unprecedented number of cases they must deal with. This has delayed the processing of renewal applications, causing work permits to expire while members wait for their approvals. This, in turn, leads Metro to proceed with terminations.

One of the toughest questions I faced was whether Metro was obligated to terminate employees with expired work permits, or if they could simply place them on leave. After consulting a number of immigration attorneys, the ACLU, and Los Angeles County Federation of Labor leadership, I finally found the answer from TODEC (Training Occupational Development Educating Communities), a nonprofit that helps immigrant communities. While I didn't like the answer, I learned that Metro *must* terminate employees if their work permits expire, even though it's not an ideal solution for the Authority and, of course, the worker.

This situation primarily affected Metro employees, but it could impact any of our members, at any of the properties we represent, who fall under DACA protections. The lesson here, for all members, is to *plan ahead*.

Start the Renewal Process Early!

As of this writing, the Department of Homeland Security recommends starting the renewal process at least 150 days before your work permit expires—certainly no later than 120 days before. Even at 120 days, you risk delays, especially with the holiday season coming up. In fact, the first case I handled involved a member who was let go just before the holidays, someone who wasn't back at work until almost two months into the New Year.

I'm passing along this information in order to help anyone who might be in a similar situation. ***Please, think ahead and apply for your renewal at least 5-6 months before your permit expires. This is crucial to avoid the potential stress and job loss that can come from delays.***

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President's Report

A rocky road ahead

Working People and Families Face Uncertain Times

By Jeff Shaffer
President, Local 1277

The voters across our country have spoken. Whether or not we like the results and message they sent doesn't matter. It was a fair, if nasty and low-road, election, and now we—as individuals, as union members, as Californians, have to play with the cards we have been dealt.

All the harsh words, all the insults and negativity, all the charges and counter-charges, all the promises and hot air are over. The Republican ticket won, and it won rather convincingly, sweeping all seven of the so-called “battleground states”, pulling in a majority in the United States Senate and the House of Representatives. That's the reality. Now, all we can do is try to see how this will affect us on the job, with our families, and for our futures.

Organized labor, and the millions of working men, women, and families it represents, most certainly will be adversely affected. I think it is realistically safe to say—without any false hope—that the following agenda is going to take effect in the months and years to come:

- The National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), supposedly labor's strongest federal advocate, will go back to the anti-union, anti-working people body that it was from 2017-2021. With new appointments to its board, it will pretty much cease to prosecute labor law violations. It will do its best to thwart union organization efforts. It will almost certainly rule in favor of management and corporate bosses in cases involving union and worker rights under existing labor-management contracts. In short, it will no longer be a voice and advocate for working people and families. It will become, by extension, another tool in management's already-stacked armory.
- A good number of pro-worker regulations, authorized by the NLRB during 2021-2024, will almost surely be gutted or so watered down that they become meaningless. Gone will be financial compensation for workers who were fired for union organizing. Gone will be NLRB power to order recognition of a union if the employer makes a fair union-representation election impossible. Gone will be protection against a gag order that would block workers from describing and publicizing unsafe working conditions or sexual-harassment incidents on the job. Gone will be safeguards that

allowed recognition of employee-formed unions at corporate giants like Amazon and Starbucks.

- Look for a “new direction” at the federal Department of Labor (DOL), which enforces, among many other things, minimum-wage, overtime, and jobsite safety regulations. I'm pretty sure that that “new direction” isn't likely to be beneficial to working people and families. Look for *less* enforcement (and lower fines) for child labor violations. *Less* enforcement of laws making “gig workers” employees instead of independent contractors, so that management can fatten its bottom line by not paying overtime or granting benefits. Like the NLRB, the DOL may become, by extension, another tool for management.
- **The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) may well be crippled. Its proposed requirements, for example, for employers to protect workers from health risks from excessive heat exposure by providing drinking water, rest breaks, and sufficient indoor cooling may well never see the light of day.**

And all this may just be for openers. We won't know until the dominoes start falling.

ATU International President John Costa commented on the political upheaval, expressing deep concern about the future of our country.

“This election has been one of the most divisive and contentious in modern American history. The stark contrast of values was clear throughout the campaign. Progress made regarding workers' rights, public transit, healthcare, women's rights, civil rights, and climate change are all being threatened. The ATU will continue to advocate for the vulnerable, for working families, and for those who are most at risk. At the end of the day, the American people have spoken, but our commitment to democracy and human dignity remains unwavering. We will work tirelessly to hold this administration accountable. The road ahead will be challenging, but the ATU stands ready to build a stronger, more equitable nation for all.”

A Salute to President Biden

I cannot—and will not—look into a somewhat bleak future without gratefully and wholeheartedly acknowledging an extremely productive and progressive recent past: The administration of perhaps the single-most pro-union, pro-working people and families, President Joe Biden. This is a warm, decent, caring man, who upon being elected in November 2020, said loud and clear: **“I am a union man!”**

He kept his word, crafting policies and initiatives that strengthened organized labor, protected the health and safety of working people, and boosted American productivity, while

rebuilding our aging and often outmoded infrastructure of roads, bridges, ports, manufacturing sites, airports, schools, and *mass transit*.

Let's look at the record. President Biden:

- Passed domestic legislation valued at **\$5 trillion**, spread across the entire country, earmarked for a wide range of industries and services.
- **Ensured that federal regulatory agencies—affecting both working people and Americans in all sorts of professions—made rulings that positively changed lives and futures.**
- Launched massive federal programs to move our country to clean energy sources.
- **Spearheaded the planning, designing, and construction of countless infrastructure projects—most to be built with union labor—that will change the face of our country.**
- Embedded racial- and gender-quality goals and regulations into federal programs.
- **Made his administration very aggressive in taking antitrust action against ruthless, bottom-line-first big corporations.**
- Worked to make the United States less reliant on overseas “supply chains” by opening new manufacturing plants, most notably those making the vitally needed chips for every electronic, automotive, and computer product you can think of.
- **Authored the bipartisan CHIPS and Science Act has led five of the leading global chipmakers to *commit* to building advanced production plants here in the United States.**
- Launched nothing less than a new “New Deal”, providing hundreds of thousands of new jobs for all Americans, with or without college degrees.
- **Provided the incentive and encouragement that led to significant boosts in union membership, recognition of the *value* of union membership, and the restoration of the dignity and sheer goodness of honest, productive work.**
- *Doubled* real investment in factories, *quadrupled* investment in the electronics industry.
- **Upheld our national values and commitment to democracy by unswervingly supporting the Ukrainian people in their fight to remain free, while at the same time rallying nations across the world to partner with us in this necessary effort.**
- Fought to strengthen and expand our mutually beneficial defensive and trade alliances with our friends around the world.
- **Strengthened and expanded vital healthcare benefits for tens of millions of Americans.**
- Led the country out of the disaster that was the Covid pandemic, which cost the United States alone over *1,000,000* deaths.
- **Made organized labor and its progressive agenda for working men, women, and families a *partner* at the decision-making table, not an enemy to be ignored and exiled.**

Believe me, we all will miss pro-union, pro-people, pro-decency President Biden.

And we will start missing him, and his priorities, and the good people he had in place to put them into effect very soon. Early in 2025, if I don't miss my guess. The old cliché will most likely ring true: You don't miss something good until it is gone.

The American people expressed their preference in a fair election, the bedrock of our democracy. We must live with that. It doesn't mean we have to like it. Or roll over for it.

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**Your Executive Board Wishes You and Your Families
Joyous, Safe Holidays, and a Healthy and Successful 2025.**

A most fulfilling career!

Goodbye To You All

By Errol Frazier
Vice President, Local 1277

It's often said that even the best things in life must, at some point, come to an end. And, sadly, but with *no* regrets and a lifetime's worth of good memories, friendships, and progress to cherish, I am telling you, brothers and sisters, that after 34 years of seniority at Los Angeles Metro and 12 years serving you and ATU Local 1277 on your Executive Board, I am retiring from active service, effective January 1, 2025.

It has been the honor of a lifetime to represent you and your families in negotiations and hearings at several of our properties. Further, I cannot help but take great pride in the fact that, as a rank-and-file Facilities System Technician at Metro's Divisions 5 and 18, I had the confidence and support of my fellow employees when they elected me Shop Steward and trusted me to safeguard their jobs, families, and future while, at the same time, making sure that they worked under safe and healthy conditions in accordance with the provisions of the contracts we so carefully bargained for.

During the time as a Union officer, I am proud and pleased to report that we have almost always enjoyed "labor peace"—*no* work stoppages because of management's unwillingness to listen to and respect our demands for higher wages, better and more comprehensive benefits, and safer and healthier jobsites at all our properties.

Further, over the past 20 or so years, our Union has emerged as a serious "player" in Los Angeles politics and civic affairs. Within the Houses of Labor in Los Angeles and surrounding counties, Local 1277 has been a vocal and consistent fighter for income equality, gender and civil liberties, better training and healthcare for those who need it, a progressive, pro-working family political agenda (and officeholders), and a stronger, more active role for organized labor and the values we represent.

I am immensely proud of the battles we fought and won, and the goals and values that inspired them!

Learning from Past Leaders

I would be remiss if I didn't acknowledge the experience, dedication, and assistance I received from the three Local 1277 Presidents who steered our Union during most of my time on the Executive Board: **Neil Silver, James Lindsay, and Art Aguilar**, all dear friends. These excellent, successful leaders broadened my horizons, concerning both union politics and goals, and our role in the larger arena of state, regional, and local government. Their collective knowledge and experience shaped my work and goals as your representative on the Executive Board. Their "institutional memory" continues to help my friend and our current President, **Jeff Shaffer**.

That reservoir of experience is a valuable blessing.
Thank you, brothers!

Some final thoughts: *As a Shop Steward, I made it my policy to serve my fellow workers with dedication, energy, and full commitment. Coming onto the Executive Board, I vowed to myself that I would serve our entire Union with the same values of dedication, energy and commitment. I like to think I did that. I know that I took great satisfaction in helping each and every member who reached out to me with his or her concern. I was always there for you, my brothers and sisters, and I am so damn glad I could serve you!*

So, at age 60, I leave my beloved Union, hopefully a better and stronger organization than when I joined it as a member and then served as an officer. I expect to spend a lot of time with family and friends, maybe travel a bit, try some new hobbies, and—for better or worse—cheering and suffering along with my San Francisco 49ers! *Thanks to every Local 1277 member and family, past and present, it has been a wonderful career, one I can never forget, and one that will warm my heart for many years to come!*

Here are the upcoming Local 1277 membership meetings for December 2024 & January 2025. 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, Dec. 3:	Los Angeles area members:	
Tuesday, Jan. 7:	LA Building Trades Council, 1626 Beverly Blvd., Los Angeles.	Morning Session 10:00 a.m. Evening Session 5:00 p.m.
Wednesday, Dec. 4:	Metrolink Unit members:	
Wednesday, Jan. 8:	UFCW Local 1428, 705 West Arrow Hwy, Clairmont, CA 91711.	Morning Session 10:00 a.m. Afternoon Session 1:00 p.m.
Wednesday, Dec. 4:	Riverside area members:	
Wednesday, Jan. 8:	AFL-CIO Building instead of IELC Building.	Morning Session 10:00 a.m. Afternoon Session 3:00 p.m.
Thursday, Dec. 5:	SunLine area members:	
Thursday, Jan. 9:	IBEW Local 40 Electrical Resource Center 39615 Washington St., Suite G, Palm Desert, CA 92211	Morning Session 10:00 a.m. Afternoon Session 4:00 p.m.
Thursday, Dec. 5:	Long Beach area members:	
Thursday, Jan. 9:	LB Firefighters Hall, Local 372, 2201 Cherry Ave., Signal Hill, CA 90755.	Morning Session 10:00 a.m. Afternoon Session 3:00 p.m.