



The

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ENTERTAINER

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Trumka: Workers First Agenda a Must

Editor's note: AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka on January 12 held a press call to introduce the Workers First Agenda to fight back against COVID-19 and build an economy that puts more power and prosperity into the hands of working people. The federation president also discussed the role the labor movement has in preserving democracy in the aftermath of the January 6 riot at the U.S. Capitol, incited by President Trump. Following are his remarks in their entirety

"I'm excited to talk about our Workers First Agenda, but I want to start with a few words about what happened in Washington last week. And in particular, why it matters to working people.

"The future of America's labor movement is intertwined with the fate of democracy. Our democracy is not promised on a piece of paper. It's up to us. It lives in us. It's personal for us.

"Unions both thrive on and contribute to democracy.

"What happened at the Capitol was the result of many things. Economic and political systems failing to serve the majority of working people. The Electoral College being so arcane that a president and members of Congress thought they could manipulate the rules to steal an election. Fear. Hate. Disinformation. Conspiracies. And yes, white supremacy.

"If striking workers stormed the Capitol, tactical teams would have been deployed in seconds. And if people of color had crossed the barricades, a massacre would have followed.

"Last week was a new low for the outgoing administration. An administration that has driven America to the brink of depression and civil war. Americans are shocked, but we should not be surprised. And we cannot give a pass to a president responsible for sedition.

"That is why the AFL-CIO's general board called on President Trump to resign or to be removed from office. He incited this insurrection. He pushed judges and lawmakers to overturn democratic election results. He knew exactly what he was doing.

"There was no voter fraud—we all know that. Josh Hawley and Ted Cruz know that. Even Trump knows that. Trump is outraged because Black and Brown Americans voted, and their votes counted. In cities like Atlanta and Detroit and Philadelphia, Americans of all creeds and colors voted against Trump and for a Workers First Agenda.

"An agenda that has newfound momentum with last week's victories in Georgia.

"A pro-worker House. A pro-worker Senate. And the most pro-worker president since Lyndon Johnson. What a great opportunity. And what a great responsibility.

"Today, we are unveiling the Workers First Agenda. It is bold, comprehensive and exactly what America needs to meet this moment of pain and uncertainty.

"At the center of this agenda is the PRO Act—Protecting the Right to Organize. This worker empowerment legislation would allow millions to freely and fairly form a union. So we can raise wages and expand health care. So we can make workplaces safer and retirement



Richard Trumka
President, AFL-CIO

more secure. So we can expand opportunities for women, immigrants, people of color and the LGBTQ community.

"The PRO Act is more than labor law reform legislation. It's an economic stimulus bill. It's a civil rights package. So we are going to fight like hell to pass it. An MIT study shows that more than 60 million Americans would join a union today if they could. And that number has increased during this pandemic.

"No American should ever have to choose between our health and a paycheck. That is why workers' safety is another priority of our agenda. We will never get this pandemic under control if we cannot protect working people. That starts with emergency COVID-19 OSHA and MSHA standards so we can protect workers from this virus. We must also expand access to free vaccines and rapid testing, and ensure an adequate supply of PPE by executive order and through the Defense Production Act. And it is long past time to guarantee paid sick days, paid family leave and child care for all working people. None of this is controversial—just common sense. More than 325,000 Americans are dead.

"Worker safety is how we begin to beat the virus. Investment in good jobs—union jobs—and infrastructure built by union workers is how we start to recover from it. Strengthening worker power and rebuilding America's crumbling infrastructure is at the core of Joe Biden's Build Back Better agenda. These promises resonate with our members, especially after Trump promised us the moon and gave us the shaft. It is time to invest trillions of dollars—that's trillions with a T—to rebuild our roads, bridges, schools and energy systems with union wages and standards.

"And as we start to rebuild, we must remember that any hope for recovery is impossible without equity. That is why racial justice is a key component of this agenda. Structural racial inequity exists in nearly every facet of our country. Our workplaces, our health care system, our criminal justice system. This has always been true but never been clearer. It's why

the incoming administration should appoint a racial equity czar. We need someone dedicated to leading an interagency task force that directly addresses racial injustice in all the places it exists.

"And we need to rebuild the safety net for everyone who lives and works here. That means economic security for everybody. Health care security. Retirement security. Food and housing security. This will never be a reality if we don't strengthen Social Security or shore up multiemployer pensions. If we don't lower prescription drug prices and lower the Medicare eligibility age to 50. If we don't strengthen existing health care protections or rebuild the broken unemployment system.

"Look, none of this will be easy, but all of it is necessary. When Americans casted their ballots in this seminal election, this is what they voted for. This is why working people poured our blood, sweat and tears into this campaign season. We did it to win a Workers First Agenda.

"I started working in the mines as a teenager and have been a union member ever since. America's labor movement has never been more united than we are today.

"In one week and one day, Joe Biden will be inaugurated. We are ready to work with him every day that follows. To heal our country. To empower working people. And to build a sustainable economy and a stronger democracy for generations to come."

Trumka urged the Biden administration and Congress to seize this opportunity to transform the lives of working people through bold, structural change. As part of that change, he suggested that the administration start with the following five priorities:

Worker Empowerment

Because stronger unions are essential to addressing the multiple crises facing America, we will urge the new administration to have a plan ready on Day One to enact the PRO Act and the Public Service Freedom to Negotiate Act; create an interagency task force on collective bargaining; and rescind executive orders undermining collective bargaining.

Worker Safety and the Pandemic

The most immediate focus of 2021 will be bringing the COVID-19 pandemic under control, starting by guaranteeing access for all workers to free vaccines and rapid testing; issuing emergency COVID-19 standards from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration and Mine Safety and Health Administration; signing an executive order under the Defense Production Act to ensure adequate supply of personal protective equipment; and ensuring paid sick days, paid family leave and child care for all workers.

Good Jobs and Public Investment

The first order of legislative business in 2021 will be the next COVID-19 bill, which must include \$1 trillion in flexible grants for state and local governments. But we must begin now to focus on "building back better," starting with a multitrillion-dollar infrastructure package and federal labor standards and domestic sourcing requirements for clean energy projects. Other priorities for promoting good jobs include rescinding the Trump Labor Department's anti-worker regulations; raising labor standards for all jobs supported by federal funding; eradicating workplace discrimination; reforming Wall Street; making the global economy work for working people; building a more just immigration system; increasing public investment; and making the wealthy and big corporations pay their fair share in taxes.

Racial Justice and Democracy

The racial justice crisis is intimately connected to the ongoing public health and economic crises. We will urge the administration to appoint a "racial equity czar" to lead an interagency task force to survey and address the structural racial equity issues in jobs, health care, criminal justice and policing that have become more apparent during the ongoing COVID-19 crises. The Jan. 6 attack on the U.S. Capitol also underscored the pressing need for racial justice and democracy reform.

Economic Security

We will urge Congress and the new administration to address America's continuing economic security crisis by providing pension funding relief; increasing Social Security benefits across the board; reducing prescription drug prices; lowering the Medicare eligibility age to 50; creating a public option; strengthening the Affordable Care Act; rebuilding the unemployment insurance system; and establishing postal banking.

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President's Column

Union is Strength

The government's annual report on union membership in the United States didn't necessarily include any big surprises. Published each year by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), the most recent document showed a decline in overall union membership (undoubtedly caused at least in part by the pandemic) and an increase in the percentage of workers belonging to unions. That's because more unrepresented workers were laid off when the pandemic hit (naturally, since there are more non-union workers).



Michael Sacco

We report on the specific numbers elsewhere in this edition, but a couple of items jump out at me. One, union members continue to earn more money on average and enjoy better benefits than their unrepresented counterparts. This has been the case with every report for as long as I can remember.

But, secondly, the overall number of union members would be a lot higher if there weren't so much illegal interference in many organizing campaigns. Reliable polling from the last few years has shown historically high, favorable views of organized labor. Most people would join a union if given a chance.

Yet the membership numbers basically fluctuate only a little from year to year, sometimes increasing, sometimes declining.

The remedy is contained in legislation recently re-introduced in both the House and Senate. The Protecting the Right to Organize (PRO) Act aims to level the playing field in representation elections. The reason our country needs this bill is because our labor laws have slowly but steadily eroded over many decades. It has become the norm for employers to get away with bending or breaking the rules during organizing campaigns, to the point where it's blatantly unfair to the employees. This isn't about forcing people to join a union, because no one wants that. But workers should have a fair chance to decide for themselves, free from threats by the company, free from captive-audience meetings, and free from retribution by the employer.

We have a real opportunity to get this legislation passed, and the AFL-CIO has identified it as a top priority. President Biden, a self-proclaimed "union guy" whom we've worked with for many years, supports the bill.

As a topic, labor-law reform probably sounds boring. What's important, though, is the results it will generate: better wages, safer workplaces, and a stronger voice for all workers.

This is long overdue, and SEATU will do our part to help make it happen.

Get Vaccinated, Stay Safe

When this edition of *The Entertainer* went to press, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration had already approved three COVID-19 vaccines for emergency use. There is no doubt the vaccines are effective, but that doesn't mean there aren't still plenty of questions about them. Will we be advised to take them every year? Will they protect against all the different strains of the virus? Like I said, there's no shortage of questions.

But the vaccines approved by our government work, and that's why I've been signed up and ready to get my shots for a while. I have no personal hesitation whatsoever, and encourage you and your family to do the same.

Meanwhile, keep your guard up and follow the safety protocols that probably are becoming second nature by now. I've been saying for almost a year, we'll get through this pandemic together. We're getting closer and we've got to stay vigilant.

Powell Re-Appointed to Port Authority Post

SEATU Assistant Vice President Bryan Powell recently was re-appointed to his position on the board of directors of the Detroit/Wayne County Port Authority. The Wayne County (Michigan) Commission unanimously approved the four-year appointment (2021-2025) on March 18.

Powell has served on the board since early 2017, and in the capacity of vice chairman since March 13, 2020.

Powell launched his career with the SIU at the union-affiliated Paul Hall Center, attending the apprenticeship program in 1993. He then came ashore in 1999 to work as a union official. Since then, while actively working on organizing and start-up projects nationally, Powell has served in several locations, including Baltimore; Camp Springs, Maryland; Piney Point, Maryland; Houston; Jacksonville, Florida; Wilmington/Los Angeles; Seattle/Tacoma; Oakland, California; Mobile, Alabama; Honolulu; and Algonac/Detroit.

He is active with the Detroit Metro AFL-CIO and Michigan State AFL-CIO, as well as the Michigan Building and Construction Trades Council, AFL-CIO.

Powell is a member of the Propeller Club of the United States, the Labor and Employment Relations Association (LERA), and the Society for Human Resources Management (SHRM). He holds a bachelor's degree in business management, and a master's degree in business administration with doctoral studies.

The Detroit Wayne County Port Authority (DWCPA) is a government agency advancing southeast Michigan's maritime and related industries with the purpose of delivering prosperity and economic benefit to citizens and businesses. For more than 35 years, the DWCPA has worked to bolster the community by being the connection between the maritime industry and the Great Lakes region, raising awareness of the importance of the Port of Detroit and how the cargo and vessel activity generates

economic impact for the State of Michigan.

Port Authority Board Members serve four-year terms, without compensation.

For more about the Detroit/Wayne County Port Authority, go to: www.portdetroit.com



SEATU Asst. VP
Bryan Powell

So-Called 'Right to Work' Law Rejected in Montana

The continuing drive by anti-union, anti-worker legislators and businesses to impose so-called "right to work" (for less) laws around the United States took hits in Montana and West Virginia on consecutive days in early March.

The arguably bigger triumph for workers and their allies came in Montana. For its 50,000-member labor movement, battling "right to work" (RTW) was a fight for economic life, according to state labor officials. In the Montana House, where Republicans hold a 67-33 majority, union foes wanted to pass a RTW bill, banning any requirement that workers pay dues to the unions that represent them.

Twenty-seven states, mostly in the south and mid-west, have such laws, intended to weaken unions by starving them of resources. West

Virginia, also GOP-dominated, is one of the 27. The laws let workers protected by union contracts and union services get away without paying for them.

"So-called 'right-to-work' is wrong for Montana and will lead to lower wages, weaker local economies and dangerous working conditions," Montana AFL-CIO President Al Ekblad tweeted the day before the vote.

As the vote neared, hundreds of union members packed the state capitol's hallways in Helena for two days straight, and filled the gallery when the vote was scheduled. On March 2, the bill, HB251, by first-year Rep. Caleb Hinkle (R-Belgrade), went down by a vote of 38-62, with 29 Republicans joining all 33 Democrats in voting "no."

"If you argue against the political speech of union workers on HB251 it is a safe assumption you are arguing for the special-interest PACs from out of state promoting union-busting work on behalf of monied interests," Rep. Jessica Karjala (D-Billings) told colleagues.

"Politics is like football in that it's a contact activity. Hard work and SOLIDARITY paid off. Congratulations to the everyday wage earners of Montana," union supporter John Kretzschmar tweeted.

In its mines and mills, Montana has a storied union past. Today, 12% of Montana workers are union-represented, more than the national average. Montana supporters of RTW say they plan to bring it up again in the 2023 legislative session.

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AFL-CIO President Emeritus Sweeney Dies

AFL-CIO President Emeritus John Sweeney, who led an era of transformative change in America's labor movement, passed away Feb. 1 at age 86.

"I had the honor and privilege of working closely with John Sweeney during his leadership of the AFL-CIO," said President Joe Biden. "Time and again over the many years of our friendship, I saw how lifting up the rights, voices, and dignity of working Americans was more than a job to him. It was a sacred mission. It was a calling."

"The work he led, from the factory floors of the garment workers early in his career to the highest corridors of power as a national labor leader, embodied the vital role that unions play in delivering greater wages and benefits for working people — union and nonunion alike," Biden added. "May God bless John Sweeney, a giant of the American labor movement, and a good man."

Sweeney was one of four children born to Irish immigrants in a working-class Bronx neighborhood shortly after the Great Depression. His parents, James and Agnes Sweeney, worked as a bus driver and a domestic worker, respectively. Sweeney always understood the struggles and the pride of working people.

"John Sweeney was a legend, plain and simple," said AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka. "He was guided into unionism by his Catholic faith, and not a single day passed by when he didn't put the needs of working people first. John viewed his leadership as a spiritual calling, a divine act of solidarity in a world plagued by distance and division. He used work as a way to apply his values, consistently exhibiting grit over flash and pursuing progress instead of posturing."

"John was very dedicated to improving the lives of working people," said SEATU President Michael Sacco, a fellow New Yorker and longtime friend. "He came

from a humble background and rose to the top of the labor movement. But he never, never forgot where he came from.

"John was right at home on a shop floor, in a union meeting or at the White House. His priority always was the workers and their families," Sacco added. "We both came up through the ranks — in tough times and good. He was always the same person and a great leader. We shall miss him deeply."

Sweeney was a member of the SEATU-affiliated Maritime Trades Department (MTD) Executive Board while president of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) from 1984 until his election to lead the AFL-CIO in 1995. He addressed MTD conventions in 1995, 1997, 1999, 2001, 2005 and 2009.

President Obama awarded Sweeney the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2010.

Former President Bill Clinton called Sweeney "a force for inclusion and activism."

Sweeney was interested in politics from childhood. His mother took him to see Franklin Delano Roosevelt's funeral train. He often spoke about his father's loyalty to his union, the Transport Workers Union (TWU), and its colorful president, Mike Quill, with a sense of what it did for his family.

Sweeney met his wife, Maureen Power, while working on a political campaign. He ran for and was elected Democratic district leader and volunteered for John Kennedy's presidential campaign. But it was in the labor movement where it all came together for him.

As a young man, Sweeney held jobs as a grave-digger and building porter while studying economics at Iona College in New Rochelle, New York, where he joined a union for the first time. Sweeney was exposed to Catholic social teaching from an early age, including the Xavier

Labor School, whose head was the inspiration for the priest in the film "On the Waterfront." He worked throughout his career to forge alliances between Catholic leaders and the labor movement.

Sweeney took a position as a researcher with the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, a predecessor to UNITE HERE. During this time, Sweeney connected with the Building Service Employees International Union, known today as the Service Employees International Union or SEIU. Sweeney worked his way up the ranks of Local 32B, winning election as president in 1976. He merged 32B, the union for male janitors, with 32J, the union for female janitors, in 1977, forming the powerful Local 32BJ — which now represents hundreds of thousands of building service workers throughout the East Coast. The merger got them a unified contract.

As president of 32BJ, Sweeney led several successful citywide strikes, winning better wages, benefits and other contract improvements. This led to his election as SEIU international president in 1980.

Sweeney transformed the SEIU — dedicating one-third of the union's budget to new worker organizing and doubling its membership over the next decade. He focused on winning new collective bargaining for low-wage workers and was a champion for immigrant rights.

In 1995, Sweeney led an insurgent campaign to capture the presidency of America's labor federation, the AFL-CIO. Running on a New Voice ticket with United Mine Workers of America President Trumka and AFSCME International Vice President Linda Chavez-Thompson (in the newly created position of executive vice president), paving the way for the first person of color in the federation's highest ranks, Sweeney was swept into



John Sweeney
AFL-CIO President Emeritus

office on a promise of bold change and a recommitment to worker organizing.

As president, Sweeney pushed the labor movement to become more diverse and take on issues of civil rights, racial justice and gender equality. He was deliberate about recruiting and supporting strong women as senior staff members, modeling diversity for the labor movement.

Sweeney also built the AFL-CIO into a political powerhouse, electing pro-worker champions and fighting for union-friendly policies at all levels of government.

He retired from the AFL-CIO in 2009 after nearly 60 years in the labor movement. He is survived by his wife, Maureen; their children, John and Patricia; a granddaughter, Kennedy; and sisters, Cathy Hammill and Peggy King. He is preceded in death by his brother, James Sweeney.

Contract Ratifications Secure SEATU Jobs

Hollywood Casino at Dayton Raceway

On January 28, 2021 SEATU reached agreement on a three-year package (February 1, 2021 through January 31, 2024) with Hollywood Casino at Dayton Raceway, in Dayton, Ohio. The Union bargaining committee consisted of Asst VP Bryan Powell, Business Representative Tyson Little, Lead VLT Attendant **Nicawna Russell**, Facilities Tech **Scott McCane**, and Bartender **Jackson Wolph**.

In addition to maintaining current benefits, work rules, and other terms and conditions, the agreement provides for significant wage increases in each of the three years of the agreement; added two additional Holidays (New Year's Day and Easter Sunday) with all hours paid at the premium rate for team members who work on those days; an agreement to perform a comprehensive labor market analysis and meet with the union to discuss such data to determine where targeted pay rate adjustments (beyond the across-the-board increases provide for in the agreement) for certain job classifications, including starting rates for certain classifications, are warranted, including agreement that the company and union will conduct such reviews on an annual basis to determine adjustments as may be warranted; within 30 days convene a committee, comprised of VLT Techs, bargaining committee members, union business representatives, company human resources lead, and appropriate directors or managers, to do a comprehensive analysis of VLT operations, to determine whether implementing a pay-for-skill program or adding a lead

VLT Tech to other shifts to better support the operation of the department are warranted, and otherwise identify and address other improvements which may be mutually-beneficial to the facility and VLT Tech Team members

Hollywood Casino at Mahoning Valley Racecourse

On January 29, 2021 SEATU reached agreement on a three-year package (February 1, 2021 through January 31, 2024) with Hollywood Casino at Mahoning Valley Racecourse, in Youngstown, Ohio. The union bargaining committee consisted of Asst VP Bryan Powell, Business Representative Tyson Little, Cook **Nicky Lipscomb**, Cook **Renee Thomas**, and VLT Attendant **Justin Teague**.

In addition to maintaining current benefits, work rules, and other terms and conditions, the agreement provides for significant wage increases in each of the three years of the agreement; added two additional holidays (New Year's Eve Day and Independence Day) with all hours paid at the premium rate for team members who work on those days; an agreement to perform a comprehensive labor market analysis and meet with the union to discuss such data to determine where targeted pay rate adjustments (beyond the across-the-board increases provide for in the agreement) for certain job classifications, including starting rates for certain classifications, are warranted, including agreement that the company and union will conduct such reviews on an annual basis to determine adjustments as may be warranted.

New BLS Data Shows Union Job Security

New data on unionization from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) show that in 2020, 15.9 million workers in the United States were represented by a union, a decline of 444,000 from 2019. However, while unionization levels dropped in 2020, unionization rates rose because union workers have seen less job loss than non-union workers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

According to the BLS summary of the data, "The union membership rate for women increased by 0.8 percentage point to 10.5 percent, and the rate for men was up by 0.2 percentage point to 11.0 percent. The large declines in nonunion employment among both men and women put upward pressure on their union membership rates."

The yearly study also found, once again, that union members on average earned more money and enjoyed better benefits than their unrepresented counterparts. Nonunion workers had median weekly earnings that were 84 percent of earnings for workers who were union members (\$958 versus \$1,144).

In the private sector, eight million workers were represented by a union in 2020, a decline of 544,000. The biggest losses were in leisure and hospitality (-177,000) and man-

ufacturing (-134,000). In the public sector, 7.9 million workers were represented by a union in 2020, an increase of 100,000. The increase was entirely among state government workers.

AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka stated, "In 2020, America saw working people in a new light, as the true engines of our economy and the trusted servants who can carry us through a crisis. While last year was filled with unemployment and economic pain because of a deadly pandemic and the incompetent federal response to it, union density rose. We believe this increase is part of a national groundswell. The popularity of unions is at 65%, one of the highest marks in a half-century, and research shows that more than 60 million workers would vote to join a union today if given the chance. The inauguration of President Joe Biden, who showed on his first day he is willing to fight for working people's safety and to get union busters out of government, presents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to finally create an environment where what workers desire truly drives union density. And that requires passing the Protecting the Right to Organize (PRO) Act so that our labor laws support and protect the freedom to form a union."

Members Graduate From Classes At SEATU-Affiliated Paul Hall Center



Editor's note: Many classes of SEATU members employed by Norwegian Cruise Lines (NCL) have recently completed the Basic Safety Training course at the Paul Hall Center for Maritime Training and Education in Piney Point, Maryland. The two-week training courses begin with a week of "Norwegian" training, as specified by the vessel operator, followed by a week of fire, survival and first aid training. These training sessions were all administered at the Joseph Sacco Fire Fighting and Safety School, located on a satellite campus.

The photos on Page 4 (below) were taken in late February and early March 2020, before the COVID-19 pandemic. The photos on Page 5 are from after the Paul Hall Center reopened for classes, in late October - early November 2020.



Above: Darius Bates, Kaseem Booker, Zaquan Davis, Sydni Geboyd, Marquise Glenn, Christina Golightly, Chase Gromko, Sophie Hannon, Jamie Janis, Rodel Manimtim Lucido, Nhi Nguyen, Jestoni Pedro, Kelly Sanford, Mae Sattelmair, Samuel Thompson, Jakina Williams, Stephanie Wright, Keegon Zavattaro and Derrick Zimmerman.



Above, in alphabetical order: Jessica Alba, Mayra Alvarado Fuentes, Angel Belen Mendez, Curtis Bischer, Latifah Caldwell, Stephanie Day, Sophia Fallor, Joseph Garcia, Chinelo Gibson, Derek Gordy, Jose Guitron, Carolyn Hoffelt, Uriel Marrufo, Samantha Monroe, Enrique Osomo, Kiersten Pauling, Arianna Rector, Sequoya Smith, Mary Travis, Alexis Vantuyl and Henry Villatoro Buezo.



Above (not all are pictured): Nychelle Crutcher, Antonio D'Souza, Trudy Deniis, Marisol Dixon, Dorothy Farnham, Katelyn Fowler, Colby Gorman, Blake Grandon, Patrick Horton, Bryan Mahan, Kiersten Pauling, Melanie Quinones, Jacilla Reeves, Jordan Reynolds, Antonia Rocha, Peyton Salo, Kumika Tamada, Jonathan Bennet Tinga, Mariel Tolentino and Mary Travis.

Members Graduate From Classes At SEATU-Affiliated Paul Hall Center



Above: Mason Barnes, Camilo Garavito Barrios, Jose Mendez, Kennon Smith and Gabriela Stephens.



Above, in alphabetical order: Leon Banks, Theresa Baraclaran Dilmaghani, James Cranmer, Wayne Johnson, Anelise Kerr and Tony McDonald.



Above: Alan Castillo, Rodney Hopkins, Jazmin Joyner, Owen Ridings, Jessica Scheuffele, Michele Scheuffele, Edgar Theisen and Quentin Torrance.

AFL-CIO Applauds American Rescue Plan

The AFL-CIO and its affiliates (including SEATU) are pointing out the many facets of the American Rescue Plan, signed March 11 by President Biden on his fiftieth day in office, that will benefit union members, their families and their communities.

The \$1.9 trillion federal legislation is designed to help the nation recover by providing financial relief in various forms due to the year-long coronavirus pandemic.

“For months, we have demanded that our federal government provide a road map out of the pandemic and the economic crisis,” stated AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka. “The American Rescue Plan is that road map.”

“It expands health care for unemployed workers, provides meaningful investment in frontline public services, ensures pension relief for millions of retirees, and it funds the vaccine so that we can end the pandemic. The bill will rescue our economy,” Trumka added.

“This measure will allow millions of Americans to breathe a little easier,” SEATU President Michael Sacco said. “These have been very tough times. But this bill will help so many people who might have been wondering if they could keep their job, provide shelter and food for their family, or retire in dignity.”

“This nation has suffered too much for too long,” noted President Biden. “And everything in this package is designed to relieve the suffering and to meet the most urgent needs of the nation, and put us in a better position to prevail.”

The most recognized item in the plan is the immediate \$1,400 stimulus check for people who earned less than \$75,000 or for married couples who made less than \$150,000 combined last year. It ex-



President Biden addresses the nation as he prepares to sign the latest relief package.

tends pandemic-related unemployment assistance through September 6. But the American Rescue Plan contains so much more to help workers and their families, according to the AFL-CIO.

It provides money for the production of vaccines, medical supplies and personal protective equipment. It allows dollars for COVID-19 testing and contact tracing, vaccine distribution, and acquisition of vaccines and supplies.

It funds workplace safety through the Occupational Safety and Health Administration for meat processors, health care facilities and correctional institutions.

It offers funding for state, county, local and tribal governments to continue

needed operations such as police, fire and rescue services among others. The American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees declared, “These funds will keep public employees on the front lines, providing services needed to crush the virus and rebuild our economy.”

The plan included provisions from the SIU-backed Butch Lewis Emergency Pension Plan Relief Act to support struggling multiemployer pension programs through 2051 with no cuts to accrued benefits.

International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers President Lonnie Stephenson pointed out, “Including the Butch Lewis Act language will change lives. I

am proud that President Biden made this one of his first priorities.”

Dollars will be available to reopen public schools and provide materials needed to do so safely. American Federation of Teachers President Randi Weingarten said, “This plan is quite literally a lifeline for the economy that desperately needs one. Since the beginning of the pandemic, we have lost more than a half a million jobs in public education and more than 100,000 jobs in health care. This is what government looks like when it takes swift action to care for all of us.”

The measure offers 100 percent COBRA subsidies for up to six months for health care premiums to those who have lost their jobs or had their hours reduced.

It provides relief for the airline industries and manufacturers to help with payroll and benefits. Local transportation agencies, as well as Amtrak, will get aid for operating expenses.

Additionally, it creates an emergency federal employee leave fund to allow civilian employees and postal workers up to 15 weeks of emergency paid leave while caring for someone with COVID-19 or watching over children during virtual classes. This also includes workers at the Transportation Security Administration and the Federal Aviation Administration.

The plan extends the Payroll Protection Program to help businesses keep workers employed and adds a new program aimed at restaurants. It funds a rapid retraining program for military veterans who lost their jobs because of the pandemic, and provides assistance for housing to prevent evictions and foreclosures.

House Passes H.R. 2474 - The PRO Act

After years of impediments for unions, legislation that would reform labor laws and provide workers with more power to organize is making headway in Congress. The U.S. House of Representatives on March 9 passed H.R.2474 - Protecting the Right to Organize Act of 2019.

Also known as the PRO Act, the legislation is considered by many to be the most wide-ranging, pro-worker rewrite of labor law since the original National Labor Relations Act of 1935. It previously was approved by the House in 2020, but the then Republican-controlled Senate failed to take it up. The House passed it again early last month with a vote of 225-206, largely along party lines. Five Republicans voted for the bill, while one Democrat opposed it.

The PRO Act includes a slew of provisions that proponents say will make it easier for workers to form unions, conduct strikes as a last resort, and bargain for better wages and working conditions. Should it eventually become law, the PRO Act would:

- Expand various labor protections related to employees’ rights to organize and collectively bargain in the workplace.
- Address the procedures for union representation elections.
- Modify the protections against unfair labor practices that result in serious economic harm such as the discharge of an employee.
- Further prohibit employers from taking adverse actions against an employee, including employees with management responsibilities, in response to that employee participating in protected activities related to the enforcement of the prohibitions against unfair labor practices (i.e., whistleblower protections).

In addition to the foregoing, the bill specifies procedures for adjudicating

complaints, including filing requirements, criteria for making determinations of violations, types of available relief, evidentiary guidelines, and judicial review of NLRB determinations. The measure generally establishes penalties and permits injunctive relief against entities that fail to comply with NLRB orders and creates a private right of action for employees to bring claims against employers interfering with employees’ rights to organize or join a labor organization.

Additionally, the bill modifies the reporting requirements for employers engaged in arrangements with third parties to persuade employees not to organize. Specifically, the bill narrows the scope of the exemption for arrangements that are considered legal advice or representation.

President Joe Biden, a close ally of labor, prior to the start of PRO Act debate on the House Floor, issued a March 9 statement that encouraged passage of the legislation, which in his view would dramatically enhance the power of workers to organize and collectively bargain for better wages, benefits and working conditions. The president’s statement, in part, read as follows:

“As America works to recover from the devastating challenges of deadly pandemic, an economic crisis, and reckoning on race that reveals deep disparities, we need to summon a new wave of worker power to create an economy that works for everyone. We owe it not only to those who have put in a lifetime of work, but to the next generation of workers who have only known an America of rising inequality and shrinking opportunity. All of us deserve to enjoy America’s promise in full — and our nation’s leaders have a responsibility to deliver it.

“That starts with rebuilding unions. The middle class built this country, and

unions built the middle class. Unions give workers a stronger voice to increase wages, improve the quality of jobs and protect job security, protect against racial and all other forms of discrimination and sexual harassment, and protect workers’ health, safety, and benefits in the workplace. Unions lift up workers, both union and non-union. They are critical to strengthening our economic competitiveness.

“But, after generations of sweat and sacrifice, fighting hard to earn the wages and benefits that built and sustained the American middle class, unions are under siege. Nearly 60 million Americans would join a union if they get a chance, but too many employers and states prevent them from doing so through anti-union attacks. They know that without unions, they can run the table on workers — union and non-union alike.

“We should all remember that the National Labor Relations Act didn’t just say that we shouldn’t hamstring unions or merely tolerate them. It said that we should encourage unions. The PRO Act would take critical steps to help restore this intent.

“I urge Congress to send the PRO Act to my desk so we can seize the opportunity to build a future that reflects working people’s courage and ambition, and offers not only good jobs with a real choice to join a union — but the dignity, equity, shared prosperity and common purpose the hardworking people who built this country and make it run deserve.”

The March 9 statement was the president’s second such strong pro-union declaration in as many weeks. The first was a testimonial said that a union victory in the recognition vote at the 5,805-worker Amazon warehouse in Bessemer, Alabama,

would be vital not just to the workers but to the country.

“We need to summon a new wave of worker power to create an economy that works for everyone,” President Biden said. “We owe it not only to those who have put in a lifetime of work, but to the next generation of workers who have only known an America of rising inequality and shrinking opportunity. All of us deserve to enjoy America’s promise in full—and our nation’s leaders have a responsibility to deliver it. That starts with rebuilding unions.... Unions lift up workers, both union and non-union. They are critical,” the president concluded.

The PRO Act now heads to the U.S. Senate, where winning approval arguably will be impossible, unless Democrats in that chamber do away with or evade the filibuster, which would allow a minority of senators to hamstring it by requiring 60 votes for passage.

“We’re not going to let a minority in the Senate stop” the PRO Act, AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka vowed in a video press conference with lawmakers and the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights just before House debate on the PRO Act began.

“If people (lawmakers) know corporations are too strong and workers are not strong enough” economically, “and they make corporations stronger” anyway, by defeating the PRO Act, “they do so at their peril,” Trumka warned.

“And in an era of extreme polarization, nearly two-thirds of Americans—65%—approve of labor unions, so it’s not surprising workers would form unions if they were given the chance. That’s 60 million people knocking on our doors. The PRO Act would let them in.”

Mortgage assistance for union families



Learn more at unionplus.org

Union Plus Mortgage Assistance provides interest-free loans and grants to help you make mortgage payments when you're disabled, unemployed, locked out or on strike.

unionplus.org



SEATU-MORTASSIST-2-5-2021 3/21



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Text "SEATU" to 97779
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Text Alerts

Delegates Needed

Delegates are needed at workplaces in all SEATU jurisdictions. Contact your local union hall for more information.

Know Your Weingarten Rights

All SEATU members should be aware of their Weingarten Rights.

Established by the Supreme Court in 1975, the rights guarantee employees the right to union representation during investigatory interviews with management. An investigatory interview is one in which a supervisor questions an employee to obtain information which could be used as a basis for discipline or asks an employee to defend his/her conduct.

If an employee has a reasonable belief that discipline or discharge may result from what they say during such an interview, they have the right to request union representation. It's important to remember that management is not required to inform employees of their Weingarten rights; employees have the responsibility of knowing that these rights exist and to request that they be invoked when appropriate.

Copies of the Weingarten Rights are posted on all union bulletin boards. They also can be accessed on SEATU's web site at www.seatu.org, linked under the Members Rights section. Individuals with questions regarding these rights should contact their SEATU representative, delegate or shop steward.

Become Familiar With Your Labor Contract

All SEATU members, especially those in bargaining unit classifications, are reminded to obtain, read and become familiar with the provisions of their labor contracts.

It is equally important to be aware of the company's policies and procedures where labor issues are concerned. Knowledge of both better enables members to invoke their rights as necessary and protect them when threatened.

Those desiring copies of their labor contracts should contact their on-site delegate or visit their union hall.

Support Your Newsletter

All members are encouraged to share their ideas for stories and photos with the editorial staff of *The Entertainer*. Become the eyes and ears in your work areas by staying abreast of newsworthy events such as promotions, awards, retirements, participation in community activities, etc.

The Entertainer staff would also like to know about anyone who has or participates in unusual hobbies for possible feature stories.

Contact your union representatives with any tips you may have so that we can give recognition to those who richly deserve it.

CDC Post-Vaccination Guidance

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) on March 8 issued its first public health guidance targeted at resuming normal activities for people who have been fully vaccinated with COVID-19 vaccines.

A person is considered fully vaccinated two weeks after receiving the last required dose of vaccine (both doses of the Pfizer or Moderna shots or one shot of the single-dose Johnson & Johnson vaccine). Based on the latest science, the new guidance includes recommendations for how and when a fully vaccinated individual can visit with other people who are fully vaccinated and with others who are not inoculated.

This guidance represents a first step toward communities returning to normal everyday activities. When more people are vaccinated, rates of COVID-19 in the community change, and additional scientific evidence becomes available, the CDC will update these recommendations. Although vaccinations are accelerating, the CDC estimates that just 9.2% of the U.S. population has been fully vaccinated.

"We know that people want to get vaccinated so they can get back to doing the things they enjoy with the people they love," said CDC Director Rochelle P. Walensky, MD, MPH. "There are some activities that fully

vaccinated people can begin to resume now in their own homes. Everyone – even those who are vaccinated – should continue with all mitigation strategies when in public settings. As the science evolves and more people get vaccinated, we will continue to provide more guidance to help fully vaccinated people safely resume more activities."

What Has Changed

Under the recommendations, fully vaccinated individuals:

- May gather indoors with other fully vaccinated people without wearing a mask.
- May gather indoors with unvaccinated people from one other household (for example, visiting with relatives who all live together) without masks, unless any of those people or anyone they live with has an increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19.

Fully vaccinated people who been around someone who has COVID-19 do not need to stay away from others or get tested unless they have symptoms. However, those who live in a group setting (such as a correctional or detention facility or group home) and are around someone who has COVID-19, should still stay away from others

for 14 days and get tested, even if they don't have symptoms.

While the new guidance is a positive step, the CDC says the vast majority of people need to be fully vaccinated before COVID-19 precautions can be lifted broadly. Until then, it is important that everyone continues to adhere to public health mitigation measures to protect the large number of people who remain unvaccinated.

What Has Not Changed

CDC recommends that fully vaccinated people continue to take the following COVID-19 precautions when in public, when visiting with unvaccinated people from multiple other households, and when around unvaccinated people who are at high risk of getting severely ill from COVID-19:

- Wear a well-fitted mask.
- Stay at least 6 feet from people you do not live with.
- Avoid medium- and large-sized in-person gatherings.
- Get tested if experiencing COVID-19 symptoms.
- Follow guidance issued by individual employers.
- Follow CDC and health department travel requirements and recommendations.

SEATU Notebook

Algonac/Detroit Metro

Current Delegates:

- M/V Detroit Princess**
- Bar Staff:** CaSandra Houston
- Wait Staff:** Seeking volunteers
- Kitchen Staff:** Anthony Young

Boston

Current Delegates:

- Plainridge Park**
- Food & Beverage:** Russ Selvitella,
- Player Services:** Seeking volunteers
- EVS:** Seeking volunteers
- Racing:** Jo Ann Smith
- Seeking Delegates:** **Mutuals, Deep Cleaners, Cooks, Barbacks, Stewards**

Chicagoland/Joliet

Members are encouraged to contact their SEATU representatives with any questions or concerns at 815-723-8002.

- Hollywood Casino Joliet:** Marsha Gavin, Manuel Peralta
- Majestic Star:** Matoya Coleman
- Ameristar:** Jim Jasman

Honolulu

The union is always seeking volunteers in all departments aboard the *Pride of America*.

Current Delegates:

- Restaurant:** Seeking volunteers
- Hotel-Housekeeping:** Lucia Colon
- Galley/F&B:** Seeking volunteers
- Bar/Gift Shop:** Seeking volunteers

Kansas City

Anyone interested in volunteering for a steward or delegate position, call the union hall at 816-453-5700.

- Food & Beverage:** Susan Hunt
- Slots:** Alfonso Hernandez
- Maintenance:** Donna Miller
- Player Services:** Crystal Malone

Lawrenceburg

Current Delegates:

- Slot Attendant:** Carl Marting
- Slot Technician:** Nick Hall
- EVS Steward:** Warren Walls
- Cage & Credit:** Linda Richter,
- Food & Beverage:** Cassandra Cole
- Guest Services:** Seeking volunteers
- Wardrobe/Gift Shop:** Seeking volunteers
- Hotel:** Linda Hensler
- Maintenance:** Kyle Callahan

Anyone interested in becoming a delegate or steward is encouraged to contact the union hall at 812-539-2941.

Maryland

Anyone with questions or concerns is encouraged to call 410-537-5987.

Current Delegates:

- Hollywood Casino Perryville**
- Food & Beverage:** Beth Knight
- Table Games:** Jackie Holstein
- Poker Dealer:** Bill Monahan
- Maryland Live! Casino**
- Food & Beverage:** Glory Warrick
- EVS:** Seeking volunteers
- Housekeeping:** Seeking volunteers
- Baltimore/Washington International Airport**
- Lead Delegate:** Shauntae Dawson

New Orleans

Anyone wishing to become a delegate or steward is encouraged to call 504-328-7545.

Current Delegates:

- MOPS:** Seeking volunteers
- Food & Beverage Hotel:** Seeking volunteers
- Bell/Luggage Attendants:** Seeking volunteers
- Maintenance:** Tony Blanks (chief delegate)
- Boat:** Trina Hester

Ohio

Miami Valley Gaming

- Cage:** Kyle Bauer
- Count Room:** Daniel Estle
- Gaming Attendants:** Gwen Nevin, Gina Fumi-Fiamawle
- Gaming Technician:** Shawn Brown
- Facilities:** Andrew Johnson
- Food & Beverage:** Carlos Mendez, Kerri Gates
- Player Services:** Tom Cox
- Warehouse:** Tabitha Stephens
- Hollywood Gaming Dayton**

Raceway

- VLT:** Nieawna Russel
- F&B:** Jackson Wolph
- Facilities:** Scott McCane
- Cage:** Amy King
- Mutuals:** Linda Yeatman
- Hollywood Gaming at Mahoning Valley**

Current Delegates:

- Food & Beverage:** Nilsa Lipscomb, Dasia Flenoury
- VLT:** Justin Teaque
- Facilities:** Mike Morris,
- Retail:** Joyce Pishkur

Riverside

Current Delegates:

- Cage:** Pam Knapp
- Food & Beverage:** Jaime Edge
- Count Room:** Jackie Hibbs
- Slots:** Sabrina Louthain
- Maintenance:** Ahmad Alzaidi
- EVS:** Eddie Heilmann

St. Louis/Alton Metro

Current Delegates:

- Food & Beverage:** Maggie Roy, Dennis Baker, Lisa Longo
- Housekeeping:** Seeking volunteers
- Cage & Credit:** Hope Jones
- Marine Crew:** Seeking volunteers
- Count Team:** Chloe Lake