Trumka: Workers ‘Not Interested in a Sliver of Change,’ Demand Economy That Works for Them, Not One Percent

Editor’s note: The following piece was written by Mark Graubenberg, editor, Press Associates News Service. It has been slightly edited to conform to local style.

Workers are “not interested in a sliver of change or gestures” from politicians, but demand massive shifts to an economy that works for them, and not the one percent, said AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka.

Trumka noted that unions’ popularity, at least as measured by an annual Gallup Poll, reached a record 64% approval. But that hasn’t translated, yet, into increasing union numbers, due to the loopholes and flaws of U.S. labor law.

He sees change coming, though, citing new state-level legislation that will open the way to organizing more than 120,000 workers and due to the fact that public employee unions, thought to be harmed by last year’s U.S. Supreme Court Janus decision, have added 200,000 members in AFSCME and 88,000 in the American Federation of Teachers alone.

But the disconnect between popularity and results has lost the AFL-CIO, in its preparations for the 2020 presidential campaign, to undertake a massive education effort among its unions’ members, prepping them on questions for the Democratic contenders. The quizzes are a prelude to what Trumka predicts will be a record labor political effort next year, though he gave no details.

Those questions involve kitchen table issues, such as years of stagnant wages, pensions which crashed in the Great Recession, increased corporate shifting of health care spending from firms to workers, and the right to organize free of corporate interference and repression.

The Pro Act, designed to massively strengthen labor law, now has more than 200 U.S. House co-sponsors and 41 Senate co-sponsors.

Several years ago, ruling against the Service Employees International Union when it sued on behalf for minimum wages on behalf of an home health care worker who was among those they were trying to organize.

“Without legal rights, the workers are open to both exploitation and abuse,” Trumka said. “We need action to transform the economy.”

That economy that works for all must include strong worker rights safeguards, through the Pro Act (Protect the Right to Organize) on Capitol Hill and through massive changes in laws and enforcement in Mexico before, or both, statistics show.

“New NAFTA” pact, Trumka said. “We need action to transform the economy.”

Saying it’s time to legally stand up for the nation’s millions of domestic workers, the co-chair of the House Progressive Caucus and a top Democratic presidential contender on Capitol Hill and through massive changes in laws and enforcement in Mexico before, or both, statistics show.

That’s a legacy of racism and sexism: President Franklin Roosevelt exempted domestic workers.

That’s a legacy of racism and sexism: President Franklin Roosevelt exempted domestic workers.

For the first time in history, we have a chance to raise the bar for every domestic worker in our country, and set the stage for all working people,” said Ai-jen Poo.

The workers need it. The 1935 National Labor Relations Act and the 1938 Fair Labor Standards Act, the nation’s two basic labor laws, one which OKs the right to organize and the other which establishes the minimum wage and overtime pay—exempt domestic workers.

“Domestic workers do the work most precious to us: Caring for our homes and loved ones. But they don’t have the basic rights and dignity that they deserve,” said Jayapal. “It underpins the value of who we are, the way we treat each other.”

Home care workers, nannies and house cleaners have been excluded from basic labor protections. Many domestic workers are afraid to speak up about wage theft, discrimination, and unsafe working conditions because they fear losing their jobs or being torn from their families by deportation,” the site added.

Editor’s note: The following piece was written by Press Associates News Service. It has been slightly edited to conform to local style.

Democratic Lawmakers Introduce National Domestic Bills on Workers Rights

Editor’s note: The following story was introduced nationwide domestic workers’ rights bills.

If enacted, the legislation (HR 7870 and S2112, respectively) by Rep. Pramila Jayapal (D-Washington), and Sen. Kamala Harris (D-California) would bring a measure of job equity to one of the nation’s most exploited groups of workers: Maids, house cleaners, nannies and home health care assistants among them.

Ninety percent of those 2.5 million workers are women and the overwhelming majority of them are women of color, migrants into the U.S., or both, statistics show.

The National Domestic Workers Alliance (NDWA), headed by activist and organizer Ai-jen Poo, has pushed the Domestic Workers Bill Of Rights through in New York, Illinois, Oregon, California, Nevada, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Hawaii and New Mexico, plus the city of Seattle. NDWA now wants to take it nationwide.

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From the President

Labor Day Brought Vital Fact to Light

Media coverage of this year’s Labor Day often included what I consider a crucial fact. Namely, the general public has a favorable view of organized labor – but people who want to join unions often fight an unfairly uphill battle.

 AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka, who’s been a friend for many years, did a great job throughout a series of interviews explaining why our country is long overdue for extensive labor law reform. The deck is severely stacked against workers in most traditional organizing campaigns. We’ve gotten to this point through decades of attacks on unions. Those attacks – sometimes sneaky, sometimes brazen – have taken a toll and have eroded too many protections.

And that’s basically how the movement’s numbers are where they are. It’s a flat-out falsehood that unions aren’t needed anymore, or that people aren’t interested in joining. Nonpartisan polling shows that people do indeed value what collective bargaining and union representation have to offer. They understand that union representation is the only effective way to have a voice at work. They’d welcome the chance to sign up, and they know that union members consistently earn more money and have better benefits than unrepresented workers. But, too often, employers have all the power during an organizing campaign, and they face few if any penalties for breaking the law.

It’s no secret that when unions are strong, the middle class is strong. And America’s businesses and workers, from the 1930s to the 1970s, grew together. But since then, companies have gotten more prosperous while workers’ pay largely has stayed the same.

We have an opportunity to turn this ship around, and as always, it starts at the ballot box. The 2020 elections, incredibly, are only a year away. They are scheduled for Tuesday, November 3, 2020 and take it from me, a lot is on the line. All 435 seats in the United States House of Representatives, 34 of the 100 seats in the United States Senate, and the office of president of the United States will be contested. Thirteen state and territorial governmentships, as well as numerous other state and local elections, will also be contested. These are elections before the end of this year. Stay informed about the issues and candidates, and support the vote at every level of government who’ll support America’s working families and the maritime industry. The UIW has never cared about political party and that’ll be the case again next year. We’ll back those who back us, period.

Grassroots and Civility

Speaking of politics, I enjoyed recent remarks given by Brian Schoeneman, legislative director of the UIW’s parent organization, the SIU. While addressing one of our affiliated unions, he declared that the most important thing union members can do to protect your job and help advance the labor movement in the political arena is to vote.

“There is no more powerful four-letter word in the union vocabulary than ‘vote’,” he said, and I agree.

Motivating others to vote is also important, and it’s something we can all do. Talk with your co-workers and neighbors about the issues and candidates that matter to you. Encourage them to vote, and if they’re not registered, point them in the right direction.

On a personal note, I encourage all UIW members to keep it civil when discussing politics, no matter who you’re talking with. It’s often a touchy subject, but our country needs to re-learn the art of civil discourse and focusing on issues rather than personalities.

UIW/MDT President Michael Sacco (right) welcomes AFT President Randi Weingarten to the 2018 MTD meeting.

AFT Becomes MTD’s Newest Affiliate

Organization Boost Membership of 1.7 Million Strong

The Maritime Trades Department (MTD) recently welcomed its newest affiliate: the American Federation of Teachers (AFT).

“We are very proud and honored that the AFT has joined the decks of the MTD,” declared MTD President Michael Sacco, who also is president of the UIW and its parent organization, the Seafarers International Union (SIU).

“We have had a very good working relationship with the AFT and its members from the local level up through the years. People may wonder why the Territory would join another affiliate at every level of government who’ll support America’s working families and the maritime industry. The UIW has never cared about political party and that’ll be the case again next year. We’ll back those who back us, period.

The MTD is a constitutional department of the AFL-CIO. It has 22 affiliates with a collective membership of approximately six million.

“The AFT is proud to join the Maritime Trades Department,” said AFT President Randi Weingarten. “Together, we can fight for what all Americans want – a better life and a better future for our families – through good jobs; high-quality, affordable health care; a secure retirement; great public schools; affordable college; and a healthy democracy.

“The AFT represents 1.7 million teachers, paraprofessionals and school staff, higher education faculty and staff, nurses, other health care professionals, and public employees. AFT members work as instructors and staff at a variety of public maritime schools, colleges and programs across the United States. The union also represents workers at the Guam Port Authority.

During the last two years, MTD affiliates – prominently including the SIU – and the AFT have worked together to help Puerto Rico recover from the devastating hurricanes of 2017, including the delivery and dispersal of 100,000 water filters. Weingarten has also spoken publicly about that labor solidarity when she addressed the 2018 MTD executive board meeting in Orlando, Florida.

At the start of this year, members of the Port Maritime Council of Southern California immediately adopted a local school when the United Teachers of Los Angeles went on strike on Jan. 10. They walked picket lines and provided supplies (including food and drinks) during the six-day struggle.

In 2018, the Maritime Port Council of Greater New York/New Jersey and the AFT joined Randi Weingarten with its Paul Hall Award of Merit. In receiving the recognition, Weingarten told the audience how MTD affiliates helped her local, New York City’s United Federation of Teachers, gain recognition in the early 1970s.

Income Growth Slows to Crawl in 2018

The U.S. Census Bureau on September 10 released its report on income, poverty, and health insurance for 2018.

“Household income growth significantly slowed again in 2018, following a marked deceleration in 2017. While any reduction in poverty or increase in income is a step in the right direction, most families have just barely made up the ground lost over the past decade,” said EPI Senior Economist Elise Gould.

“After correcting for a discontinuity in the income data to make years before and after 2013 comparable, median household income remains just below where it was in 2000.”

Median household incomes rose only 0.9% in 2018, compared with 1.8% in 2017. In 2016 and 2015, median household incomes grew much faster, at 3.1% and 5.1%, respectively. The poverty rate, meanwhile, dropped 0.5 percentage points to 11.8% in 2018.

“Increased employment among African Americans in 2018 helped to reverse the loss of income among these households in 2017,” said EPI Economist and Director of the Program on Race, Ethnicity, and the Economy Valerie Wilson.

“In 2015 and 2016, income growth was stronger for black and Hispanic households than for white households, but after a disappointing 0.8% decline in black median household income in 2017, income grew 1.8% for black households in 2018.

“The report also shows that while in 2017, growth in Hispanic median household income continued to outpace that of white non-Hispanics, income growth stalled for black households in 2018.

“These trends resulted in a widening of the Hispanic–white income gap, while the black-white income gap was essentially unchanged,” Wilson concluded.

Income growth slowed to a crawl in 2018.
Continued from Page 1

The kitchen-table questions also include so-called “free trade” pacts and business’s corresponding massive export of U.S. jobs to Mexico.

The latest such pact, the “new NAFTA” President Donald Trump compelled Mexico and Canada into signing, “still falls short” when it comes to guaranteeing and enforcing worker rights in Mexico, Trumka said. “We need a pact that upholds the rights and dignity of working people” in all three NAFTA nations, he added.

To see whether such a pact – and safeguards – can be achieved, Trumka on September 4 led a delegation of union presidents to Mexico City to discuss the issue with Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador and other officials.

But he admitted it may be an uphill climb. In one of many examples, Trumka pointed out Mexican firms – especially Mexican factories of U.S.-contracted companies – have compelled Mexico and Canada into NAFTA’s new three-year agreement for an additional three years. In photo above, UIW members affirm their support for the move by raising their hands in a show of approval. From left to right: UIW Shop Delegate Juan Medina, UIW Shop Delegate Jose Lopez, UIW Rep Amanocio Crespo, Norma I. Matos, Natividad Seda and Pedro Torres.

Trumka Discusses Economy, 2020 Elections

“Trade without enforcement is a windfall for corporations and disastrous for workers. If Mexico can’t ensure that the new NAFTA is a non-starter...We need him (Obrador) to show how he guarantees the rights of working people, or workers all over North America will suffer.”

“All those issues, and more, have come up on the U.S. campaign trail as unionists have quizzed the Democratic presidential hopefuls. The results, Trumka said, have been gratifying.”

“We’re excited that all the candidates are talking about workers’ rights and unions, and that’s a big plus.” Trumka said when asked to rank five top contenders: Former Vice President Joe Biden, Sens. Bernie Sanders, (I-Vermont), Elizabeth Warren, (D-Massachusetts), and Kamala Harris, (D-California), and South Bend, Indiana Mayor Pete Buttigieg.

Trumka declined to rank them. “Any AFL-CIO endorsement will come from the bottom up – from our members through our executive council. And it’ll take 70 percent of the vote there. “They’re asking candidates about their position on different issues that are important to them. And forcing the candidates to think about it,” Trumka said of union members. “And if they have a position, it’s stated. If they don’t, they think it through and get a position. That’s where we’ve been largely successful and we will do that again.”

And in that respect, all the current hopefuls differ from 2016 Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton, whom most unions supported early in her contest with Sanders. She put kitchen table issues second, behind criticizing Trump, and said Trumka.

“The more that they (current candidates) talk about changing the rules -- and it’s not just trade, it’s tax laws, it’s regulations, it’s health and safety, it’s education, it’s health care, it’s pensions. It’s bankruptcy laws that have stripped workers of their pensions over the years” the greater the possibility they’ll win workers’ votes, he said.

“It’s what case they make on all of them. And then our members will say: ‘That’s the one that we want.’”

“The lesson the Democrats and the candidates have come to understand is that unless you talk about kitchen-table economic issues, you won’t get elected.” But they can’t just give lip service, he said.

On other issues, Trumka reiterating labor’s opposition to Trump’s nomination of Eugene Scalia, a pro-management attorney, to be the new Labor Secretary. Trump formally sent Scalia’s name to the Senate on August 26. No hearings have been scheduled yet on the nod.

“We actively opposed him in 2002, because his record was so bad” when GOP President George W. Bush nominated Scalia to be Solicitor of Labor, the department’s top legal post. “It’s only gotten worse. His views are dangerously outside the mainstream.”

Union opposition to Scalia, son of the late conservative U.S. Supreme Court Justice, helped scuttle Bush’s nomination. Scalia never got a hearing.

And Trumka led off with particular scorn for the president, though he did not name him.

“Working people are rising to meet this moment in history because we know something is deeply wrong,” he said.

“Our nation is being poisoned by hateful rhetoric and divisive tactics at the highest levels of government. People of color are being scapegoated, minimized, dehumanized and told to go back where they came from. Racist dog whistles have been replaced with megaphones.

“Women are openly degraded and discriminated against. And America’s welcome mat, long a beacon of hope for immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers, including my parents, is being bulldozed and paved over, replaced with a clear message: ‘you’re not welcome here.’

“Meanwhile, the rich continue to hoard unprecedented money and power, while the people who build that wealth are working harder and longer, for less money, with less dignity, in harsher, more dangerous workplaces. Faced with the reality of historic inequality and rising bigotry that goes all the way to the top, the labor movement is offering a path forward led by solidarity,” Trumka declared.


The U.S. economy added just 130,000 jobs in August, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). Given the sizable downward revisions of half a million jobs from March 2018 to March 2019, this modest employment number brings average monthly job growth this year so far down to 143,000, compared to a stronger 208,000 jobs created on average in the first eight months of last year. The private sector saw a slower 96,000 jobs added, while government employment rose by 34,000. The vast majority of this increase (27,300) was in the non-postal federal sector, largely due to an uptick in hiring in advance of the upcoming decennial census. The BLS reports that 25,000 temporary workers were hired to prepare for the 2020 Census.

The unemployment rate remained at 3.7% in August. The labor force participation rate edged up 0.2 percentage points to where it was when the year started, at 63.2%. The prime-working age labor force participation rate (25–54 years old) saw a significant gain in August, rising 0.6 percentage points. Like the overall labor force participation rate, it is now sitting exactly where it was at the start of 2019 (82.6%). The prime-age employment to population ratio rose as well (+0.5 percentage points) in August and is now slightly above its level in January (80.0% versus 79.9%). While the August increases are welcome, they are only just making up for the losses in participation that occurred earlier in this year.

Nominal wages grew 3.2% year-over-year in August, which is slower than expected in an economy that has had historically low unemployment—the unemployment rate has been at (or below) 4.0 % for the past 15 months. Wage growth has been particularly disappointing because it provides further evidence that the deceleration experienced in the first half seems to be holding.

Collective Bargaining Agreement Extension in Puerto Rico

Union members at UIW-contracted Iluminación Products Inc., in San Juan, Puerto Rico on August 5 unanimously ratified an extension of their collective bargaining agreement for an additional three years. In photo above, UIW members affirm their support for the move by raising their hands in a show of approval. From left to right are: UIW Shop Delegate Juan Medina, UIW Shop Delegate Jose Lopez, UIW Rep Amanocio Crespo, Norma I. Matos, Natividad Seda and Pedro Torres.
UIW Headquarters Recognizes Employees

More than 25 union and non-union employees at UIW/SIU headquarters in Camp Springs, Maryland on July 12 were recognized for dedication to the union and professionalism in the performance of their respective duties. Each were lauded for their respective years of service to the union by their colleagues during a formal recognition event in the headquarters cafeteria which was hosted by UIW Secretary Treasurer David Heindel and UIW Plan Administrator Maggie Bowen.

The longest serving UIW/SIU Headquarters employee to be recognized was John Sacco with 35 years of service. Because of previous commitments, Sacco was unable to attend the event.

10 Years Service - (from left) Brian Horton, Craig Floyd, Sherri Curtis, Stacy Thacker, Lee’tonja Scott and Constance Young. Also recognized for 10 years of service, but not pictured, were Charles Gorban Jr. and Norma Ferguson-Pike.

5 Years Service - Nick Merrill. Also recognized for five years of service, but not pictured, were Robert Parker, Amber Leonard and Rose Fox.

20 Years Service - (from left) Donna Brisco, Stephanie Baker and Debra Miller. Also recognized for 20 years of service, but not pictured, was Glenn Lewis.

25 Years Service - Sandy Sneed

30 Years Service - (from left) Catherine Ganoe, Tammy Kiley-Brazerol, Sandra McDonald and Kristy Clements

5 Years Service - (from left) Nick Merrill. Also recognized for five years of service, but not pictured, were Robert Parker, Amber Leonard and Rose Fox.
Paul Hall Center Bestows Accolades on Workers

Officials at the UIW-affiliated Paul Hall Center for Maritime Training and Education (PHC) on July 9 rolled out the red carpet to recognize and honor employees for their assorted years of service to the union.

Hosted by Acting PHC VP Tommy Orzechowski, the event recognized more than 25 employees. Like their counterparts at UIW/SIU headquarters in Camp Springs, Maryland, each service award recipient at the PHC received certificates and assorted gifts for their respective years of service.

Certificates and giveaways were provided by the Seafarers Plans Department in both locations.

5 Years Service - (Photo at left, from left): Mark Goldsmith, Amber Rye, Karen Gold, Cindy Springer, Patrick Schoenberger, Natalie Woodburn, Christopher Raley, Tina Stevens and John Thomas. Also recognized for five years of service, but not pictured, were: Christine Davis, Andrew Kenny, Donna Nelson and Charles Noell.

10 Years Service - (From left) Tracey Mayhew, Joseph Zienda and Kimberley Greenweld. Also honored for 15 years of service, but not pictured, was Terri Dean.

15 Years Service - (From left) Tracey Mayhew, Joseph Zienda and Kimberley Greenweld. Also honored for 15 years of service, but not pictured, was Terri Dean.

20 Years Service - Frank Torres. Also recognized for 20 years of service, but not pictured, were: Stanley Beck and Kathy Swann.

25 Years Service - Lori Cates

30 Years Service - Bonnie Johnson

35 Years Service - Robert Springer Jr.

40 Years Service - Janice Smolek (left) and Kerrie Thompson

5 Years Service - (Photo at left, from left): Mark Goldsmith, Amber Rye, Karen Gold, Cindy Springer, Patrick Schoenberger, Natalie Woodburn, Christopher Raley, Tina Stevens and John Thomas. Also recognized for five years of service, but not pictured, were: Christine Davis, Andrew Kenny, Donna Nelson and Charles Noell.
A new report from the Economic Policy Institute (EPI) thoroughly examines the economic plight of American workers.

“This report makes clear that despite an unemployment rate below 4%, wage growth continues to elude the vast majority of working families,” noted EPI Vice President John Schmitt. “This is a result of a decades-long attack on labor unions, and trickledown policies that put corporate profits and CEO pay above the rights and wages of working people.”

A headline on one of the essays contained in the overall report stated, “Working people have been thwarted in their efforts to bargain for better wages by attacks on unions.”

The report, available online at epi.org, was launched just before Labor Day. The research therein is consistent with the nonprofit, nonpartisan think tank’s self-described mission of “including the needs of low- and middle-income workers in economic policy discussions... They conduct research and analysis on the economic status of working Americans, and propose public policies that protect and improve the economic condition of low- and middle-income workers and assure policies with respect to how they affect the workplace.”

One of the report components, by Heidi Shierholz, points out that the “share of people who either have unionized workers or report they want a union is 60% – the same as it was 40 years ago. But employers’ aggressive efforts to intimidate, coerce, or fire workers in an attempt to keep them from organizing or voting to join unions continues to rob workers of their rights to come together and have a voice in their workplace.”

Her conclusion about the need for labor law reform is shared by the AFL-CIO, to which the UIW is affiliated. Such reform is one of the federation’s top priorities, though it’s also an enormous challenge. “Impeding union representation has been a primary goal of corporate interests in recent decades, and these interests have convinced conservative policymakers to attack collective bargaining through legislation, executive rulemaking, and the courts,” Shierholz added.

Meanwhile, policymakers have been ignoring the fact that the decline in collective bargaining has occurred naturally. “Quite the opposite,” she wrote. “Failing to protect workers to organize has reduced employees’ freedom to form unions and bargain collectively. Intense and aggressive anti-union efforts are one consequence of the most anti-union employers – have become widespread; it is now typical, when workers seek to organize, for their employers to intimidate union avoidance consultants to orchestrate fierce anti-union campaigns.”

EPI proposes strengthening current federal law and the NLRA; creating safer workplaces; and expanding federal income tax credits for workers who literally go to work each day of the year through minimum-wage violations alone. This month, Rep. Rosa DeLauro (D–Connecticut) and Sen. Patty Murray (D–Washington) introduced the Wage Theft Prevention and Wage Recovery Act, which would combat wage theft by strengthening current federal laws and empowering employees to recover their lost wages. If enacted, the bill would ensure that workers across America receive a fair day’s wage for a fair day’s work and empower them to recover the lost wages they deserve.

The House has taken action on key workers’ rights measures. Chief among these is the Raise the Wage Act, Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R–Kentucky) should allow votes on the critical bill. If he does not, he is preventing a raise for millions of U.S. workers. Further, the House should pass the Public Service Freedom to Negotiate Act, and the FAIR Act. Each of these measures would guarantee a system of laws that is tilted towards corporate interests and help to make our economy more just.
Stroke

A stroke can happen in one of two ways: blocked artery or ruptured artery.


GIOVANNA CROLLA
Pensioner Giovanna Crolla, 91, died February 1. Sister Crolla came under the union umbrella in 1980, joining while working at Tara Textiles. She was born in Italy and began receiving stipends for her retirement in 1994. Sister Crolla was a resident of Cedartown, Georgia. Brother Glover donned the union colors in 1972 while working at National Graphics. He was a military veteran, having served in the U.S. Army. Brother Glover began collecting retirement stipends in 1989 and made his home in Columbus, Ohio.

ANGELLO ILLUZZI
Pensioner Angello Illuzzi, 96, died June 17. Born in Italy, Brother Illuzzi was a military veteran. He signed on with the UIW in 1956 while working at Regent Wire & Rope Works. He retired and went on pension in 1986. Brother Illuzzi called Ocklawaha, Florida home.

GONE BUT NOT FORGOTTEN

UIW Pensioners

Rosalinda Budd
Armaly Brands
London, Ohio

Robert Campbell
Paulson Sunbury
Sunbury, Pennsylvania

Fernando Chavez
Del Monte Corp.
Wilmington, California

Emelita Clinton
DEW Management Systems, Inc.
29 Palms, California

Craig Cotterall
Paulson Wire Rope
Sunbury, Pennsylvania

Neil Disabelli
A&K Products Group
Newark, Delaware

Amelia Ednalam
Severson Group, LLC
29 Palms, California

Jesu Gandarilla
Save The Queen
Long Beach, California

Humberto Garcia
District 1, MEBA
Brownsville, Texas

Deborah Grahl
National Fiberstock
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

James Gilispie
Armaly Brands
London, Ohio

Gertrudes Hasse
Severson Group, LLC
29 Palms, California

James Jenning
Victory Refrigeration
Voorhees, New Jersey

Timothy Mays
Crown Cork & Seal
Abilene, Texas

Consuelo Moreno
Save The Queen
Long Beach, California

Hipoilo Navarro
A&K Products Group
El Paso, Texas

Jose Rodriguez
Victory Refrigeration
Cleveland, Ohio

Steven Sherf
Victory Refrigeration
Mt. Ephraim, New Jersey

Michael Win
Atlantic Cordage
Edison, New Jersey

GOING TO BE A PROUD UNCLE

KATHERINE WATKINS
Pensioner Katherine Watkins, 84, died July 5. Born in Ross County, Ohio, Sister Watkins signed on with the UIW while working at Church & Dwight Co., Inc. She retired and went on pension in 1997. Sister Watkins made her home in London, Ohio.

The United Worker

July-September 2019

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The Transportation Security Administration on August 22 announced that it began verbally advising travelers who present non-compliant driver’s licenses or other acceptable form of identification, to fly within the United States. Individuals who are unable to verify their identity will not be permitted to enter the TSA checkpoint and will not be allowed to fly.

“The security requirements of the REAL ID Act are an important step in enhancing commercial aviation security,” said TSA Acting Deputy Administrator Patricia Cogswell. “The Act is a little more than a year away—now is the time to prepare.”

Since April, TSA has displayed signs at airports to remind travelers that REAL ID-compliant licenses or other acceptable forms of ID, such as a state-issued enhanced driver’s license, a valid passport, or U.S. military ID is compliant should check with their state driver’s license agency.

Beginning October 1, 2020, each traveler must present a REAL ID-compliant driver’s license, state-issued enhanced driver’s license, or another acceptable form of identification, to fly within the United States. Again, individuals who are unable to verify their identity will not be permitted to enter the TSA checkpoint and will not be allowed to fly.

For more information about flying with a REAL ID and to download and print informational materials, visit tsa.gov/real-id.

Editor's note: The following article was written by Margaret Poydock and Celine McNicholas of the Economic Policy Institute. It has been edited slightly to conform to local style and policy.

Congress ended its legislative work for the summer July 26. Members returned to their districts after a busy week dominated by discussion of the Mueller report. While much of the focus of the 116th Congress has been on investigations of the administration, the House of Representatives has passed several bills that would benefit working people.

On July 18, the House passed the Raise the Wage Act which would raise the minimum wage to $15 an hour in 2025. This critical legislation would increase wages for over 33 million U.S. workers and lift 1.3 million people out of poverty. Nearly half of them children. Workers in every congressional district in the country would benefit from this critical legislation.

In March, the House passed the Paycheck Fairness Act, which would put an end to the Equal Pay Act of 1963 and guarantee that women can challenge pay discrimination and hold their employers accountable. Since the passage of the Equal Pay Act of 1963, millions of women have joined the workforce. However, more than 50 years later, women are still earning less than their male counterparts. On average in 2018, women were paid 22.6 percent less than men, after controlling for race and ethnicity, education, age, and location. This gap is even larger for women of color, with black and Hispanic women being paid 34.9 and 34.3 percent less per hour than white men, respectively—even after controlling for education and age, and location. The Paycheck Fairness Act is crucial legislation in reducing these gender pay gaps and guaranteeing women receive equal pay for equal work.

In May, the House passed the Equality Act, which prohibits discrimination in housing, the workplace, and public accommodations on the basis of sex, gender identity, and sexual orientation. While many states have enacted laws to protect LGBTQ Americans against discrimination regarding sexual orientation and gender identity, there is no federal law that would provide the same protections. There is, however, a glaring need: nearly two-thirds of LGBTQ Americans report experiencing discrimination in their personal lives. The Equality Act amends the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Fair Housing Act, the Equal Credit Opportunity, and the Jury Selection and Service Act to explicitly include sexual orientation and gender identity as protected characteristics. The Equality Act is a pivotal step toward ensuring equality for all Americans.

In addition to the bills the House has already passed this session, a number of others that have been introduced that would restore and strengthen workers’ rights. These include:

**Protecting the Right to Organize (PRO) Act:** (See Page 1 in this edition of the United Workers) The PRO Act would be critical for increasing wages, improving working conditions, and combating income inequality in America. However, the erosion of labor laws and attacks on unions by special-interest groups has weakened union membership to just 10.7 percent in 2018. The result has been stagnating wages for working people, unsafe workplaces, and rising inequality. The Protecting the Right to Organize (PRO) Act introduced by Rep. Bobby Scott (D-Virginia) and Sen. Patty Murray (D-Washington), would strengthen the federal laws that protect workers’ right to organize a union and collectively bargain over wages, benefits, and better working conditions.

**Public Service Freedom to Negotiate Act:** Under current federal law, public service workers do not have the freedom to join in union and collectively bargain over wages or working conditions. The Public Service Freedom to Negotiate Act, introduced by Rep. Matt Cartwright (D-Pennsylvania) and Sen. Mazie Hirono (D-Hawaii), would require states to provide public-service workers the freedom to join in union and collectively bargain. Ultimately, the bill would provide 17.3 million public employees a national standard of bargaining rights.

**Forced Arbitration Injustice Repeal (FAIR) Act and the Restoring Justice for Workers Act:** According to a recent report by EPI and the Center on Popular Democracy, more than 80 percent of workplaces will subject their workers to mandatory arbitration with class and collective action waivers by 2024. The FAIR Act, introduced by Rep. Hank Johnson (D-Georgia) and Sen. Richard Blumenthal (D-Connecticut), would eliminate forced arbitration in employment, consumer, and civil rights cases. The Restoring Justice for Workers Act, introduced by Reps. Jerrold Nadler (D-New York), and Bobby Scott (D-Virginia) and Sen. Patty Murray (D-Washington), would ban mandatory arbitration and class and collective action waivers in labor and employment matters.

**Restoring Overtime Pay Act:** In June, Reps. Mark Takano (D-California) and Bobby Scott (D-Virginia) and Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio) and Patty Murray (D-Washington) introduced the Restoring Overtime Pay Act, which strengthens overtime protections by attaching the salary level to the 40th percentile of earnings of full-time sala- ried workers in the lowest wage census region. The bill also requires automatic updates every three years to ensure the level remains in line with the changes in our economy. If Congress were to enact the bill in 2019, the overtime salary level would increase from $23,660 per year to roughly $51,000 per year, making roughly 4.6 million workers newly eligible for overtime pay.

**Wage Theft Prevention and Wage Recovery Act:** Wage theft—the failure of employers to pay wages owed to employees—has become an epidemic in the United States. Each year, millions of workers are denied wages that they have earned. In many cases, the denial of wages is not an accident but a willful scheme to increase worker exploitation.

The bill would provide enforcement tools specifically targeted at preventing wage theft and obtaining millions of dollars in unpaid wages on behalf of workers.