

# The United Worker

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## Trumka: 'Workers First Agenda' Will Build Sustainable Economy, Stronger Democracy

*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.



Richard Trumka  
President, AFL-CIO

"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 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

See *Federation*, Page 5

## AFL-CIO President Emeritus John Sweeney Passes Away

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 UIW 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 SIU-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),



John Sweeney  
AFL-CIO President Emeritus

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

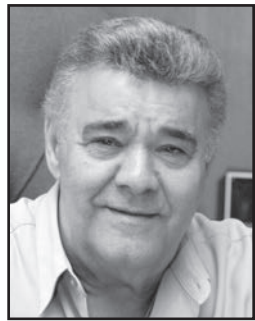
See *Former*, Page 5



## From the President

### 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 reintroduced 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 the UIW will do our part to help make it happen.

#### More on Vaccines

When this edition of the *United Worker* went to press, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration had already approved two COVID-19 Vaccines for emergency use. A third is currently being considered.

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.

The UIW will take a sensible, fair approach as vaccines become more readily available. We will respect individual rights while also taking the most prudent steps to protect you, your co-workers and your families.

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.

## Federation President Voices Strong Support for PRO Act

*Editor's note: The following op-ed was written by Richard Trumka, president of the 12.5 million-member, 55 union AFL-CIO, America's labor federation. It was published in the January 26 online edition of CNN Business.*

At the ballot box, working people pushed America in a new direction. Two years ago, even two months ago, the idea of a pro-worker control of the U.S. House of Representatives, Senate and White House was far-fetched. Following the victories of President Joe Biden in November and Senators Jon Ossoff and Raphael Warnock three weeks ago in Georgia, that is now America's governing reality.

Union members were a major reason these victories happened. But we know the value of these wins is in what happens after Election Day. If lawmakers don't ensure the economy works for working Americans, then what is the point?

Amid the chaos of the Covid-19 pandemic, frontline workers are showing the world what heroism looks like. And as we confront the coronavirus with courage, big businesses and corporate executives are profiting from the service and sacrifice of American workers. Billionaires have increased their collective net worth by more than \$1 trillion in the past three years. The profits these billionaires have seen could cover half the cost of Biden's bold relief package to rescue our entire nation — over 330 million people — from financial ruin.

America's inequality crisis began long before this public health crisis, but failed leadership has deepened it. President Donald Trump lost his job and Senator Mitch McConnell lost his Senate majority because they lost control of this virus. On the verge of bankruptcy, state and local governments are cutting public sector workers from payrolls. The absence of a standard for infectious disease — a set of rules that require employers to protect workers from hazards — means employers can risk workers' lives with impunity, although Biden's executive order calling for a standard is a good first step. Food and housing insecurity is spreading just like the virus. Throw in the lack of safeguards for equal pay, fair scheduling and other long-overdue rights, and worker protections in America are among the weakest in the world.

Sure, Trump and McConnell could have secured passage of the HEROES Act to provide relief back in May, but they shot it down. They refused to pass a dire relief package until December — after working people sent them a message with our votes, our power — and even that was a modest package.

In the last Congress, Speaker Nancy Pelosi and the U.S. House of Representatives passed the most significant worker empowerment legislation since the Great Depression by creating a much fairer process for forming a union. It is called the Protecting the Right to Organize Act, or PRO Act. After an anti-worker majority blocked it in the Senate, reintroducing the PRO Act, passing it in both chambers of Congress and getting Biden's signature is vital to our economic recovery.

The PRO Act would protect and empower workers to exercise their freedom to organize and bargain. It would make sure that workers can reach a first contract quickly after a union is recognized, end employers' practice of hiring permanent replacements to punish striking workers and finally hold



Richard Trumka  
President, AFL-CIO

corporations accountable by strengthening the National Labor Relations Board and allowing it to impose penalties on employers who retaliate against collective bargaining. It would also repeal so-called "right to work" laws, which make it harder for working people to form unions and collectively bargain for better wages, benefits and working conditions.

Democrats can't afford to leave workers out to dry and repeat the missed opportunities of previous administrations and congresses. Workers know that too many Democratic candidates in the past were quick to cash our checks and court our votes, but they postponed our priorities — especially labor law reform — when they assumed power. This time must be different.

The PRO Act is a generational opportunity that will transform America's labor landscape and marshal economic recovery for working people. Unions bargain for higher wages and better health care, and help ensure a more secure retirement. For instance, 79% of union members have access to defined benefit pension plans as opposed to 17% of non-union workers.

The PRO Act is more than labor law reform, it's also civil rights legislation. We secure contracts that protect workers who have to care for a loved one and ensure our workers' voices are heard as technology evolves. We also defend women, people of color, LGBTQ people and people with different abilities from discrimination.

The PRO Act is also an economic stimulus bill. Unions give more of us the collective power to win better pay and safer working conditions, putting additional money in workers' pockets, driving demand and creating jobs. And research from MIT shows nearly half of non-union workers — nearly 60 million people — would vote to join today if given the opportunity.

I was in the meeting where Biden, just days after he was elected, looked at a group of CEOs in the eye and said that in his administration, "unions are going to have increased power." The CEOs just nodded, completely shocked to hear such a clear pro-worker message directly from an incoming president. Biden, who proudly calls himself "a union guy," rightfully pointed out that worker power is "not anti-business. It's about creating economic growth [and] creating good-paying jobs."

I could not agree more, Mr. President. And that's why we need to make the PRO Act the law of the land.



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**Great Lakes Region:** Monte Burgett, vice president

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**West Coast Region:** Nicholas Marrone, vice president





Virtual Membership Meeting In U.S. Virgin Islands



UIW National Director Karen Horton-Gennette, lower right in screen grab above, on January 24 conducted the first-ever successful virtual membership meeting with members, representatives and officials in the U.S. Virgin Islands. Included was UIW VP Caribbean Region Eugene Irish who is pictured at the top right. In addition to other union business, in-depth discussions were held on the COVID-19 Pandemic, testing and vaccines.

Members Ink New Contracts at Seven Locations Despite Challenges Posed by COVID-19 Pandemic

Despite the COVID-19 Pandemic and the myriad of challenges it has presented during the past year, the UIW continues full steam ahead and laser focused on its mission of ensuring that members' rights on the job are protected as well as respected.

In this vein, the efforts of union leadership at all levels has paid huge dividends over the last 12 months as a bevy of new collective bargaining agreements (CBA) were negotiated and ratified. Altogether, seven new work accords were finalized at seven UIW worksites which directly affected more than 530 union members. While contract provisions varied at each job site, the new accords nonetheless were "win wins" for all concerned.

"We were not able to get everything we wanted at each job site during the various negotiations," said UIW National Director Karen Horton-Gennette. "As you know, it's not a perfect world and things are no different in the collective bargaining arena. By design, you necessarily have to give and take when at the bargaining table.

"Despite this environment though, I'd say that we still came out in very good shape at each shop where negotiations were conducted," she continued. "Among other features, we were successful in maintaining and/or improving medical benefits and vacation benefits at each job site. And with one unique exception, we were also able to secure annual wage increases."

Aside from the normal obstacles encountered during CBA consultations, last year's talks presented a host of new and uniquely different challenges not only for Horton-Gennette, but also for negotiating team members on both sides of the table.

"As we all (members of the negotiating teams) found our way through the pandemic during the

entirety of 2020, we had to be extremely creative in our approach," Horton-Gennette said. "Safety was our primary concern at every turn. It was always at the fore, whether we were representing our members in contract talks or doing our normal day to day jobs.

"For the most part, our normal face to face discussions were not an option," she continued. "We looked at one another other through a computer screen or listened to each other via conference calls. We exchanged proposals via email or fax, and caucused in a different virtual room or simply over the phone.

"Amidst the poor connections, many technical difficulties, the countless 'can you repeat that, I couldn't hear you' and dropped calls or missing faces on the screen, we were still able to push through and get the deals done for our members," she said.

"I'd like to extend a 'job well done and a thank you' to our UIW representatives and negotiating committee members who participated in these negotiations and ratifications," she concluded. "Brothers

and Sisters, we couldn't do this without you."

UIW negotiating committee team members (by location) were as follows: Sodexo: UIW National Director Karen Horton-Gennette, UIW Rep. Laura Lopez, Shop Steward **Sandra Molina** and Shop Steward **Shawn Clifford**; AMG: Horton-Gennette, UIW Rep. Shane Sterry and Shop Steward **William Wright**; Juanita's Foods: Horton-Gennette, UIW Rep. Lupe Murillo, Shop Steward **Juan Carlos Guerrero**, and Member **Martin Mercado**; Refresco: Horton-Gennette, UIW Rep. Laura Lopez, Shop Steward **Ray Adkinsson**, Shop Steward **Sergio Castaneda** and Shop Steward **Tim Fitzgerald**; Rossmoor: UIW Rep. Eddie Ruiz, Shop Steward **Albert Patrick** and Member **Paul Thibault**; Sealy: Horton-Gennette, UIW Rep. Shane Sterry, Shop Steward **Mary Swope**, Shop Steward **Karl Boyd**, and Shop Steward **Charles Clopper**; and Armaly: UIW VP Monte Burgett, UIW Rep. Jeff Harris, Shop Steward **Brian Watson**, Shop Steward **Robert Henry**, Shop Steward **Justin Baumgardener** and Member **Andrew Williams**.

UIW CBAs Ratified During 2020 At A Glance

Worksite	Location	Contract Duration	Members Affected
Sodexo	29 Palms, California	2 years	48
AMG	Baltimore, Maryland	5 years	30
Juanita's	Wilmington, California	3 years	80
Refresco	Long Beach, California	3 years	110
Rossmoor	Jamesburg, New Jersey	2 years	15
Sealy	Williamsport, Maryland	3 years	192
Armaly	Walled Lake, Michigan	3 years	56



# Bill Aims for Fairness in Union Organizing Drives

The PRO Act is back. Viewed as the most pro-worker labor law legislation in more than 85 years, the bill formally was introduced Feb. 4 by House and Senate Democratic leaders. The House passed the same bill (Protecting the Right to Organize Act) during the prior Congress, but the Senate never conducted a hearing on it. President Biden tweeted his support for the legislation, which would overturn decades of anti-worker court and National Labor Relations Board rulings, and make organizing, winning elections and bargaining first contracts easier and fairer for employees. It would also increase fines for corporate labor law-breaking,

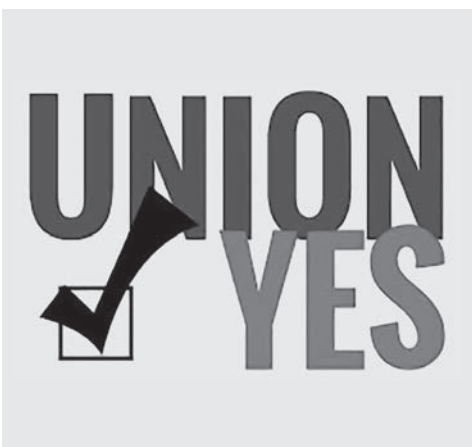
make court orders easier against violators easier to obtain, and void the labor law provision that approves so-called “right to work” laws. The PRO Act is organized labor’s top priority, after coronavirus economic aid, in the new Biden-Harris administration and the Democratic-run Congress. “Every American deserves the dignity and respect that comes with the right to union organize and collectively bargain,” Biden tweeted. “The policy of our government is to encourage union organizing, and employers should ensure their workers have a free and fair choice to join a union.” AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka

hailed the measure’s introduction, while warning Democrats it’s time to back up their words with deeds and pass it. He added workers would mobilize for support. “We will make our case in every state and every congressional district, to elected leaders across the political spectrum,” Trumka said. “But make no mistake, this is a test for Democrats. After decades of disappointment, it’s time for the party of FDR to finish what he started.” House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-California), Senate Majority Leader Charles Schumer (D-New York) and House Education and Labor Committee Chair Bobby Scott (D-Virginia)

promptly jumped on board after Senate Labor Committee Chair Patty Murray (D-Washington) unveiled the PRO Act. Retired Americans Executive Director Richard Fiesta noted, “Employers are now routinely denying workers their basic right to join with co-workers for fairness on the job, and the ability to negotiate for better pay and benefits has eroded. It is no surprise that more and more Americans feel squeezed financially and are afraid that a secure retirement is out of reach. We must update labor laws so everyone can safely organize and join a union.” Neither Murray nor Scott set hearing dates for the legislation.

## Labor Officials, Industry Leaders Meet With Biden

AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka, AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Liz Shuler and leaders from construction and manufacturing unions on Feb. 17 met with President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris to discuss actions the administration can take to create good-paying union jobs, highlighting the need to pass the Protecting the Right to Organize (PRO) Act, COVID-19 relief and an infrastructure package. After the meeting, Trumka and Shuler released the following statements: “For working people, this was the most productive Oval Office meeting in years. The president and vice president share our belief that rebuilding our infrastructure is critical to our communities,” said Trumka. “President Biden ran on a promise to build back better. As we made clear today, America can only build back better if unions are doing the building. If we make key structural changes to our economy, we can create a new generation of good-paying union jobs. That means delivering long-overdue COVID-19 relief to working families. It means passing urgently needed infrastructure spending. And, it means strengthening working people’s freedom to organize a union by passing the PRO Act. President Biden understands how urgent this is, and we’re looking forward to getting it done as quickly as possible.” “For nearly a year, women and people of color have borne the brunt of this pandemic,” said Shuler. “Any just recovery will build a pathway to economic security and workplace dignity for the millions of working people who have already sacrificed too much. As I told President Biden, that path runs directly through the labor movement. A union card is the single best tool we have to advance racial justice and gender equity on the job. And passing the PRO Act is a critical step in ensuring we rebuild our economy fairly.”



## Members At Armaly Brands Elated With New Contract

Photos appearing here show some of the union members at UIW-contracted Armaly Brands. Most are all smiles because they are pleased with provisions contained in their new three-year labor accord which was negotiated and ratified last year (see related story on Page 3). Nearly 60 UIW members are employed by the Walled Lake, Michigan-based company. Armaly is the manufacturer and marketer of consumer and commercial-grade sponges and cleaning products. Thanks to UIW VP Great Lakes Region Monte Burgett for providing these photos.



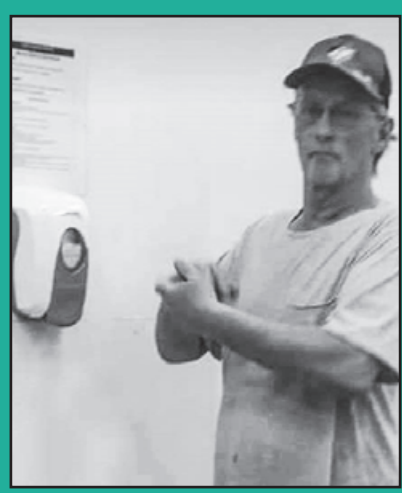
Tina Hastings  
Operator



April Ervin  
Operator



Debbie McClane and Piper White  
Operators



Paul Stonerock  
Auto Park Mechanic



Jason Garlin and Tony Strickland  
Warehouse Workers



Larry Johnson  
Mechanic



# Former AFL-CIO President Dies

Continued from Page 1

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 of 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.

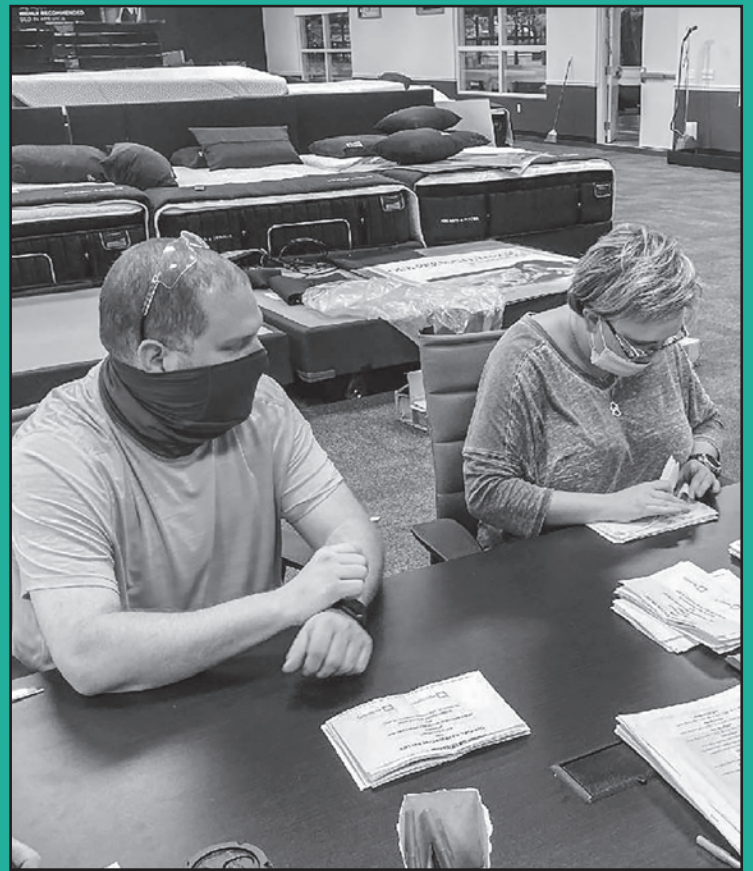
In 1995, Sweeney led an insurgent campaign to capture the presidency of America's labor federation, the AFL-CIO. Running on a New Voice ticket with United Mine Workers of America President Trumka and AFSCME International Vice President Linda Chavez-Thompson (in the newly created position of executive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



UIW members Eric Andrews (left) and Kelly Davis tally votes during last year's collective bargaining agreement negotiations at union-contracted Sealy Mattress in Williamsport, Maryland. The union's negotiation committee finalized a three-year accord which affects more than 190 UIW members at the worksite. (see related story on Page 3). Thanks to UIW Rep. Shane Sterry for providing this photo.

# Federation Rolls Out Workers First Agenda

Continued from Page 1

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.



## UIW Directory

### HEADQUARTERS

5201 Capital Gateway Drive  
Camp Springs, MD 20746  
(301) 899-0675

### ANCHORAGE, AK

721 Sesame St.  
Suite 1C 99503  
(907) 561-4988

### BALTIMORE, MD

2315 Essex St. 21224  
(410) 327-4900

### COLUMBUS, OH

2800 South High St.  
P.O. Box 07770, 43207  
(614) 497-2446

### HONOLULU, HI

606 Kalihi Street 96819  
(808) 845-5222

### HOUSTON, TX

625 N. York Street 77003  
(713) 659-5152

### JACKSONVILLE, FL

5100 Belfort Rd. 32256  
(904) 281-2622

### JERSEY CITY, NJ

104 Broadway  
Jersey City 07306  
(201) 434-6000

### JOLIET, IL

10 East Clinton St. 60432  
(815) 723-8002

### NEW ORLEANS, LA

3911 Lapalco Blvd.  
Harvey LA 70058  
(504) 328-7545

### NORFOLK, VA

115 3rd St. 23510  
(757) 622-1892

### OAKLAND, CA

1121 7th St. 94607  
(510) 444-2360

### PHILADELPHIA, PA

2604 S. 4th St. 19148  
(215) 336-3818

### PINEY POINT, MD

45353 St. George's Avenue 20674  
(301) 994-0010

### SAN JUAN, PUERTO RICO

659 Hillside St, Summit Hills  
San Juan, PR 00920  
(939) 204-0337

### ST. CROIX, USVI

4031 Estate La Grande Princess Suite 37  
Christiansted, USVI 00820  
(340) 773-6055

### ST. LOUIS, MO

4581 Gravois Ave. 63116  
(314) 752-6500

### ST. THOMAS, USVI

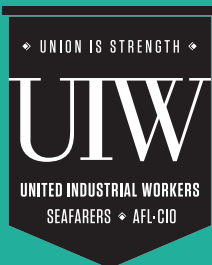
201-3A Altona & Welgunst  
Suite 101  
St. Thomas, USVI 00802  
(340) 774-3895

### TACOMA, WA

3411 S. Union Ave. 98409  
(253) 272-7774

### WILMINGTON, CA

510 N. Broad Ave. 90444  
(310) 549-3920



# House Includes \$15 Minimum Wage in Bill

*Editor's note: The following piece was written by Mark Gruenberg, editor, Press Associates Union News Service. It has been slightly edited to conform to local style and sensitivities.*

The raise in the federal minimum wage to \$15 an hour took another step in Congress when the Democratic-run House Education and Labor Committee included it in the \$1.9 trillion "reconciliation" bill Democratic President Joe Biden seeks to help ease the economic woes of the coronavirus pandemic.

The panel's section of the legislation was passed over GOP screams against raising the minimum wage for 27 million-32 million workers, depending on whose calculations you cite. The Republicans called raising the wage part of "a radical left-wing agenda."

Now the wage hike and other pro-worker provisions in committee's section of reconciliation will be combined with provisions from other panels before the full House votes on the measure, expected by the end of the month.

The minimum wage hike is a key worker cause, as the federal minimum wage for regular full-time workers, \$7.25 an hour, hasn't risen since 2009. The wage for tipped workers—servers, porters, taxi drivers and others—is \$2.13 an hour. It hasn't risen in 30 years. The bill equalizes the tipped workers' minimum and the youth subminimum wage with the regular minimum wage in 2027. It faces GOP Senate opposition, along with that of key Sen. Joe Manchin (D-West Virginia).

And support for the "\$15 and a union" led thousands of fast food workers out on a strike, literally or virtually, from coast to coast on Feb. 16 (see separate story).

The raise to \$15 an hour by 2025 "will lift nearly one million people out of poverty and put money into the pockets of

27 million workers, who will accelerate our economic recovery by spending that money in local businesses," committee chair Rep. Bobby Scott (D-Virginia) said.

"According to the" non-partisan "Congressional Budget Office, a \$15 minimum wage, even after you account for any employment losses, will put an additional net \$333 billion into the pockets of low- and middle-income workers, outweighing the cost to the federal government."

The AFL-CIO and other unions strongly support minimum wage hikes, while fast-food barons and low-paying corporate and capitalist interests oppose it. The Auto Workers had a pointed reply to them in a tweet: "Despite claims that the cost wage increases will be passed onto consumers, researchers found that a 10% increase in the minimum wage raised McDonald's food prices by just 1.4%."

The panel's reconciliation section included other pro-worker provisions, a fact sheet says:

■ \$150 million to the Labor Department to "implement COVID-19 worker protection activities," though it does not specify which ones. Half of that will go to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration for increased enforcement against businesses that violate OSHA's "general duty clause" and don't protect workers against the virus.

The bill says OSHA should single out "high-risk sectors, such as meat processing, corrections and health care" for enforcement. It does not order OSHA to craft and implement a temporary emergency rule mandating firms protect workers and customers against the virus.

■ \$130 billion "to help schools take the steps recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to ensure students and educators can return to the classroom safely," including better venti-

lation, smaller class sizes, buying personal protective equipment (PPE) for workers, temperature checks for teachers, workers and students and "hiring support staff to deal with students' health and well-being." It also bars states from cutting their own education aid to local schools and substituting the federal dollars.

Becky Pringle, the Philadelphia science teacher who heads the nation's largest union, the National Education Association, had lauded that Biden proposal, contrasting it with Trump regime refusal to aid schools while strong-arming them to reopen too fast and too much.

"These are encouraging words to the nation's educators who have been performing their jobs over the past year in deeply challenging circumstances, Pringle said then. She called Biden "finally a true partner in the White House who will listen, value the ideas, and act in the best interest of students, educators, and families."

■ "COBRA subsidies to ensure workers who have been laid-off or subject to reduced hours can access affordable health coverage. This provision would allow workers and their families to keep their doctors, maintain continuity of care, and avoid restarting their annual deductibles and out-of-pocket limits mid-year."

■ An unspecified sum for better subsidies for health care under the marketplaces in the 11-year-old Affordable Care Act, covering workers who don't have COBRA coverage. The committee said the subsidies would especially help workers at "small businesses, the self-employed, and gig economy workers impacted by the pandemic."

■ "A presumption that COVID-19 is work-related" for federal, postal and long-shore workers who fall ill from it. That presumption makes those workers eligible for medical benefits, lost wages and survivor benefits."

## 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 manufacturing (-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."

## Mortgage assistance for union families



Learn more at [unionplus.org](https://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.

3/21

[unionplus.org](https://unionplus.org)



UNIONPLUS



# FDA Authorizes 2 COVID-19 Vaccines for Emergency Use

U.S. Citizens late last year received arguably their best news to date regarding the COVID-19 Pandemic when the federal government announced the release of two vaccines.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in December 2020 issued emergency use authorizations (EUA) for the distribution of a pair of vaccines for the prevention of coronavirus disease 2019 caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2). On Dec. 11, the agency issued its first EUA that allowed the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine to be distributed in the U.S. for use by individuals 16 years of age and older. Seven days later, on Dec. 18, the FDA issued its second EUA. This one cleared the way for the distribution of the Moderna COVID-19 Vaccine for use by individuals 18 years of age and older.

According to the Centers for Disease Control, both vaccines have shown to be very effective at preventing COVID-19 infection. The Pfizer vaccine has shown to be 95% effective across all age, racial and ethnic groups. The Moderna vaccine has shown to be 94.1% effective across all racial and ethnic groups, but this number did appear to be a little lower among those 65 years of age or older.

### Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine

Manufactured by Pfizer Inc., the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine is administered as a two-dose series, three weeks apart, into the muscle.

The most commonly reported side

effects, which typically lasted several days, were pain at the injection site, tiredness, headache, muscle pain, chills, joint pain, and fever. Of note, more people experienced these side effects after the second dose than after the first dose, so it is important for vaccination providers and recipients to expect that there may be some side effects after either dose, but even more so after the second dose.

### Moderna COVID-19 Vaccine

The Moderna COVID-19 Vaccine is manufactured by ModernaTX, Inc. It is administered as a two-dose series, one month apart, into the muscle. The Moderna COVID-19 Vaccine may not protect everyone.

The most commonly reported side effects, which typically lasted several days, were pain at the injection site, tiredness, headache, muscle pain, chills, joint pain, swollen lymph nodes in the same arm as the injection, nausea and vomiting, and fever. Of note, more people experienced these side effects after the second dose than after the first dose, so it is important for vaccination providers and recipients to expect that there may be some side effects after either dose, but even more so after the second dose.

While the rollout of the vaccines indeed is welcome news, it has actually created more questions than federal/state health officials appear able to answer. And while these questions vary widely, those most consistently posed center around actual vaccine injections, distribution of the life-saving

cocktail, number of doses available, and length of time the vaccines protect people from the virus.

The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP), a U.S. federal group within the CDC made up of medical and public health experts, has recommended that in the first phase of vaccination in the U.S., COVID-19 vaccines should be given first to health care personnel (HCW) and adult residents of long-term care facilities (LTC).

The ACIP has also recommended that the next group to get a vaccine in the U.S. should include people age 75 and older and frontline essential workers, such as first responders, teachers and public transit and grocery store workers.

The third priority group recommended to get the vaccine in the U.S. includes people ages 65 to 74, people ages 16 to 64 who are at high risk of severe COVID-19 due to underlying medical conditions, and all other essential workers, such as those working in food service and construction. Examples of underlying medical conditions include type 2 diabetes and severe obesity.

Based on the foregoing ACIP recommendations, health officials in each state have formulated their plans for who should be vaccinated and when. Earlier CDC recommendations gave the highest priority to health care workers and nursing home residents. But the slow pace of the rollout has frustrated many Americans at a time when the coronavirus death toll has continued to rise.

According to a health system tracker conducted by the Peterson Center on Healthcare and Kaiser Family Foundation, most states are following ACIP's Phase 1a recommendation:

■ 45 states are following ACIP's interim Phase 1a recommendation to prioritize HCWs and LTC residents. Some states will start vaccinating both of these groups together, while others will start with one of these groups first as they await more supply to start vaccinating the other. Still, even with these state criteria, decisions about how to allocate limited initial vaccines to HCWs and LTC residents will mostly be left to facilities.

■ Seven states depart from ACIP's Phase 1a recommendation in some way. For example, the District of Columbia and Utah include HCWs in Phase 1a but LTC residents in Phase 1b. In addition to HCWs and LTC residents, Nevada, New Hampshire, and Wyoming also include law enforcement in Phase 1a (per ACIP's proposed framework, they are in 1b). Massachusetts also includes people incarcerated in prisons and those living in homeless shelters in Phase 1a (neither is explicitly mentioned ACIP's Phase 1 framework).

■ More than 20 states also provide further sub-prioritization rankings or criteria within HCW and/or LTC resident groupings. For example, Alabama segments HCWs into "very-high," "high" and "medium" risk. Idaho provides specific rankings within each group. Texas groups Phase 1a into "first" and "second" tier.

## Gone But Not Forgotten

### RONALD ARMENTROUT

Pensioner Ronald Armentrout, 69, died October 5. Born in Columbus, Ohio, Brother Armentrout donned the union colors in 1970 while working at Church & Dwight. He retired and went on pension in 1991. Brother Armentrout made his home in his native state in the city of West Jefferson.

### MICHAEL BENNINGTON

Pensioner Michael Bennington, 66, passed away September 27. A native of Oak Hill, Ohio, Brother Bennington signed on with the UIW in 1986 while working at Crown Cork & Seal. He began receiving retirement stipends in 2005. Brother Bennington resided in Burseson, Texas.

### PAUL DIEFENDERFER

Pensioner Paul Diefenderfer, 71, died October 24. Born in Butler Township, Pennsylvania, he joined the union in the 68 while employed at A&E Products. Brother Diefenderfer began receiving compensation for his retirement in 2004. He called Ashland, Pennsylvania home.

### WILLIE GANT

Pensioner Willie Gant, 82, passed away November 28. A native of South Carolina, Brother Gant signed on with the union in 1980 while working at Soda Rental Service. He went on pension in 1992 and was a resident of Philadelphia.

### JOANN GRUBBS

Pensioner Joann Grubbs, 87, died January 11. Sister Grubbs joined the UIW in 1976 while employed at National Fiberstock. A native of Philadelphia, she began receiving retirement stipends in 1994. Sister Grubbs made her home in Huntington Valley, Pennsylvania.

### NANCY HARPER

Pensioner Nancy Harper, 87, passed away October 10. Sister Harper joined the UIW ranks in 1974 while employed at Bron-Shoe. She started receiving compensation for her retirement in 2006 and resided in Marengo, Ohio.

### THERESA HAYDEN

Pensioner Theresa Hayden, 89, died September 25. Sister Hayden came under

the UIW umbrella in 1967 while working at National Fiberstock, Inc. A native of Bristol, Pennsylvania, she retired and went on pension in 1991. Sister Hayden made her home in Philadelphia.

### PHYLLIS HENKLE

Pensioner Phyllis Henkle, 82, passed away November 14. Born in Ohio, Sister Henkle donned the union colors in 1973 while employed at Church & Dwight. She retired in 1999 and lived in her native state in the city of South Charleston.

### ARTHUR JERNIGAN

Pensioner Arthur Jernigan, 66, died October 2. A native of North Carolina, Brother Jernigan signed on with the UIW in 1981 while working at Progressive Driver Services. He started collecting stipends for his retirement in 1999. Brother Jernigan lived in Gloucester Point, Virginia.

### LAFAYETTE MAGEE

Pensioner Lafayette Magee, 84, passed away November 26. Born in Louisiana, Brother Magee joined the union in 1972 while working at Crown Cork & Seal. He began receiving compensation for his retirement in 1996. Brother Magee made his home in Houston.

### ROBERT MCNEVICH

Pensioner Robert McNeveich, 65, died July 27. Brother McNeveich donned the UIW colors in 1972 while employed at A&E Products. Born in Shenandoah, Pennsylvania, he retired and went on pension in 2002. Brother McNeveich resided in his native state and city.

### NANCY MILLER

Pensioner Nancy Miller, 80, passed away December 13. Sister Miller came under the UIW umbrella in 1972 while working at Bron Shoe. A West Virginia native, Sister Miller began receiving stipends for her retirement in 1987. She made her home in Columbus, Ohio.

### MARY NASH

Pensioner Mary Nash, 90, died June 27. Born in Virginia, Sister Nash joined the union in 1968 while employed at

Plymkraft. She started receiving compensation for her retirement in 1991. Sister Nash was a resident of her native state and called Hampton home.

### ELDRED RIDDICK

Pensioner Eldred Riddick, 86, passed away December 15. Brother Riddick came under the UIW umbrella in 1976 while employed at Dixie Manufacturing. He retired and went on pension in 1993. The Virginia native resided in his home state in the city of Norfolk.

### DAVID SINGLEY

Pensioner David Singley, 62, died November 15. He donned the union colors in 1976 while working at A&E Products. Brother Singley began receiving compensation for his retirement in 2003. He called Mahanoy City, Pennsylvania home.

### GEORGE THOMPSON

Pensioner George Thompson, 89, passed away October 20. Brother Thompson signed on with the union in 1979 while working at Crown Cork & Seal. The Centerville, South Dakota native started receiving retirement stipends in 1994. Brother Thompson lived in Abilene, Texas.

### OLEGARIO TORRES

Pensioner Olegario Torres, 74, died November 9. Brother Torres donned the union colors in 2003 while working at Del Monte. He retired and went on pension in 2010. Brother Torres was a resident of Long Beach, California.

### ROSE TREXTER

Pensioner Rose Trexter, 70, passed away January 12. Born in Washington, Sister Trexter signed on with the UIW in 1980 while working at Franklin International. She began receiving stipends for her retirement in 1995. Sister Trexter made her home in Bucyrus, Ohio.

### NATALIE ZINK

Pensioner Natalie Zink, 87, died December 25, 2019. She joined the UIW in 1977 while working for the Retail Clerks Union. Born in Philadelphia, Sister Zink started receiving compensation for her retirement in 1986. She resided in her native city and state.

## UIW Pensioners

**Melodye Bush**  
Church & Dwight  
London, Ohio

**Valdemar Chavez**  
Del Monte Corp.  
Long Beach, California

**Wallace Currie**  
Severson Group, LLC  
Twentynine Palms, California

**Jeffrey Deurer**  
Argo International Corp.  
Slatington, Pennsylvania

**Rodrigo Espinosa**  
American Casting & MFG Group  
Hicksville, New York

**Albert Frazier**  
Victory Refrigeration  
Sicklerville, New Jersey

**Dora Garcia**  
Queen Mary  
Long Beach, California

**Steven Gilkerson**  
Church & Dwight  
Sun City Center, Florida

**Guadalupe Hernandez**  
Queen Mary  
Long Beach, California

**Billy Mongold**  
Armaly Brands  
London, Ohio

**John Oxley**  
Franklin International  
Columbus, Ohio

**Eccielia Ruiz**  
Del Monte Corp.  
Long Beach, California

**Manuela Valencia**  
Queen Mary  
Long Beach, California





## President Biden Implements Many Pro-Worker Actions During Early Stages of His Presidency

*Editor's note: The following piece appeared on the UCOMM Media Group's Feb. 16 Blog. It was written by Brian Young, a media group staffer.*

Nearly a month into his Presidency, President Joe Biden has already taken some big actions to help working people. Some of them have gotten a lot of attention while others have been done quietly. With a lot of other news coming out of Washington over the last few weeks, UCOMM decided to put together a list of 20 things that Biden has done to help unions and working people in just his first month in office.

### Firings and Appointments

**Fired Peter Robb-** Robb was Trump's General Counsel for the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB). Back in the 1980's, Robb was a key player in busting the PATCO union and brought that same anti-union spirit to the NLRB. In his time in office, Robb tried to end neutrality agreements and make inflatable rats, like Scabby, illegal. Robb was fired just hours after Biden took the oath of office. After firing Robb, he also fired Robb's deputy who had become the acting General Counsel.

**Appointed Peter Ohr Acting NLRB General Counsel-** After firing Robb, Ohr was a regional director for the NLRB before being promoted to Acting Counsel and has a long history of pro-worker decisions. He took immediate action to overturn some of Robb's decisions, many of which will show up later on this list.

**Appointed Marty Walsh to lead the Department of Labor-** Walsh, the Mayor of Boston, was previously a union leader with Laborers Local 223 and the head of the Boston Metropolitan District Building Trades Council. His selection was praised for putting a union leader in charge of the Department of Labor.

**Appointed Julie Su Deputy Secretary of Labor-** Su, the current California Labor Secretary, was appointed to be Walsh's second in command. Su was being pushed by many Asian American legislators for her work with low wage and immigrant workers. One of her biggest cases involved helping 72 enslaved Thai garment workers win a multi-million-dollar lawsuit against clothing companies.

**Biden Fires More Trumpers in US DOL-** Biden's quest to rid the government of Trump's anti-union appointees continued with his decision to get rid of the ten members of the Federal Service Impasses Panel (FSIP). This panel decides contract disputes between federal unions and the government. It was stacked with anti-union picks that included people from ALEC, the Heritage Foundation, and someone from a union-busting law firm. Biden gave the 10 appointees the chance to resign, which eight did, before the other two were fired. With these appointees on the board, the government won 90% of the cases that came before the FSIP.

**New appointments to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC)-** Biden pro-



President Joe R. Biden

White House Photo

moted Charlotte Burrows and Jocelyn Samuels to serve as chair and vice-chair on the commission. Burrows has a long history of fighting for civil rights and working with immigrant communities, while Samuels has worked for years on policies to attain equality for sexual and gender minorities.

**Made a union attorney Chairman of the Federal Labor Relations Authority (FLRA)-** Biden promoted Ernest Dubster to be the chairman of the FLRA which oversees disputes between the federal government and federal unions. Dubster previously worked as a union attorney, legislative counsel for the AFL-CIO, and a law professor teaching collective bargaining and arbitration.

**Selected a Steelworker to lead OSHA-** Biden's pick to lead the safety department is James Fredrick who worked for 25 years in the United Steelworkers' health, safety, and environment department. After leaving the Steelworkers in 2019 he became a part-time safety consultant who advised companies on safety compliance.

**Picked Jessica Looman to lead the Wage and Hour Division-** Looman was the Executive Director of the Minnesota Building and Construction Trades Council before she was selected. She also previously worked as general counsel for the Laborers District Council of Minnesota and North Dakota. In between, she served as the deputy commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry.

**Biden picks a teacher to run the Education Department-** After four years of Betsy DeVos, Biden promised that he would put a teacher in charge of the Education Department, and he fulfilled that promise with the selection of Miguel Cardona. The former education commissioner for Connecticut, Cardona worked as an elementary school teacher, before becoming a principal, a position he held for 10 years. Cardona would go on to become a district administrator and deputy superintendent before becoming state education

Commissioner. His pick was praised by teachers' unions.

### Executive Orders

**Repealed Union-Busting Executive Orders-** These Executive Orders, signed by Trump in 2018, kicked unions out of their collectively bargained offices in federal buildings, limited union release time, and instituted one sided contracts onto a number of agencies. Repealing these orders was a top priority of federal unions and President Biden repealed them on his second day in office.

**Ordered OSHA to create a COVID safety standard-** Unions fought for a COVID safety standard for nearly a year, with the AFL-CIO even suing Trump to create one. On Day 1, Biden signed an Executive Order that directed OSHA to put a standard in place. This will not only create a uniform standard for safety during COVID, but it will also allow workers a new avenue to protect themselves from bosses who refuse to put proper safety procedures in place.

**Biden Strengthens Buy American Provisions-** Five days into office, Biden signed an Executive Order that directed the federal government to strengthen their Buy American standards. This required more of the product to be made in the USA, cut red tape for buying these items, and made it easier for new small and medium sized manufacturers to get federal contracts. The government spends about \$600 billion a year on American made products and is expected to add another \$400 billion as part of Biden's Build Back Better program.

**A \$15 Minimum Wage for Federal Contractors-** Biden signed an Executive Order that ordered the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) to establish a \$15 minimum wage for all federal contractors.

**Allow Federal Unions to Bargain Again-** Biden signed an Executive Order telling agencies to "bargain over permissible, non-mandatory subjects of bargaining when contracts are up for negotiation." This gives federal unions the ability to have a

voice on more issues than just the basic work rules and pay. It is especially important with COVID, since many federal unions were shut out of any process to protect their members at work.

**Ordered an end to federal private prisons-** Biden issued an order that the government stop contracting with private prisons, a for profit venture that reduces wages and takes jobs from union corrections officers. According to AFGE, which represents prison employees with the Federal Bureau of Prisons, federal workers housing prisoners are "more cost effective, more efficient and much safer than their for-profit counterparts."

**Reinstated federal diversity and inclusion training-** Biden repealed a Trump order that banned the use of federal funds for these trainings for federal workers and contractors, an effort that was supported by AFGE. "Diversity and inclusion programs help employees understand each other's perspectives and help employers build workplaces that treat everyone with dignity, fairness, and respect, regardless of their background," AFGE National President Everett Kelley said. "By revoking the previous administration's order eliminating such trainings, President Biden is affirming his commitment to advancing equity across the federal government and providing everyone with an opportunity to reach their full potential."

**Instituted a federal mask mandate for everyone in involved in interstate travel-** This mask mandate includes everyone who is flying, taking a train like Amtrak, or a bus like Greyhound. While many carriers already had these mandates in effect, this order allows the carriers to remove a customer from and issue a temporary or permanent travel ban for refusing to wear a mask. It provides some much-needed backup after a number of videos went viral of flight attendants pleading with customers to wear a mask and being forced to kick them off flights for not wearing a mask.

**Signed an Executive Order allowing workers to refuse dangerous work-** In an executive order, Biden ordered the Department of Labor to issue a guidance that clarifies that workers have a federally guaranteed right to refuse employment that puts their health in danger, like COVID-19, and still qualify for unemployment insurance.

**Announced his support for the PRO Act-** This was actually done during the campaign, but with the PRO Act being reintroduced in the Congress, Biden's support is a powerful tool in helping to ensure that all of the Democratic Senators support the bill. You can find out more about the PRO Act by clicking here.

These are just some of the things that President Biden has done in his first three weeks in office. While it is a good start, Biden has a lot more on his agenda to be completed over the next 47 months, including a major infrastructure project, COVID relief and stimulus, a minimum wage hike, and the passage of the PRO Act.