



WHITE COLLAR

OFFICE AND PROFESSIONAL EMPLOYEES INTERNATIONAL UNION, AFL-CIO, CLC



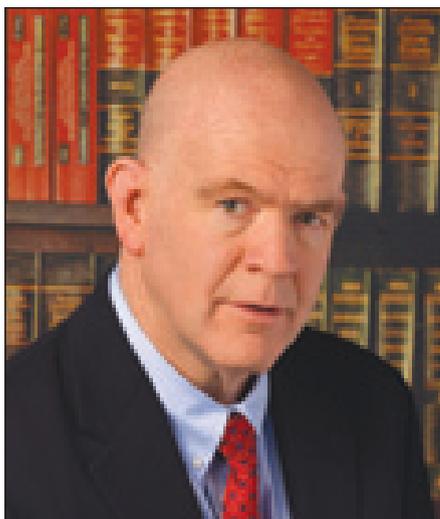
OPEIU Takes Capitol Hill

**Nurses Tell Congress
to Protect
Patient Safety**

OPEIU nurses from around the country descended on Capitol Hill May 5 to meet with their legislators and demand safe nurse-to-patient ratio legislation aimed at protecting nurses, patients and their families.
See cover story on page 12

He's Now on the Supreme Court, But Does He Care About Working People?

By Richard Lanigan, President



Occasionally, despite the best efforts of the union, a grievance cannot be resolved. When this happens the union and management select an arbitrator who will hear the grievance and decide whether the union or the employer will prevail.

Picture this: Smith is a boiler operator at a college. His department operates a steam generator that provides the electricity for a number of campus buildings. For a few days, there has been a malfunction of a steam

release valve causing the temperature to increase, making the boiler room very hot.

One day, while working, Smith noticed the valve malfunction and the rapidly rising temperature in the boiler room. He called his supervisor and was directed to stay in the boiler room until help arrived.

Smith stayed in the room and watched the temperature increase to 125 degrees. He then passed out for a short time. When he awoke he felt faint. Concerned that if he fainted again he could die, he again called the supervisor. The supervisor told him to remain in the boiler room. The temperature increased to 130 degrees.

After waiting for help that had not arrived, he left the boiler room to get air for a few minutes. Help finally arrived while he was outside. Within a short time, the help stabilized the boiler and eventually reduced the temperature. Smith was discharged for insubordination. The union contract does not provide specific language on this type of situation. The Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA), however, provides that when an employee has a legitimate concern for his or her life or safety at work, the employee may act in contravention of a supervisor's directions and take action to get to safety.

After filing for arbitration, the Arbitration Service provided both the union and the employer with the same list of arbitrators. The union reviewed the arbitrators' earlier decisions, then ranked each arbitrator. The union ranks the arbitrator who would be most likely to issue a favorable ruling for the employee first and ranks those who are less likely to rule for the employee further down the list.

The local union learned that an arbitrator on the panel had heard a safety case as a judge. That judge reviewed the case and wrote a decision against the employee. The case involved a tractor trailer driver operating a truck for his employer in weather that was about seven degrees below zero when the truck's brakes malfunctioned. The driver pulled over and called his supervisor for direction. The supervisor told the driver to stay with the trailer and help was on the way. The employer was afraid the trailer would be broken into or hijacked. While waiting for help, the heater in the truck broke, causing the temperature inside the cab to drop below freezing.

Still waiting, the driver fell asleep. When he woke up his legs were numb. Worried about frost bite or possibly dying, he called the supervisor again and explained his circumstances. The supervisor again directed him to remain with the trailer. After waiting for another 30 minutes his arms began to tingle. Fearing for his life, the driver detached the truck cab from the trailer and drove the cab away to get warmth. Help arrived shortly after he left. The help contacted him at a nearby diner. Soon, the brakes were repaired and the driver continued on his way. When he arrived back at the depot, the employer fired him. The driver stated that OSHA should protect his job.

The judge who wrote the decision against the employee said the driver was properly discharged for failing to follow orders. The judge said the driver could have kept his job if he had stayed with the trailer. Staying with the trailer, however, was a serious threat to his health.

Who, as a representative of working people, would pick the judge in the very real truck driver case as the arbitrator to hear our fictitious boiler room case? Would you pick him as the arbitrator for a case where you were an OPEIU represented cab driver, boiler operator, nurse, helicopter pilot or other member in a similar dangerous work environment facing discharge from employment?

Advocates of working people must, when they have a choice, select an arbitrator who is likely to see the case from the vantage point of the working person. When the judge who wrote the opinion in the truck driver case was nominated to be a justice on the U.S. Supreme Court, it caused me to wonder what are the criteria used to select a candidate for that important position? Why would an advocate of working people nominate a person who is likely to rule in favor of the discharge of an employee facing life-threatening working conditions when OSHA allows working people to act in their own self-preservation?

Your Next Union Benefit is Here!

Announcing the OPEIU Free College Benefit



OPEIU is pleased to introduce the newest union benefit for all OPEIU members — the OPEIU Free College Benefit. Just as the name implies, OPEIU members and their families can now earn an associate degree *completely free of charge*.

With all the expenses working families have to deal with these days, it's good to know meeting the costs of rising tuition and textbooks doesn't have to be one of them. If you have children graduating from high school and planning

to attend college, or you are looking for a way to advance your own career, the OPEIU Free College Benefit is here to help. Beginning this summer, every member or retired member, as well as spouses, children, grandchildren and dependents of OPEIU members, can earn a two-year degree online for free. You read that right — free college just for being an OPEIU member in good standing.

OPEIU has partnered with Eastern Gateway Community College to provide all members and their families access to their classes online. Eastern Gateway *is an accredited*, non-profit public institution with campuses serving eastern Ohio. But, OPEIU members and their families can enroll in the distance learning program from anywhere in the country and earn a participating online associate degree and certificates with absolutely no out-of-pocket costs for tuition, fees or e-books.

For Fall 2017, students will have the opportunity to enroll in associate degree programs in general studies, healthcare, business management, criminal justice, paralegal and early

childhood education. As demand increases, OPEIU will continue to look for additional programs to meet the needs of our members.

For those intending to transfer credits to a four-year college, credits earned at Eastern Gateway are accredited by the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA), making transferring to a state or public college less complicated. Before enrolling in a private college or university, we recommend you first contact the private school regarding transferring credits.

The Fall 2017 semester begins Aug. 21, with enrollment ending Aug. 18. Go to FreeCollege.OPEIU.org or call 888-590-9009 for more information.

We encourage you to take advantage of this valuable new OPEIU membership benefit. It pays to belong to your union.

OPEIU Student Debt Reduction Application Deadline is June 30



Applications are now being accepted for the OPEIU Student Debt Reduction Program to help OPEIU members and associate members repay their student debt. The fund provides five awards of \$2,500 each year to members who have completed an associate or bachelor's degree, can demonstrate they have at least

\$10,000 in student debt and have a current account.

The application deadline is June 30, so apply today. Visit opeiu.org and click on the Member Resources/Union Benefits tab for more information and an application.

WHITE COLLAR

Official Organ of
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INTERNATIONAL UNION
affiliated with the AFL-CIO, CLC
www.opeiu.org

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A Wish for OPEIU

I don't know if I can find the words to tell you how much I appreciate and love OPEIU. You all have done so much for me and my Local 306. Without your help, knowledge and training I would not have survived.

Anytime I needed anything, you all were there to show, guide and teach me. Your support during our strike was amazing and greatly appreciated.

I am not going to miss the company I work for when I retire in May, but I am going to miss my union job and the wonderful union people I've met during the last 36 years at conferences and conventions.

My wish for OPEIU is that you continue to grow our membership and teach and train our members so they will have the same opportunities I had.

May God bless you and watch over you! If I can ever do anything to help you out, feel free to call me. Thank you for the beautiful plaque and [OPEIU] watch. I will cherish them forever.

Love y'all,
Pam George
Former President
Local 306
Amarillo, Texas

Spreading the Union Message on the Radio

The Union Edge team wants to sincerely thank President Richard Lanigan and OPEIU for your sponsorship of labor radio in [Washington] D.C., and 30 other radio stations nationwide. We're always here to help!

In solidarity,
Charles, Angela, Brittany, Carol and Laura
The Union Edge
Pittsburgh, Pa.

Editor's note: Visit theunionedge.com to listen live or find a station in your area. Podcasts are also available on iTunes and SoundCloud.

Local 407 Acknowledges Bristow's Generosity to Members

I would like to address the letter [submitted by Local 407] published in the last edition of the OPEIU's White Collar [Issue 533, Winter 2017]. There is a line in that letter stating, "Our company did not reach out to our members, but thankfully we were supported by many kind and wonderful people of the OPEIU." At the time that letter was written, the Executive Board of Local 407 was not aware of the generosity the company had extended to the employees who were affected by the flooding.

On behalf of the Executive Board, I would like to extend my sincerest apologies to the Bristow managers who made it possible for these employees to take paid time off from work to take care of their families and properties during this stressful time. I would also like to apologize to the employees who may have taken offense to the statement as it was written.

Respectfully submitted,

Paul Rivait
President
Local 407
Abbeville, La.



We Want to Hear from You

Letters to the editor are welcomed. Send correspondence to:

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OPEIU
80 Eighth Avenue
20th Floor
New York, NY 10011

or email to frontdesk@opeiu.org.

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OPEIU's New 401(k) Top Priority: Lowest Fees Possible



OPEIU's national 401(k) program is soon to launch, providing members with a low-cost, feature-rich retirement savings solution through its members' employers. Unlike traditional target date funds with their "one-size-fits-all" risk approach, the OPEIU plan will

be customized to each participant's risk tolerance and target retirement dates with an emphasis on prudent and sound investing. Just as importantly, OPEIU's plan will focus on lowering administrative fees. "Over the average working person's lifetime, they will pay the equivalent of three years' salary in fees in traditional 401(k) plans," said President Richard Lanigan. "OPEIU's plan will reduce those fees substantially."

International Vice President and Local 42 President Lisa Blake shared with White Collar why her local union will be participating.

"The impact of OPEIU's new 401(k) is going to be phenomenal for the members of Local 42 who currently have their funds in another plan sponsored by the local," Blake said. "The new plan will provide us with lower fees and the benefit of professional management.

"Our members are paying much too much in fees in our current plan and that is simply not acceptable," Blake continued. "The new OPEIU 401(k) plan will correct this and will be useful in collective bargaining. It is my hope to bargain language allowing the employer to merge any of the employer plans into the OPEIU plan. This will provide us with an additional tool at the bargaining table since many employers don't want to offer 401(k) plans because they will have to administer it.

"In addition, our current employer trustees don't want to do their duties because of liability and their lack of true pension/401(k) experience. It has been very hard for me to get employer trustees, and the new OPEIU 401(k) plan will remedy this situation as well," Blake said.

American Jobs Watch

OPEIU Supports Nabisco 600 Campaign to Keep Good Jobs in the U.S.

It's been a year since the campaign launched, and OPEIU is still standing in solidarity with the Bakery Workers (BCTGM) Nabisco 600 Campaign to keep jobs at Nabisco plants in the United States instead of seeing them shipped to Mexico.

A year ago, 600 members of BCTGM Local 300 were laid off from their jobs at the Nabisco/Mondelēz Chicago bakery. Their jobs were outsourced to Salinas, Mexico, where workers earn just \$12 a day. Nabisco/Mondelēz is a \$30 billion multinational corporation, and their corporate greed has proven enormously challenging for our fellow union members.

Support our brothers and sisters at Nabisco/Mondelēz by checking the label. If the product is made in Mexico, don't buy it and talk to the store manager and demand that they stock products made in the United States. Show them that America's working people refuse to accept the outsourcing of jobs and will not support corporations that divide workers, destroy communities and diminish the living standards of millions.

SUPPORT AMERICAN JOBS!
CHECK THE LABEL!

DO NOT BUY Nabisco/Mondelēz snacks made in Mexico and tell your grocery manager to stock **ONLY AMERICAN-MADE!**

CHECK THE LABEL for these TWO indicators:

- 1

(Check for words "made in Mexico")
- 2

(Check the plant identification code)

DO NOT BUY:

 - 00 = Chicago, IL
 - 01 = Mexico, Mexico
 - 02 = Mexico, Mexico

DO BUY:

 - 03 = Chicago, IL
 - 04 = Montreal, QC
 - 05 = Fort Worth, TX
 - 06 = Dallas, TX
 - 07 = Richmond, VA
 - 08 = Memphis, TN

www.fightforamericanjobs.org

Local 298's Kara Sheehan: A Champion of Workers' and Women's Rights

Kara Sheehan is a great organizer and leader of Texas Young Active Labor Leaders, known as YALL, and an OPEIU Local 298 and Rising Stars young workers group member. Check out her advice for young union leaders.



Kara Sheehan

Meet Kara Sheehan, a field organizer at the Texas AFL-CIO and member of OPEIU Local 298. Before joining the AFL-CIO, Sheehan worked with the Workers Defense Project, other local progressive groups in Austin and at the Austin City Council.

She was born into the labor movement. Both her parents and grandparents raised her with the values of solidarity and intersectional movements.

"Kara is eager and enthusiastic about changing the face of labor to be more inclusive and representative of the demographic in Texas," said Lee Forbes, her colleague at the Texas AFL-CIO. "Her unwavering passion and dedication to elevate young workers, and especially women, is not only admirable, but quite awe-inspiring."

In January, under Kara's leadership, Texas YALL held its first statewide conference. Nearly 100 people attended the gathering; they took to the streets Jan. 20 to stand for their values.

Julia Kranzthor said of Sheehan, "Through her work with the AFL-CIO, Kara is a champion of workers' rights, women's rights and immigrants' rights. What she can't fit into her work week, she volunteers. She is a joy to be around and an inspiration, always getting people to be better, do better and work harder. She truly is a special young organizer."

With young people making up a bigger share of the workforce and the voting population, Sheehan thinks unions need to engage more young people — and she has been doing exactly that in Texas. Young worker groups now exist in Austin, Dallas and Houston, with growing numbers of people getting active.

Sheehan's advice to young union members, activists and staff? "Every day will present its own challenges, but don't give up. There are people who want to support us and make sure that we succeed. Find those people! And remember, this is a movement and it involves a lot of people and input. While it can be frustrating and challenging, it's on us to stick with it. The more we fight, the more change we will see."

OPEIU is proud to have featured Kara on the very first AFL-CIO Blog's Working Women Profiles. Post reprinted with permission.

Take Advantage of OPEIU Organizing Training Opportunities

OPEIU has made the commitment to provide training to any local union leader, member and activist who wants to learn more about how to bring the benefits of union membership to others. Members throughout the country are taking us up on the offer and are taking advantage of the invaluable training provided through OPEIU, the AFL-CIO Organizing Institute and other labor training programs.

With the support of OPEIU, International Vice President and Local 42 President Lisa Blake and Executive Board Member Nina Brooks attended the Organizing Institute recently held in Chicago, where a number of union activists from OPEIU and other unions learned the ins and outs of organizing in what is fast becoming an anti-union, right-to-work-for-less climate.

“During the three days of training, participants learned how to talk to workers so they don’t see unions as a third party, but instead understand that they are the union,” said Blake. “We learned how to engage members in contract negotiations with employers and how to help members see that they can’t wait for the union to act, but instead must be involved for the union to build strength and power at the negotiating table.

“The Organizing Institute also provided participants with an understanding of how to directly contact people and ask them to become part of a team of workers who join the union to make a difference in their place of work,” Blake said. “The training was extremely worthwhile and useful for growing OPEIU. We plan to use it to make a difference with Local 42 and workers in Michigan.”

If you or your local union is interested in taking advantage of similar training, please contact Organizing Director Cindy Schu at frontdesk@opeiu.org.



International Vice President and Local 42 President Lisa Blake, right, and Executive Board Member Nina Brooks.

Local 100 Builds Union Membership



Members and officers of the Government Supervisors Association of Florida (GSAF)/OPEIU Local 100 are taking active steps to build union membership as part of upcoming contract negotiations. Outreach to members is taking place through home visits and at work, as pictured. Left to right are Local 100 Board Member Robert Prymus Jr., Attorney Don Slesnick, First Vice President Otto Castillo, International Vice President and Local 100 President Greg Blackman, Second Vice President Fredricka Green, Secretary-Treasurer Walter Clarit Jr. and active member Felix Hernandez.



OPEIU members from Locals 40, 101, 179, 393 and 713 attend the Organizing Institute held in Atlanta. Left to right are Local 40 Vice President of the McLaren Macomb Unit Dina Carlisle, Local 713 member Phyllis Garrett (with arm raised), Local 393 President Lynda Eckstrom, Local 713 LERC Chair Deborah Hogan, Local 179 President Brandon Anderson and Secretary-Treasurer Steve Coffman, Local 40 President Jeff Morawski, Local 101 President Jeremiah Edmond and Executive Board Member Zolanolo Taylor.

OPEIU Activists Focus on Increasing Union Power Through Organizing

OPEIU members, leaders and staff gathered April 27–30 in Memphis, Tennessee, at the Southeast/Southwest Educational Conference to develop strategies for organizing new members to strengthen their local unions and build power on the worksite. From how to conduct new member orientations to involving more members in the

union through team building and leadership development, these OPEIU activists proved we're stronger working together!

Check out the Local Union Resources tab at **opeiu.org** for helpful materials to use in your local union's internal organizing efforts.



Local 101 Secretary-Treasurer Joan McLean, left, Miramar, Florida, and International Vice President and Local 277 President/Business Manager Becky Turner, Ft. Worth, Texas, develop strategies for talking with potential members about the benefits of union membership.



Left to right, New York's Local 153 Director of Organizing Nick Galipeau, International Senior Representative Paul Bohelski and International Vice President and Savannah's ITPEU/OPEIU Local 4873 President Dennis R. Arrington.



Florida Nurses Association (FNA)/OPEIU Local 713 Vice President Matt Price, RN, and Secretary Marcia Stroud, RN.



Clockwise, Boston's Local 6 Business Manager George Noel, Chattanooga's Local 179 Vice President Devin York, ITPEU/OPEIU Local 4873 Executive Board Member Lena Bailey, Albuquerque's Local 251 President Bernadette Ramirez, Local 153 Assistant Business Manager John Edmonds, Local 179 President Brandon Anderson and Local 6 Trustee Christine Richards discuss the development of plans to strengthen their local unions through membership building.



OPEIU Nurses Council Chair and Local 22 President Paige Yates, RN, and Steward Kris Teed, RN, from Little Rock, Arkansas.



Local 102 President Mark Souza, at podium, and Vice President Alan Hauenstein discuss their plans for increasing membership among helicopter flight instructors and operators at Fort Rucker in Alabama.



Local 381 Secretary-Treasurer Linda Smith, left, and President Debra Graumann from Oklahoma City.



Virginia's Local 334 President Suzanne Clements, left, and Missouri's Local 13 Trustees Lorie Lane and Lee Tweedy, at the microphone.

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STORY OF

UNION FAMILY PROGRAMS



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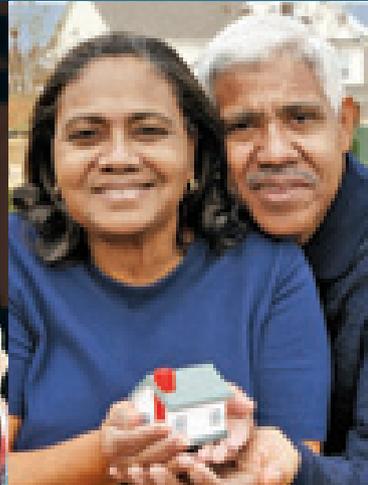
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**Certain restrictions, limitations, and qualifications apply to these grants. Additional information and eligibility criteria can be obtained at UnionPlus.org/Assistance. Credit approval required. Terms and conditions apply. The Union Plus Credit Cards are issued by Capital One, N.A., pursuant to a license from MasterCard International Incorporated. Capital One N.A. is not responsible for the contents of this message and/or any of the other third party products/services mentioned. The MasterCard Brand Mark is a registered trademark of MasterCard International Incorporated.

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OPEIU Activists Focus on Increasing Union Power Through Organizing

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Local 6 Business Manager George Noel and International Vice President and Local 42 President Lisa Blake of Michigan, who shared with the conference her local's experience building a successful internal organizing campaign.



Left to right, Ft. Worth's Local 277 Secretary-Treasurer Linda Gonzalez, Knoxville's Local 2001 Shop Chair Jim McDaniel and Local 277 Vice President Gene Patton discuss strategies to turn issues and challenges facing their members into ways to grow their locals' membership and strength in the workplace.



International Vice President and Local 100 President Greg Blackman of Florida updates conference participants on the OPEIU 401(k) plan. See page 5 for more details about the new plan.



Local 306 President Tiffany Sturkie, at podium, outlines her local's goals and key strategies for bringing new members into the union in Amarillo, Texas. Also pictured are Local 306 Acting Secretary-Treasurer Karen West, left, and Local 251 President Bernadette Ramirez.

COVER STORY





OPEIU Nurses Take Capitol Hill

More than 120 OPEIU members, including nursing members of the OPEIU Nurses Council, storm Capitol Hill to make their voices heard!

OPEIU Nurses Take Capitol Hill to Demand Nurse Safe Staffing Legislation

It's Your Health, Your Families and Your Constituents We're Fighting to Protect

OPEIU nurses from around the country came to Capitol Hill May 5 to meet with their legislators and demand safe nurse-to-patient ratio legislation aimed at protecting nurses, patients and their families.

The OPEIU nurses, represented by the OPEIU Nurses Council (ONC), joined nurses from across the United States to raise public awareness of the dangers posed by unsafe nurse staffing levels in hospitals and medical clinics. These meetings laid the groundwork for continued lobbying efforts at their state level.

“Most people are not aware that there is no limit to the number of patients a nurse can be assigned,” said ONC Vice Chair Julie Murray, RN, and Local 459 chief steward. “California is the only state that has nurse-to-patient ratios as the law and Massachusetts has one for the ICU, but that’s it.

“This is an issue that affects everyone,” Murray continued. “Everyone will be a patient some day or have a loved one who will be, and studies are clear that medical errors are the third leading cause of death in the United States. If a nurse is assigned too many patients, he or she is not able to give safe patient care, and it can be the difference between life and death.

“Here’s a shocking statistic,” Murray said. “The difference between a 4-to-1 nurse-to-patient ratio and an 8-to-1 ratio is approximately 1,000 deaths.”

Legislation has been proposed, but has not been acted upon, so OPEIU nurses went to Washington to convince their legislators of the urgent need to protect their constituents by supporting such legislation both at a national and at a state level. California has led by example and proven that enacting safe nurse-to-patient ratios does not add a financial burden to hospitals. In fact, limiting the number of patients under a nurse’s care actually saves money because patients are getting the care they need, while reducing the number of deaths or re-admissions due to complications.

“Nurses are on the front lines of patient safety, and yet they are increasingly being asked to do more with less resources,” said ONC Chair and Local 22 President Paige Yates, RN. “Often, hospital administration and corporate CEOs don’t listen to their concerns and patients’ lives are put at risk, not to mention the safety and health of the nursing professionals themselves.

The difference between a 4-to-1 nurse-to-patient ratio and an 8-to-1 ratio is approximately 1,000 deaths.

“Legislation for national nurse-to-patient ratios has been stalled by big money and associations that care less about nurses and their patients and more about profits. That’s why OPEIU nurses came to Washington, to demand our legislators listen to the largest healthcare workforce in the United States — nurses — and mandate safe nurse-to-patient ratios in their states,” Yates said. “Our elected officials have to understand that it’s their health, their families and their constituents we’re fighting to protect.”

Many of the nurses reported positive results following their meetings, with congressional staffers saying they would look further into the issue. Still other nurses made plans to continue the discussion with legislators and their staff in their home districts over the coming months.

The OPEIU Nurses Council meeting was held in conjunction with the North Central-Erie/Northeast Educational Conference. Local union leaders and activists from New York to Wisconsin and south to Virginia joined the ONC for the legislative day on the Hill, meeting with their representatives to discuss issues of importance to members in their local unions, such as protecting healthcare, Social Security and Medicare, and fighting the threat of so-called “right-to-work” laws that restrict people’s access to higher wages and benefits that come with collective bargaining.



Left to right, Boston’s Local 6 Steward Fritz Asuncion and New York’s Local 153 Executive Board member Brenda St. John, Business Representative Dan Ross, Business Manager Michael Goodwin, Assistant Business Manager John Edmonds, Director of Organizing Nick Galipeau and Senior Business Representative Seth Goldstein. The group met with the office of U.S. Sen. Charles Schumer (D-NY).



OPEIU member nurses and activists from throughout the country gathered on Capitol Hill to tell legislators to protect their constituents by supporting mandatory safe nurse-to-patient ratios. They wore shirts demanding Safe Staffing Now.



Members of the Florida Nurses Association (FNA)/OPEIU Local 713 meet with U.S. Rep. Bill Posey's (R-Fla.) staff member Christen Kapovic.



Chicago's Local 391 Recording Secretary Norma Moore, left, and Trustee Sabrina Elms prepare to meet with staff from the office of U.S. Sen. Richard Durbin (D-Ill.) to discuss issues related to healthcare and education.



Left to right, Local 40 President Jeff Morawski, Treasurer Joanne Czeiszperger, Trustee Marty VanDerHeyden, CHMC Unit Vice President Josephine Walker, Recording Secretary Joe Smithson and McLaren Macomb Vice President and ONC Secretary-Treasurer Dina Carlisle prepare to meet with U.S. Rep. Sander Levin (D-MI).



Left to right, Local 494 Recording Secretary Hollie Nicole Smith, Vice President Joe Mason, Local 393 Secretary-Treasurer/Recording Secretary Julie Garcia and Local 494 President Kris Bucci prepare to meet with their representatives from Michigan.

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Be the Change You Want to See!

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The OPEIU nurses are just like you — working people with a passion to improve their working conditions and better their communities. They are putting their passion to work by telling their representatives they want legislation to protect them and their patients.



Are you and your fellow members experiencing an issue in the workplace that could be redressed through the political process? Has there been a recent change in the law that is harmful to you and your members? Are you concerned about the future of healthcare, Social Security, immigration, the spread of unfair “right-to-work” laws or offshoring of jobs? Then it might be time to get involved and tell your representatives how they can — and must — help.

Remember, if our OPEIU

nurses can do it, you can too! Join your local union’s efforts to demand your elected representatives protect working people in your home state.

- 1 IDENTIFY** your issue/idea.
- 2 RESEARCH** your issue/idea: Has it been getting media attention? Is there pending legislation?
- 3 DEFINE** your goal: Do you just want to raise awareness, or do you want to resolve the issue through seeing a bill signed into law or a new regulation adopted?
- 4 PROPOSE** a solution: Once you’ve done your homework, join your local union in writing letters, emailing, calling or even visiting your legislators and making your case.

Our elected officials work for us. Make sure they are held accountable and do their job to represent us all, not just the interests of the wealthy and powerful.

A Nurse is the New Surgeon General

A nurse has been tapped as acting surgeon general, only the second nurse ever to serve in this important position.

Rear Adm. Sylvia Trent-Adams was a nurse officer in the Army and research nurse at the University of Maryland. In 1992, she became a member of the Commissioned Corps of the Public Health Service and was the deputy associate administrator for the HIV/AIDS bureau of the Health Resources and Services Administration before she became deputy surgeon general.

“It’s a victory for nurses in an uncertain political arena,” said OPEIU Nurses Council Vice Chair and Local 459 Chief Steward Julie Murray, RN. “We need to have more nurses in high political positions to impact nursing legislation.

“We are hopeful that she will use her new position to call attention to important public health priorities, such as safe nurse-to-patient ratios and other safety issues that directly impact our frontline nurses and patients,” Murray continued.

Admiral Trent-Adams is the first surgeon general who is not a physician. The only other nurse to be named surgeon general, Dr. Richard Carmona, who served under President George W. Bush, was also a physician.



Rear Adm. Sylvia Trent-Adams

OPEIU Nurses Council Re-Elects Officers



The 2017 OPEIU Nurses Council, which re-elected Local 22 President Paige Yates, RN, as chair, Local 459 Chief Steward Julie Murray, RN, as vice chair, and Local 40 Vice President Dina Carlisle, RN, as secretary-treasurer for another three-year term.

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OPEIU's Elder Statesman Still Working on Behalf of His Union

OPEIU's Charles Ponti served Local 153 in New York for more than 77 years before his retirement in 2014 and is still deeply involved in the organization he founded—the Local 153 Retirees Association. Ponti celebrated his 104th birthday June 3. What follows is an interview with Charlie's local magazine, Downtown Rutherford, in honor of his centennial (plus four!).

The Inspirational Charles Ponti

Interview conducted by Jennifer Mariano Ersalesi

Charles Ponti is a national treasure and an inspiration to all of us who follow in his footsteps — he's a veteran, a model trade unionist and a good Christian. And he was never, ever late for work! Friends and former colleagues such as [former International President and current Local 153 Business Manager] Michael Goodwin say things like, "Charlie has lived his life with dignity, respect and hard work." By the way, did we mention that Charlie is 104 years old?

After working for 77 years with OPEIU Local 153, Charlie retired at age 101 on Dec. 31, 2014. Charlie has accomplished a lot, and he has experienced so much in his lifetime.

Downtown Rutherford: There aren't enough pages in this magazine to fully detail your amazing life. Let's start before World War II, when you began to learn the skills you would use throughout your long career.

Charlie Ponti: In 1937, my older brother Michael was asked to join the American Federation of Stenographers, Typists, Bookkeepers and Assistants Union, Federal Local 20940. Shortly thereafter, they asked Michael if he knew anyone who could help. He recruited me. From there, I began helping clerical employees unionize. I remember going into Brooklyn to the Loeser's Department Store with all of these men who were determined to bring attention to our organizing efforts. We had many colorful balloons filled with helium at our Fulton Street headquarters. We marched down the street with them and then entered Loeser's through the rear entrance. The store was near a Catholic school and all of these children were coming out of the school around lunchtime. We handed each of the children a few balloons and they marched through the store with us during a big sale. There were so many of them, and so many of us, that customers and clothing racks were being knocked over! There had to have been 200 kids there! The cops were called, but we left before they knew we had caused all this trouble. The cops were left to get the kids and balloons out of the store. The entire experience with these organizers was like a baptism by fire. I watched, and I learned. Those men knew what they were doing, and I truly began to understand how to represent white-collar workers. Once we had created a union, we broke off into smaller groups — one group for electricians, one for plumbers, etc. — and we each got our own group to handle.

Serving in the Army during World War II must have been both challenging and an educational experience for you.

My brothers Neil, Fred, James and I were all drafted into the U.S. Army. I was assigned to the 32nd Infantry Division. After completing basic training, which was grueling at times,

I was stationed in Dutch New Guinea. From there, I ended up in Luzon in the Philippines. [Laughs] A very interesting story. One morning, while I was still stationed in Dutch New Guinea, I was sitting around a table having breakfast with about seven other guys who had not been assigned to a company yet. The captain came in and sat next to me. He told us he needed a volunteer to be in charge of the general headquarters. There were no volunteers. The captain became frustrated and he asked us a second time. Since he was sitting beside me, I figured I had better say yes since he was probably going to order me to do it anyhow! He told me, "You won't be sorry." I was taken in a Jeep to the top of the mountains. There were four generals at the headquarters. Alexander, one of the generals, gave me a list of what to do. I was in charge of everything, but he told me in no uncertain terms was I ever to repeat anything I saw or heard. Eventually, Alexander left the headquarters and a new general took his place, Brig. Gen. Harry H. Baird. He told me the same thing: "Forget everything you see or hear here." Often, all of the generals met in a large conference room. One day, I noticed that the large conference room door was unlocked. I knew that wasn't good. I walked in to make sure I wouldn't be locking the door on anyone and I saw a great big map on the wall with pinpoints that showed where the Navy was, where the enemy could be found, points of attack, etc. This was top-secret information, so I locked the door and never said a word!

That was a very big secret to keep! I still remember the end of the war. I could tell something was going on when one of the generals said he had to go on the USS Missouri. Truman was president and he knew our next step was to attack Japan, and if we did so, we would lose 100,000 men. He didn't want to lose our men, so it was agreed that they would drop the first Atomic bomb. That night, the B-17 took off and threw the

first bomb. When the newspapers came out the next day, we saw the photo of a mushroom cloud in blue ink. The next day, the second bomb landed and the Japanese gave up. Truman spared 100,000 lives. Once the Japanese were surrounded at Manila Bay, we sunk their Navy and pushed them out to sea. General Tomoyuki Yamashita gave orders to his men to keep fighting or they would be shot in the back. We were killing them, but the Japanese soldiers kept fighting as they were commanded to do. We got them to the ocean and Yamashita waved a white flag. He was captured. He was disgraced, so he ripped off his medals and threw them on the ground.

Was it hard for you to see what the war had done to your fellow soldiers?

While stationed in Manila, I had a friend who slept in the bunk next to mine. We were both on guard duty and we alternated shifts. He left one night for guard duty and said, "I'll be back," but he never came back. I had the honor of sending all of his personal belongings to his wife. He had only been married for six months. He had \$1.60 with him, but I tucked it into one of his socks and mailed it to his wife. I never did get a chance to meet her to tell her what an amazing man he was. I regret that.

You walked away from the war, for the most part, unharmed. But, not everyone was as fortunate. Did you suffer any injuries while in the service?

I was one of the lucky few. When the medical group examined us before we headed home, they discovered I had a punctured ear drum. I lost my hearing. But when I got home, I knew that there were men in worse shape. My brother was one of them. I would visit him in the Army hospital. He had suffered so much and had lost 50 pounds. He was so weak that he had to be fed. The nurses didn't have much patience; they wouldn't spend the time to feed him slowly, so I did it. I went at noon every day to feed him. It was so sad to see what those patients were going through, especially my brother.

After returning home from the war, you married your late wife, Carolyn, and went to New York to return to your job at the Federal Local 20940. However, you ended up with the Federal Local 23076.

After my previous work experiences with the unions prior to the war, I knew that union votes were important. I made sure that the employees were there to vote. I also knew that I had to keep these workers informed. I dealt with up to 198 different union shops and I tried my hardest to not let anyone down. In my 77 years of employment, I was never late! I took the 190 New Jersey Transit bus from Rutherford [New Jersey], where I was living with my wife and three kids, Rosemarie, Geraldine, and Charles Jr. Once I got to the Port Authority, I took the subway to 14th Street and Eighth Avenue [Local 153 offices], every day.

What did you truly enjoy about your work?

One of the best parts about what I did for a living was that I got to train young men to do the type of work that I did. I remember one young man who worked in our mailroom. He asked me every day if I could please take him with me when I went out to organize another group. The Steamship Line wanted to be organized, so one day I walked in and asked the young man, "Would you like to come with me today?" He eagerly said, "Yes, sir, I do." So, I took him with me over to Wall Street and Broadway. We had over 1,000 people to organize! I was so excited to bring that young man with me that day because

he wanted to learn. He wanted to see how things were done, and he wanted to learn from experiences. Eventually, he opened up his own labor relations company. He even had his own employees! I was so proud.

To what do you attribute your strong work ethic?

While growing up in Jersey City, my father owned a fruit and vegetable store. My father had my brothers and I working there just about every day. That's when I started to learn what hard work was all about. I truly believe that people should work hard, enjoy their work and enjoy their lives. You really can't do anything without working hard. In earlier days, people understood that being successful at their job was a lot like putting up a building. You had to work hard to build a foundation and truly understand what was happening at the lowest level above it. Then, you had to work hard to build a roof. I have always understood that if you really want to be good at what you do, you have to put your heart and soul into it.

Charlie Ponti is a longtime resident of Rutherford, N.J. This interview is reprinted with permission.



Rutherford Mayor Joseph DeSalvo Jr. presents Charlie Ponti, right, with a proclamation honoring him for his lifetime of service.

Patience Leads to McLaren Greater Lansing RN Agreement

After long, difficult negotiations marked with hospital proposals for significant concessions, Local 459 secured a new contract that maintains healthcare for registered nurses at McLaren Greater Lansing (MGL).

Negotiations for a contract that had expired in September 2014 were slowed by hospital proposals to move RNs to the non-union insurances, waive the right to bargain over changes to insurance in the future (the so-called “me too” clause), eliminate all bonuses, freeze step increases after the contract expires, remove nursing assistants, unit assistants and unit coordinators from the staffing guidelines, end holiday pay and other changes to give management more control over staff’s schedules. In fact, it took more than a year before the hospital offered even a 1 percent pay increase in exchange for the many concessions proposed.

“The RNs understood they were better off with their current contract while they waited for a fair proposal from MGL,” said International Vice President and Local 459 President Sharon Taylor. These proposed concessions would cost more than any raises MGL was likely to offer. “When the McLaren Flint RN union accepted the non-union healthcare plan in September 2016, along with giving the hospital the latitude to change insurance in the future, the MGL nurses were even more determined to fend off these proposed cuts.”

The bargaining team didn’t simply wait around hoping MGL would change its mind. They established a negotiation steering committee to involve a greater number of members, improve communication and keep solidarity strong during the two-and-a-half-year struggle. The committee adopted a strategy of letting the contract expire to put additional pressure on the hospital to get a fair contract.

“It may not seem logical, but having a private sector contract expire can sometimes increase the union’s clout,” Taylor said. “Every contract has a ‘management’s rights’ clause that allows an employer to operate their business. When the contract ends, so



The Local 459 bargaining team, standing, John Endres, Service Representative Jeffrey Fleming and Jo Ellyn Steele; seated, Theresa Wing, Kyra Keusch, Chief Steward Julie Murray, Ellen Harmon and Malinda Green. Not pictured are alternates Deb Douglass and Deb Disler.

does the management’s rights clause, so things the employer used to be able to do whenever it wanted now have to be negotiated with the union when it is a change in working conditions. Management cannot legally move forward with the change until bargaining is completed. This strategy raised the cost for MGL of not having a new contract.” The RNs understood they kept their current pay, benefits and working conditions, which included none of the concessions proposed by management, while negotiations continued.

The union continued to spar with the hospital over changes imposed by management, including how vacation time was awarded. When the hospital refused to bargain over the issue, Local 459 filed an unfair labor practice charge with the National Labor Relations Board, which agreed the hospital had a legal obligation to negotiate the

change with the union and moved forward with prosecuting MGL.

A tentative agreement was reached the week before the trial, which contained none of the concessions management had been proposing in exchange for Local 459 withdrawing its unfair labor practice charge. “The MGL RN contract is now the only one in the entire McLaren hospital system that maintained the current healthcare,” Taylor said. “The agreement added a new 3 percent step to the top of the pay scale, which means 40 percent of the RNs at the top moved to the new step in the first full pay period following ratification. All other RNs will reach this step as they progress through the pay scale.”

The RNs overwhelmingly ratified the tentative agreement, which runs through Sept. 30, 2018.

ULLICO Celebrates Local 153



Left to right, ULLICO President Daniel Wolak, OPEIU President Richard Lanigan, Local 153 Senior Business Representative Seth Goldstein, Local 153 Funds Director George Bueno, ULLICO Regional Sales Manager Brian Doherty and Local 153 Business Manager Michael Goodwin.

In a visit to the union office by executives of Union Labor Life Insurance Company (ULLICO), company President Daniel Wolak and Regional Sales Manager Brian Doherty presented OPEIU and Local 153 in New York with a plaque in recognition of being longtime clients and supporters of ULLICO, a relationship that began more than 50 years ago.

“We appreciate the relationship and the confidence,” said Wolak. “We look forward to continuing to provide insurance to your staff and members for years to come.”

Local 32 Goes WILD in New Jersey!

Local 32 members recently attended the New Jersey State AFL-CIO’s Women in Leadership Development (WILD) Conference, an event designed to help union women develop leadership skills to strengthen the labor movement. It’s a great opportunity for national and state union leaders, organizers, educators and authors to share the challenges they face and their strategies for advocating on behalf of their members.



Left to right, Local 32’s Charmin Lyons, Trustee Monica McCleod and Cynthia Taylor. Also, attending the conference from the local union were Secretary-Treasurer Sharon Eastwick, President Mary Short, Ann Stover, Sandy Mason, Hava Athill, Robyn Banks, Recording Secretary Diane Spillane, Marilyn Dawson, Marie Dukes, Penny Umlauf, Legretha Wingo and Chalen Downs.

A Member for 63 Years, Melba Smith is Honored

Local 277’s Melba Smith retired after 63 years of service working for the International Association of Machinists District Lodge 776, and her employer and local union joined forces to honor her with a surprise retirement party.

Smith began her career with IAM 776 while still in her teens, and it was her job to “light the fires” at the office before everyone came to work. At the time of her retirement, she served as an administrative executive secretary. Through the years, Smith served three directing business representatives and served on several negotiating teams for both Local 277 and IAM 776. “The district will be losing a wealth of knowledge with Melba’s retirement,” said IAM 776 President and Directing Business Representative Paul Black.

Smith credits Local 277 for the many years of good contracts she worked under throughout her long career. International Vice President and Local 277 President/Business Manager Becky Turner recognized how fortunate the local was to have had such a loyal, long-term member. Turner said she could always count on Smith to “tell me the truth and help keep me focused,” at negotiations. Congratulations to Melba Smith and best wishes for a long and happy retirement.



Melba Smith, holding flowers, is feted on her retirement. Left to right are Local 277’s Melinda Tomlin, Patricia Carroll, Mitzi Ames, Smith, Renea Tamplin, Lynette Lane, IAM member Anna Ritchey, Local 277’s Ashley Ahrens, President/Business Manager Becky Turner, Mary Brewer and Elisa Miller.

Local 40 in Michigan Elects New Board Members



Local 40's new executive board: standing, Recording Secretary Joseph Smithson, Vice President of the McLaren Macomb Unit Dina Carlisle, Trustees Marty VanDerHeyden and Michael O'Neill, Chief Steward of the McLaren Macomb Unit Terri Dagg-Barr; seated, Trustee Brian Losiowski, Chief Steward of the Crittenton Unit Barb Chubb, President Jeff Morawski, Vice President of the Crittenton Unit Josephine Walker and Treasurer Joanne Czeiszperger.

Local 2002 Secures \$5,000 Signing Bonus and \$5,000 Retention Bonus for Embattled RN Managers

The Michigan Association of Governmental Employees (MAGE)/OPEIU Local 2002 has been embroiled in a long-standing fight to protect Michigan registered nurse managers from the ravages of “mandatory overtime” due directly to a drastic recruitment and retention problem. The union has now made some headway in alleviating the overtime problem, securing a \$5,000 signing bonus and similar retention bonus for these RN managers.

“This issue has plagued RN managers for many years now,” said John DeTizio, labor relations director of MAGE. “We have convened meetings with senators and representatives from many districts that contain our psychiatric hospitals. We continue to fight for bills that require minimum staffing ratios. We have succeeded in convincing journalists from local newspapers to study and report on the issue. Our OPEIU Nurses Council works tirelessly addressing the concerns of nurses throughout the country facing similar tribulations.”

Each state department containing nurses may choose how and when to implement the bonuses. The

bonuses will be in addition to the negotiated 3 percent general wage increase on Oct. 1, which will help the collateral problem of recruiting less than the best nurses due to the low pay and difficult environment in the state. “No nurse will choose to work in a prison or state psychiatric institutions when they can earn more money working in the private sector,” said Kay Hiltunen, MAGE board member and nurse manager at Jacobetti Veterans Facility.

“This is a very small step in the right direction, but at least it’s a step,” said Al Quattrin, president of MAGE.



President Al Quattrin and RN Manager Kay Hiltunen testifying at the Coordinated Compensation Hearings regarding mandatory overtime.

Maureen Colvin Elected to Lead Local 11



Maureen Colvin has been elected to serve as executive secretary-treasurer of Local 11, the local’s top elected office. Colvin has been a representative at Local 11 since 2007 and had been serving as interim executive secretary-treasurer since the retirement of her predecessor Mike Richards in 2016.

Local 11 represents approximately 1,900 members employed at Northwest Natural, Columbia River Mental Health and Columbia Wellness, as well as with Clark County and the City of Vancouver. It also represents employees at other local unions and union-associated businesses in Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana and Utah.

Colvin says her top goal is to increase member involvement in the union in light of the many challenges expected by the very real threat of anti-worker “right-to-work” legislation that is spreading across the country.

Also elected were Vice President Doug Luse, Recording Secretary Debi Turk, Trustee Kim King, and executive board members Sandra Dowling, Chuck Strange and Lori Ricketts.

Great Contract at St. Paul Federal Credit Union

The local newspaper, Workday Minnesota, said it's newsworthy that Local 12 and St. Paul Federal Credit Union reached a contract settlement in a quick and easy fashion that met both sides' needs. We couldn't agree more!

The three-year agreement, which covers 20 tellers, customer service agents and mortgage loan officers, raises standards for workers in the financial services industry, according to Local 12 Representative Lance Lindeman.

"They have better wages and benefits than the big banks like Wells Fargo," he told the newspaper.

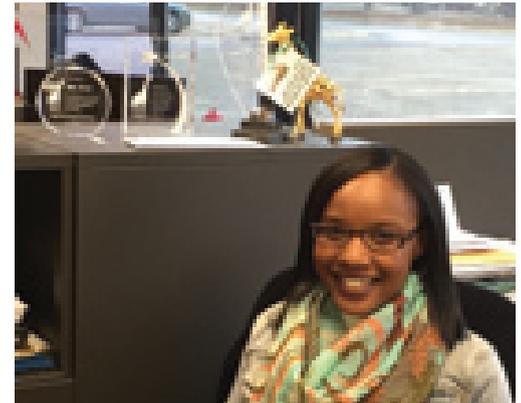
Even before the contract expired, the credit union instituted a \$15 minimum wage for all jobs, realizing that a decent wage is the way to attract and keep the best employees. Employees also receive 100 percent employer-paid medical, dental and vision care, all of which were maintained in the contract along with improvements to the retirement plan.

That's why negotiations lasted just five hours; both sides were working in the best interest of the employees and the credit union with the goal of attracting and maintaining the best employees.

St. Paul Federal Credit Union was founded in 1953 by members of Local 110 of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers. In recent years, the credit union expanded its membership to the wider community, but kept its focus on the customers and its employees. "The credit union is doing very well... If the company's doing well, let's share it," CEO Tom Glatt said.

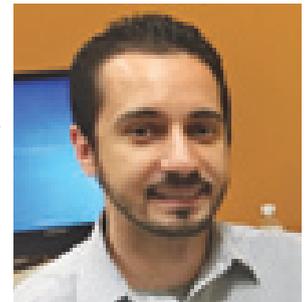
Local 11 represents approximately 2,500 members at 100 worksites.

Thanks to Workday Minnesota's Barb Kucera for allowing us to share details of her article.



Talia Jones, a Local 12 member at St. Paul Federal Credit Union. The giraffe in the background is an award for sticking her neck out for the credit union members she helps to obtain mortgages.

Local 12's Ash Khatib, a loan officer at the credit union.



Local 2 Swears in Executive Board



Photo credit: Chelsea Bland, Local 2

Local 2 President Dan Dyer, Secretary-Treasurer Linda Bridges and their slate have been sworn in for a new three-year term. Metro Washington Council AFL-CIO President Emeritus Jos Williams swore in the officers and board, who will be focusing on organizing, political action and member mobilization.

Left to right, Local 2 Executive Board members Ann Bartley, Ian Stublarec, Brenda Jones, Vonda Oliver, Danny Lopez, Erin Radford, Recording Secretary Caniesha Washington-Seldon, Second Vice President Mike Spiller, Executive Board members Rosemary Meushaw and Audrey King, First Vice President Sarah Levesque, Executive Board Member Rian Howard, Secretary-Treasurer Linda Bridges, Executive Board Member Tangela Smallwood, Trustees Yvonne Ellis and Sandy Smith and President Dan Dyer. Not pictured are board members Marcia Reid, Michelle Forrester, Terri Brady, Robert Reid, Alicia Nestor and Third Vice President Eric Starin.



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