

# THE UTILITY WORKER



UTILITY WORKERS UNION OF AMERICA, AFL-CIO

Volume LXVI, No. 1

January/February/March 2020



# UNION STRONG! 2020

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Stepping Up, Stepping Out at the Women’s March

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*James Slevin*

# Where Do We Go From Here?

So far my travels as UWUA president have taken me from very small locals where a handful of our members provide vital services to their own communities, to large locals with thousands of members, as well as others of various sizes, with more to come.

I've had numerous conversations that have sparked my interest in trying to answer the question, where are we going? Not just as a union, but as a country.

Where is the care and concern for workers? What's the next step for our members whose jobs are threatened by the decarbonization of the economy? What is the future of the middle class that workers, organizing together into unions, built?

## Sound the alarm

Despite a growing economy and low unemployment, those with only a high school diploma are being left out. This is especially true for the 94% of workers in the private sector who are not represented by a union.

The growing inequality between those with a college degree and those without, has fed what is now called "deaths of despair" from suicide, drug overdoses and alcoholism. This has contributed to falling life expectancy in our country for three out of the last four years.

Those who sit in corporate boardrooms have directed the half-century of successful attacks on workers and their unions. That is how we have arrived at where we are today.

When will it be our time again, a time when workers are respected and those who represent them are supported, both in government and in boardrooms?

I'm here to tell you that our time is now! The crisis our country faces from the corporate control of government and commerce has gotten so deep that even some influential businessmen are waking up to sound the alarm.

The Business Roundtable, representing the chief executive officers of America's leading companies, issued a

"Statement of Purpose" last August signed by 181 CEOs who committed to leading their companies "for the benefit of all stakeholders — customers, employees, suppliers, communities and shareholders." This is a major shift for the Business Roundtable, which, for the past half-century practiced and promoted principles and policies that put shareholders first, with little regard for workers and their communities.

We have reached the point where we're in a struggle, politically, socially and economically for the future of

our great country. This election year we need to have a serious conversation with ourselves and our loved ones, in our communities and in our society, as to how to make a level playing field for all Americans, not just the wealthy.

## Support the PRO Act

One way to level the playing field is to support the Protecting The Right To Organize (PRO) Act. In early February, the AFL-CIO succeeded in getting the

House of Representatives to pass the PRO Act, the most comprehensive pro-worker labor law reform in decades. The legislation would make it easier for workers to organize and would undo most of the pro-business anti-worker barriers to joining unions going all the way back to the original National Labor Relations Act of 1935.

Now we need to get all of our U.S. senators on board supporting the PRO Act and have the president sign it. Support for the PRO Act is the litmus test for gaining the support of the UWUA and all of labor. It doesn't matter whether you are a Democrat or a Republican, you're either with us, or you're against us.

It's time to get serious. It's time to get engaged with your local leadership in collective bargaining, organizing and political action. It's time to find your point of entry and get to work. Only the present has potential!

In unity.

**It's time to get serious. It's time to get engaged with your local leadership in collective bargaining, organizing and political action. It's time to find your point of entry and get to work. Only the present has potential!**

# Public Sector Solidarity Pays Off in Bay City, MI



**“We knew going into negotiations that after 10 years of concessions we were going to have to have all the members behind us if we were going to be successful in getting a good contract. The only way we got this done was with membership solidarity, and we ended up where we needed to be. This shows how strong membership solidarity can truly be.”**

— Local 542 President Ross Dean

**P**ublic sector members of Local 542 in Bay City, MI recently ratified a new three-year contract that took almost two years to negotiate. The 95 municipal workers staff city hall, and the Department of Public Works; including streets, sanitation, parks, water distribution and waste water systems.

## No concessions

The new agreement provides annual raises, an increase in employer pension contributions, improvements to the grievance procedure and job descriptions. The membership was successful in fighting back attempts to strip the contract of work rules and impose much broader management rights language. In the end, Local 542 members made no concessions.

While the local was squaring off with the city, the union was simultaneously conducting very difficult negotiations with the Bay City Housing Commission, affecting 12 other members. These members faced proposals that would have stripped them of health

care and retirement as well as giving management unchecked rights to control the workplace. In the end, the local successfully pushed back these concessions and maintained these benefits and rights, in addition to winning wage increases over three years of the agreement.

Both of these successful outcomes were accomplished despite Michigan's anti-worker laws. The members of Local 542 stuck together in solidarity to weather the effects of laws designed to force public sector workers, in particu-

lar, to accept management demands at the expiration of a contract. Such laws prevent public employers from paying retroactive wages and step increases, and shifts increases in health care costs onto the backs of workers when a contract expires.

## Getting it done

“We knew going into negotiations that after 10 years of concessions we were going to have to have all the members behind us if we were going to be successful in getting a good contract,” says Local 542 President Ross Dean. “The only way we got this done was with membership solidarity, and we ended up where we needed to be. This shows how strong membership solidarity can truly be.”

# Local G-555 Wins Back Automatic Progression for Field Employees in New Agreement

Cleveland Local G-555 won a huge victory recently with Dominion Energy Ohio when they successfully negotiated back into the contract automatic progression for more than 300 members in the Field Metering Services (FMS) Department. The local proved that it is possible to negotiate back into a UWUA contract things that were previously lost when concessions were given to help bring contract talks to a close.

## Righting a wrong

In 1998, members of the FMS Department lost automatic progression within their job title. That allowed the company to promote only when they determined there was a need at the higher classifications.

As a result, for the past 20-plus years, the members in the entry-level Helper FMS 2013 (Helper) position and second-step Utility Person-Customer Service (UPCS) position could be stuck in those lower paying jobs for years before finally being promoted when the company determined there was a need. Promotion also varied drastically depending on needs at certain shop locations. One shop could see all of their Helpers promoted within two years, while other shops could see their Helpers languish for 4-5 years before having the opportunity to advance.

“This is a huge win for our local,” says Local G-555 Executive President Eddie Hall. “In a department that employs over 300 of our members, we were able to right a wrong.”

Ever since automatic progression for FMS members was bargained away, the union has kept it on the table. Finally, in late 2019, when negotiations to update the FMS agreement were needed to more accurately reflect the ever-changing business environment, the union was able to bargain progression based on time served within the classification.

**“This is a huge win for our local. In a department that employs over 300 of our members, we were able to right a wrong.”**

—Local G-555 Executive President Eddie Hall



Local G-555's FMS Department members are the face of Dominion Energy in Ohio in the field and are responsible for ensuring safe and reliable natural gas service to over 1.5 million customers. Pictured here is part of the team of G-555 FMS members who traveled to Massachusetts in the Fall of 2018 to assist in rebuilding the gas infrastructure in the aftermath of the Merrimack Valley gas explosion and subsequent outage.

## Promotions bring raises

The new job descriptions call for a Helper to be promoted to UPCS after 12 months in the position; promotion could occur sooner if the employee fulfills all the requirements prior to the 12 months. Likewise, the job description for UPCS calls for promotion to Customer Service Representative B after 18 months, and again, promotion could happen sooner if the requirements are met earlier.

“Our members could be stuck in lower-paying positions and not reach the top rate of the department for over a decade. They will now progress to top rate in no more than three and-a-half

years,” Hall explains. “There is no small gap in pay between Rep A's and Helpers either, at over \$16.00/hr. difference. Our newer FMS employees will make more money sooner, but more importantly will be exposed to all aspects of the work we perform sooner, making them better trained, safer, and more productive employees able to handle whatever the job throws at them. Most of the time when you lose something at the bargaining table, it is gone forever. We were thrilled that our team was able to win this back for our members!”

Local G-555 represents nearly 1,100 members employed by Dominion Energy Ohio.

# What do you hope to learn at UWUA's 2020 Regional Conferences?



**Aaron Cozatt**

Local 175

“I hope to gain knowledge on how to represent the members of our local at the highest level possible. It would be helpful to have discussions in areas such as workers’ compensation, NLRB filing rules, how to give a deposition, and how to educate people on right-to-work within the local and the community. I would like to hear some of the challenges other locals in our region are facing in order to prepare for what we may face in the future. and learn about what steps locals have taken to increase member involvement within their locals and their communities.”



**Joseph Tischina**

Local 18007

“I am very excited to attend the upcoming 2020 UWUA Region IV Conference that will be held in Chicago. It is a very humbling, yet at the same time, prideful feeling to attend an event in which so many locals come together. When asked to attend the conference, I jumped on the opportunity. I look forward to networking with the brotherhood that will be in attendance, troubleshooting and discussing solutions to problems they are facing in their respective cities, and learning new strategies to take back work that was given to contractors. I sincerely hope there will be workshops and conversations centered on contract negotiations and effective strategies with regard to dealing with management.”



**Dale Heineman**

Local 433

“I’m hoping to learn where we stand in the upcoming presidential election. Also, looking forward to hearing from my brothers and sisters about what’s going on in their area, good or bad, and possibly learn new and different strategies we can apply in our local.”



### Paul Talboo

Local G-555 Executive Treasurer

“I look forward to being able to freely share ideas with the National Executive Officers, National Staff, as well as other locals in the region to try to get better at serving my members. Learning about recent NLRB rulings that may affect how we handle grievances and arbitrations, discussing with organizers how we can ensure renewable energy jobs go to UWUA members, developing strategies to deal with the push towards 100% renewable energy — which include potential bans on natural gas — are all things I look forward to. I truly appreciate that an environment is created where we can feel comfortable asking tough questions and dreaming up big ideas to try to build a better union for today and for the future of all of us.”



### Andrea Nieto

Local 132 Trustee

“I’d like to learn everything at the conference, the more I can soak in the better I can assist my union brothers and sisters.”



### Sean Gaurige

Local 18007 Chief Union Steward

“Attending the conference is an opportunity to meet and learn from fellow union brothers and sisters from across the region. I’m personally looking forward to the workshops so that I can learn and develop new strategies on how to be a better union steward. As UWUA members/representatives we have a common goal to provide for our families and to keep the union spirit alive for future generations. As Socrates wrote, ‘A society grows great when old men plant trees the shade of which they know they will never sit in.’”

# National Union “All In” for Water Members



Local 477W officers, left to right, President Brian Burba, Treasurer Jason McNeal, and Secretary Chad Vance.

**“The company is trying to eliminate the backbone of the grievance procedure and the National Union will not tolerate an employer denying the rights of employees to address concerns through the grievance procedure to arbitration.”**

— Kelly Cooper, UWUA Region III senior national representative

**T**hreatening to trash decades of a productive relationship with members of Local 477W in southeastern Ohio, the Highland County Water Company is demanding unfair concessions of workers in this round of contract bargaining.

## Defending arbitration process

Management’s most egregious demand is to eliminate arbitration as the final step for settling employee grievances. This could hurt customers by forcing both sides into expensive lawsuits just to settle routine workplace disputes.

The company’s unreasonable demands for concessions can be traced to a 2016 arbitration victory where the union succeeded in getting the local president to return to work, with back pay, after being wrongfully discharged.

Stung by the loss, the company is holding members hostage by trying to eliminate arbitration from the grievance procedure. The National Union is supporting Local 477W members in their fight for a fair contract.

“The company is trying to eliminate the backbone of the grievance procedure and the National Union will not tolerate an employer denying the rights of employees to address concerns through the grievance procedure to arbitration,” explains Kelly Cooper, UWUA Region III senior national representative.

## Bad faith bargaining

“The director and the board continue to hold the members of 477W hostage at the expense of rate payers,” Cooper continues. “We expect the company to negotiate in good faith in the best interests of all involved and stop harassing the employees represented by the Utility Workers Union of America.”

Highland County Water is a non-profit co-op owned and financed by the company’s customers through their water rates. Its 13 hourly employees, represented by Local 477W, deliver safe, reliable drinking water to customers in Adams, Brown, Clinton, Highland, and Ross counties.

The company’s unwillingness to negotiate in good faith, and their hiring a high-priced attorney to represent them, could drive the cost of water up in an already economically stressed area of Ohio. Every dollar management spends on unfair attacks on hourly workers is a dollar paid for by their customers.

## Company demands unreasonable

Other painful concessions the company is demanding include: elimination of all restrictions on the company’s ability to contract out workers’ jobs; new restrictions on employees’ rights to take their earned vacation leave due to a death in the family, and sick leave; elimination of company-provided work uniforms; and meal allowances for employees called out to perform emergency work after midnight to restore essential customer services.

# UWUA Ramps Up Water Work

Nothing is more fundamental to the safe, healthy functioning of our society than water and wastewater infrastructure. Without the ability to deliver clean, reliable water and to safely treat and dispose of wastewater, we would be living in a pre-industrial, almost medieval world. Water-borne diseases that used to be the scourge of the entire world can now only pose threats in places where modern water infrastructure either doesn't exist or degrades to unsafe levels.



Members of the locals of the Michigan State Utility Workers Council volunteered their support for the people of Flint during the 2016 water crisis by donating and delivering water.

The suffering of populations in cities such as Flint, MI is profound but has also surfaced similar challenges faced by

water systems around the country.

This is why the UWUA is joining with allies from across various communities to speak up on the national level regarding the importance of our members' work to make clean water a reality for all of us. Joining with our partners at the BlueGreen Alliance and exploring work with groups such as Clean Water for All, our aim is to ensure that elected officials recognize the contribution to society made by those who provide these critical services.

## Welcome Newest Members from Campbell, OH

Ohio Local 425 recently welcomed the newest UWUA bargaining unit into its ranks when, shortly after Aqua Ohio began providing water service in Campbell, its workers joined the UWUA. The six new members are distribution technicians, maintenance and plant operators with a wealth of experience.

The story of how they became UWUA members began last spring when Aqua Ohio announced plans to purchase Campbell's municipal water system and treatment plant. In January 2020 Aqua Ohio took over. After Aqua Ohio hired the former Campbell water workers, they joined the UWUA.

Aqua Ohio is managing the water facilities as part of its nearby division, which already has a collective bargaining agreement with Local 425.

Thanks to the respectful relationship between the UWUA and Aqua Water throughout the country, the union was able to negotiate an agreement to have the Campbell workers covered by Local 425's collective bargaining agreement without giving up anything in terms of pay, benefits, working conditions and seniority for retirement and vacation benefits. In addition to enjoying everything that a UWUA contract brings, the Campbell members won guarantees of job security.

Recently, they voted unanimously to accept the agreement negotiated by the UWUA.

The UWUA represents thousands of water workers in the public and private sector and is working with water companies to make sure the communities they serve have safe water and up-to-date infrastructure. Aqua Ohio is a member of the UWUA's Power for

America Training Trust Fund (P4A) and enjoys the benefits of its safety trainings.

"These guys transitioned to the UWUA because they saw the effectiveness of Local 425 and the great contracts they have been able to negotiate with Aqua Ohio. We're happy to have them on board," says Rich Cossell, UWUA national representative for Region III. "We have a number of members at Aqua facilities in Ohio and throughout the country. We think we can do really well for the Campbell members."

The UWUA is in a very good position to represent water workers in both the public and private sectors. When public water authorities are privatized, the experience of the Campbell members, is an excellent example of how the impact of such a sale can actually lead to improvements for workers.

UWUA's contracts have strong successor language that protects workers' right to representation, wages, benefits, and more when their company is sold.

# Kilpatrick Gas Safety and Workforce Adequacy Act to be Introduced in CA Legislature

When a contractor installing solar power in Murrieta, CA hit a SoCalGas line last July, the resulting explosion killed Local 132 member Wade Kilpatrick, injured several others and leveled a house. Kilpatrick died because the contractor failed to call 811 to check for gas lines prior to digging.

## Safety, reliability, sustainability

All of this could have been avoided if the contractor followed safety rules. Unfortunately, in California, there is little penalty for breaking the rules.

That's about to change. The presidents of UWUA Locals 132, 483 and 522 at the gas company are preparing to submit the Wade Kilpatrick Gas Safety and Workforce Adequacy Act of 2020 in Sacramento. Always putting safety first, this legislation, if passed, will be model legislation as the UWUA battles irresponsible contractors that endanger lives, while simultaneously promoting union jobs and a safe environment.

"The Kilpatrick Act is intended to fully utilize our members who provide essential services, especially natural gas, to the people of California," says Local 132 President Eric Hofmann. "The marginalization of workers by deregulation and the single-minded pursuit of profit by the utilities and the Public Utility Commission of previous administrations are major reasons for the struggles we presently have around safety, reliability and adequacy of service and responsiveness to the challenges of climate change."

UWUA friend, State Senator Maria Elena Durazo, is the bill's sponsor in the Senate and Tyler Diep is its sponsor in the Assembly.

The Wade Kilpatrick Gas Safety and Workforce Adequacy Act of 2020 is built around three pillars:



Lobbying state electeds for the Wade Kilpatrick Legislation, left to right, Local 522 President Kito Singleton, lobbyist Matt Broad; Sean Mitchell, Local 132 President Eric Hofmann; Sen. Connie M. Leyva, Local 132 Secretary-Treasurer Milton Davis, regulatory and legislative advisor Bill Julian, and Region V Senior National Representative Jerry Acosta.

### Greater emphasis on 811 Dig Alert.

The legislation would penalize rogue or cowboy contractors who repeatedly damage gas infrastructure by not calling 811. This damage puts members in danger as first responders and releases harmful methane to the atmosphere.

### The need for a well-trained workforce.

To reduce leaks to an absolute minimum and provide timely, responsive gas service, staffing levels must be adequate. Although state law already requires this, the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) must implement the requirement. The bill would establish a safety culture in the industry that includes robust ongoing participation of workers in safety planning, implementation and enforcement at the utilities and at the CPUC. It also supports workforce training programs to assure that the knowledge and experience of the existing workforce is passed on to utility workers of the future.

### Finding and repairing gas leaks.

Gas leaks, especially Grade 3 leaks, while being deemed not hazardous to the public in terms of an immediate probability of explosion, do enormous damage to the environment because of the potency of methane as a greenhouse gas. In terms of achieving California's ambitious climate goals, utility workers must be empowered to find and fix leaks. This would significantly reduce the amount of methane released into the atmosphere.

Whatever role natural gas will play in the long term, it remains an essential fuel now and for some time into the future. While it remains a part of California's fuel mix it should be delivered by an energy delivery system that is safe, tight, leak-less and well maintained. In order to achieve that, utility workers must be fully supported and empowered to do their jobs. That is the thrust of the Wade Kilpatrick Safety and Workforce Adequacy Act of 2020.

# Reaching Into High Schools to Train the Next Generation of Utility Workers

*P4A Programs in MI and Chicago Provide Union Career Paths*



A Holt, MI High School Facebook post promotes the Energy Industry Fundamentals class.



Giovanni Delgado trains to become a Local 18007 gasworker working at Peoples Gas while in high school.



High School students learn about tools, equipment, and apparel.



**“Our outreach to high schools to start prepping kids and building a pipeline for a union career in utilities is an important advancement for P4A. We’re letting young people know that you don’t have to go to college to have a career, that you can have a good middle class life and support your family with a union job in the industry.”**

— P4A Executive Director Jonathan Harmon

The UWUA’s Power for America Training Trust (P4A) continues to break new ground in fulfilling its mission, re-energizing careers in existing industries and training an emerging new, unionized workforce for tomorrow’s energy sector.

With its outreach to high school students in Michigan and Chicago, P4A is opening new opportunities for those who are curious about what a career in the utility sector could mean for them. And some recent high school graduates of P4A’s training programs are already enjoying the benefits of good-paying union jobs with lifelong career opportunities.

“Before I graduated high school I had the opportunity to gain experience working with Local 18007 Gasworkers and Peoples Gas. It was a big thing for a kid my age,” says Giovanni Delgado, who successfully completed the P4A training program in Chicago in 2018 and is now a UWUA member working at the gas company. “I’ve had a very different experience compared to other teenagers and I’m grateful to the program, especially my trainers who prepared me for the work I am doing now.”

In addition to the work P4A is doing in four Chicago public high schools, it is building a successful program at a high school

**Continued on page 12**



Holt, MI High School students at the Power for America training center.



In the classroom learning first aid/CPR basics.

in Holt, MI. There, working with the Michigan State Utility Workers Council (MSUWC) and Consumers Energy, students are being taught using the rigorous Energy Industry Fundamental (EIF) curriculum.

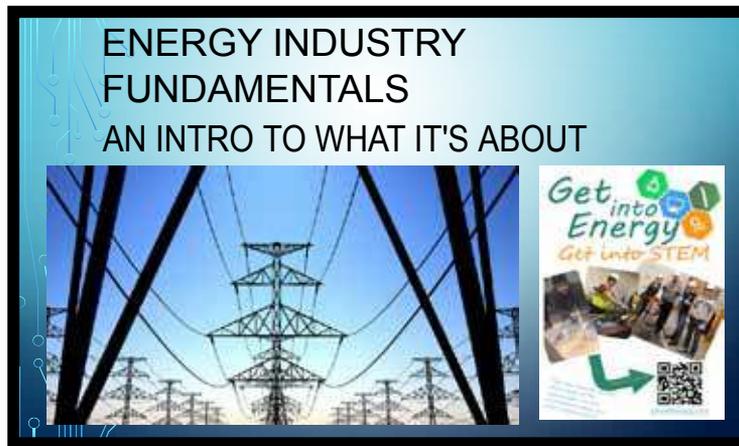
“Our outreach to high schools to start prepping kids and building a pipeline for a union career in utilities is an important advancement for P4A,” explains Executive Director Jonathan Harmon. “There’s a lot of talk about getting the next generation of utility workers ready. We’re undertaking a huge push to let young people know that you don’t have to go to college to have a career, that you can have a good middle-class life and support your family with a union job in the industry.”

**Training the next generation**

On Wednesday mornings for two hours, Holt students travel to P4A’s Potterville, MI facility to participate in basic training activities in electric, natural gas and power generation. They learn about the daily activities of an electric lineman and natural gas worker as well as safety topics that include excavation

safety, personal protective equipment, traffic zone protection and first aid/CPR basics. This year’s class is the third group to go through the program.

At the end of the semester, they receive high school class credit and take the EIF national certification exam.



If they pass the exam, they receive a certificate recognized by Edison Electric Institute members as having the basic knowledge of how energy works. This ensures that potential workers gain an understanding of the energy industry, the careers available, and the education and training to enter and advance in those careers. The certificate will give them an advantage in getting a job with a utility company as EEI is recognized as a leader in the field.

Holt High School EIF graduate Grace Millbauer says of her experience, “It’s a great way to learn about possible careers in energy and get hands on experience at the same time. We have met so many new people and had a chance to network.”

Holt students are taught by Dale Walczak, a retired UWUA member working at P4A’s Potterville center. Utility workers training utility workers is part of the UWUA’s commitment to ensuring its members are the safest, most productive, highest skilled workers in the world and the union being the go-to organization for skills and safety training in the industries where it

represents workers.

“It’s good to see that we have high school students who have the enthusiasm and are thinking about a career in the energy fields,” Walczak says. “With this program we are proving that we care about the next generation of utility workers and are able to train them for future careers. I don’t know of anyone else other than the UWUA that would take the time, the effort and make the investment to pull this all together.”



Power for America instructor Dale Walczak.

**Chicago program extended**

In Chicago, P4A is spearheading the high school program in partnership with Local 18007 and Peoples Gas. There, the final phase of the multi-year program requires students to spend up to eight hours on Saturday for nine weeks at the Peoples Gas training facility. As in Michigan, the P4A instructors are all retired UWUA members who teach the students the basics of gas distribution and service work. The training often mirrors what an entry-level worker receives in their first year of employment. Students who successfully complete the program are eligible to be hired by Peoples Gas into entry-level positions immediately after high school.

“Being a union worker for utilities is a lifelong career,” says Local 18007 President Tim Jaroch. “The program we have with P4A and Peoples Gas will keep our union local in touch with schools and help us grow with qualified, experienced young members who understand the importance of the union and want to stay and make a career out of it.”

This January, the third group of stu-

dents started this program. The first two groups included some who have taken jobs with Peoples Gas and are now Local 18007 members.

“Young men and women need opportunities outside of going to college

**“Young men and women need opportunities outside of going to college and we show them a path to a lifelong career. We show them the real deal when it comes to doing the work and the importance of the union. Some really grasp onto it.”**

— Chicago P4A instructor Brian Murray

and we show them a path to a lifelong career,” says Chicago instructor Brian Murray, a retired UWUA member who also trains veterans as part of the UWUA’s Utility Workers Military Assistance Program (UMAP). “We show them the real deal when it comes to doing the work and the importance of the union. Some really grasp onto it.”

The program was recently renewed and will now go through 2023, benefiting more Chicago-area students.

Local 18007 Business Manager Adrian

Duenas was an instructor for the first class. “These kids show a lot of dedication, volunteering to spend their Saturdays with us between January and April. Many have jobs making minimum wage. In the end, if they check all the boxes, they have a job, a career for life,” he says. “They come from blue collar families but maybe their parents don’t work in a union industry. We teach them union history, the eight-hour work day, how unions are instrumental in promoting safety. That’s all part of unions. The company didn’t set those standards. The union fought for them.”

“My instructors, Adrian and Brian, were a huge help for me in my career,” says Giovanni Delgado. “They made our jobs 10 times easier. We were steps ahead when we walked in the door at work. I am extremely thankful for what the union did for me when I was in high school.”

As for what’s next, P4A executive director Harmon says, “I would really like to expand our high school programs out into other gas and electric utilities we work with, and include those in water, and renewables as well.

For more information visit [www.power4america.org](http://www.power4america.org).

# UWUA Leads Study to Eliminate Obstacles Veterans Face Finding New Careers

Veterans and retiring service members develop invaluable leadership and technical skills while they serve their country, but outside of the military they sometimes face challenges translating their military skills into civilian sector careers. The UWUA is working hard to change that for all

veterans, and especially those who are interested in utility sector careers.

Working in close partnership with the American Legion, UWUA is pursuing efforts that will make it easier for servicemembers and veterans to seek new and exciting employment opportunities and that will create a pathway to the utility sector.

Director of Veterans Affairs Rick Passarelli, with other industry leaders and



Director of Veterans Affairs and Workforce Development, Rick Passarelli

the American Legion, are working together to study and identify the barriers to entry veterans face, including how credentialing costs create obstacles for veterans seeking civilian employment and what kinds of gaps between military training and civilian sector require-

ments currently exist. The Department of Defense (DOD) will incorporate the findings of the study in future training program curriculums.

This effort represents a significant step toward helping veterans translate skills they learned while in the military into civilian sector careers in the utility industry. This also supports efforts allowing servicemembers with the ability to apply their military train-

ing and coursework to bachelor's and graduate degree programs. The study, led by Passarelli as part of the Legion's Military Credentialing Advancement Study Ambassador Roundtable, will be completed and shared with DOD in the first quarter of 2021.

The UMAP program will continue to benefit even more veterans in the coming years. The overall program has been extended to 2023, which means 200 more veterans will have the opportunity to build a career and earn a quality, family-sustaining paycheck and benefits. In Michigan, the UMAP program recently celebrated the milestone of graduating 200 veterans.

*For more information about how UMAP can benefit your local or work with employers in your area, reach out to Rick Passarelli at [rpassarelli@uwua.net](mailto:rpassarelli@uwua.net).*

## Local 105 Members Rally Around Two Families Impacted by Tragic Housefires

Within a week of one another and just days before Christmas, tragically, two members of Local 105 in Michigan lost everything in two separate house fires.

The Lindle family was enjoying an evening out when Mike Lindle received a call from his neighbor that his home was on fire. The family was 45 minutes away from home at the time at the Detroit Zoo but rushed to get back as quickly as possible. They had hoped their two dogs would be ok, but they didn't survive the fire.

While they're still coping with the loss of their dogs and their home, Mike says people from nearby churches, neigh-

bors and the members of Local 105 stepped up to offer support for the family and buying gifts for his daughters.

"I've never been on the receiving end of this kind of charity before," said Lindle. "People called to check on us. I really wasn't ok."

Earlier in December, CJ Ballinger, his wife, three kids and their dog escaped unharmed from a house fire, but they lost everything they own.

Local 105 members acted quickly to provide much-needed support for these two families. Members set up a fundraiser and were able to raise \$50,000 to split between the two families.



The Ballinger family lost everything they had in a house fire on December 16th.

"We take our pledge to help one another out seriously," said Tim Gohr, president of Local 105. "I'm proud of how our members stepped up to help out the Lindle and Ballinger families."

# UWUA/P4A Training's Best Year Yet!



Patrick Dillon  
Executive Vice President

In 2009, the UWUA with employer partners Utility Lines Construction, Entergy, and National Grid established the Power for America Training Trust Fund (P4A) to provide training support to incumbent workers as well as administer apprenticeship programs. Although often thought to be a Michigan program, due in large part to the Pottsville, Michigan Training Center, since its inception P4A has grown to include 12 employers with trainings currently conducted in 13 states including: California, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Michigan, Missouri, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Tennessee and Virginia.

## Training reaches 10% of membership

Last year marked the most active year of training yet, with over 5,100 members trained in more than 40 locals. That's 10% of the membership! Training during 2019 included safety, leadership, eLearning, the Utility Workers Military Assistance Program (UMAP), high school vocational, apprenticeship and other skills related trainings in generation, renewable energy, electric, water, and gas.

Milestones in 2019 include the creation of a new national staff position, Director of Veterans Affairs and Workforce Development, to work between the UWUA, P4A, all branches of the U.S. Military, as well as various veterans groups across the country, to grow the UMAP program. Former Local 18007 Business Manager, Rick Passarelli, was named to the position in January 2019. Rick spearheaded the creation of UMAP in Chicago, in partnership with P4A, between Local 18007 and Peoples Gas. The 500th graduate of the Chicago UMAP program was celebrated with a graduation ceremony in 2019. Representatives from the previous 24 UMAP cohorts were in attendance. The program is so successful that over one third of Local 18007 members working at Peoples Gas are veterans and graduates of the program.

Other 2019 milestones include P4A's first venture into eLearning where 917 members working with American Water took over 3,000 courses offered through the eLearning catalogue. These replaced traditional classroom courses previously taught by American Water. Many were prerequisites for other P4A led courses, and/or were necessary for renewing or

obtaining credentials. P4A Executive Director Jon Harmon sees eLearning as one of two gateways for employers to test the waters of joining the P4A. The other is safety training. In coordination with the UWUA's National Safety Director, Scotty MacNeill, P4A has freshened the Systems of Safety program with new activities based on safety incidents within the specific energy industry. Safety leadership training using P4A's peer-to-peer approach is being adopted by employers across the nation.

**Developing a successful safety program under P4A is the gateway to the P4A providing skills training to your company, your local, and your members, and you, the union, taking control of your own safety and skilling destiny.**

## Utility workers training utility workers

The key to P4A training is not a training center, facility, or location. The key is that retired UWUA members with real life field experience are the trainers for P4A programs. Utility workers training utility workers makes P4A programs better than other training model. Members often ask, "how can we get P4A training in our local or with our company?" The answer is simple, get involved. If safety with your company is less than exceptional, get involved and make your voice heard.

Safety is the easiest way to get company buy-in to the P4A. What company doesn't want its union to be pushing safety amongst the membership? Tell your company, the union has a safety program that is producing results throughout the industry and across the nation. Developing a successful safety program under P4A is the gateway to the P4A providing skills training to your company, your local, and your members, and you, the union, taking control of your own safety and skilling destiny.

P4A is ramping up for another record-breaking year of delivering high quality safety and skills training to the membership across the country, utilizing a member-to-member approach. If you are already involved in P4A training, be sure to speak highly of the program, share your success stories so that others can hear. If you have yet to enter into the world of P4A safety and skills training, make your voice heard with your employer, tell them there is a better way and that is the way of P4A.

# Key Filing Compliance Requirements



Michael Coleman  
Secretary-Treasurer

**T**imely and accurate financial reporting is of the utmost importance. The National Union's goal is to continue providing guidance and/or support to help ensure the compliance of our affiliated locals and councils. To that end, we continue to provide financial and leadership training with financial officers and local union leaders. Whether at smaller member-to-member settings or in larger groups like a regional conference, our organization is committed to assisting and reinforcing the importance of regulatory compliance and protecting our union's funds and assets.

The UWUA continues to work with the Department of Labor (DOL) through the Voluntary Compliance Partnership Program to assist our affiliates' compliance with the Office

of Labor Management Standards (OLMS). We continue to review several of the Voluntary Compliance Program objectives, including the following: 1) Continued partnership in the program; 2) Successful transition to the new mandatory electronic filing requirements; 3) Bonding requirements; 4) Review of all affiliate's compliance; and, 5) Utilization of OLMS resources to assist the UWUA financial training efforts.

Listed below, are several key components for reference and proper filing. As always, please do not hesitate to contact the National Office for guidance, clarification or assistance.

## DOL Filing Requirements



### What Form do you file?

Depending on size of the organization's receipts, there are three potential forms your local union would be required to file:

- **Form LM-2** – required when your local union's total annual receipts were \$250K or more.
- **Form LM-3** – required when your local union's total annual receipts were \$10K or more, but less than \$250K.
- **Form LM-4** – required when your local union's total annual receipts were less than \$10K.

### When is the Form due to the DOL?

**The Form LM-2, LM-3 and LM-4 are required to be filed within 90 days after an organization's fiscal year-end and must be filed electronically.** The DOL does not authorize or allow extensions.

## Fidelity Bonding Requirements

The Labor-Management Reporting and Disclosure Act (LMRDA) provides that any person who handles union funds must be bonded for an amount of at least 10% of the funds handled (including assets and income) during the previous fiscal year up to a maximum of \$500,000. The coverage must be computed at the start of each fiscal year and any increase in coverage must be adjusted promptly. The National Office does obtain the coverage for your local union or council through a national policy. In order to obtain the coverage, each affiliate must provide the National Office with the amount of coverage needed annually. Please contact the National Office for assistance in determining the amount of bonding required.

## IRS Filing Requirements



### What IRS Form do you file?

Depending on size of your local union's assets and receipts, there are three potential forms organizations would be required to file:

- **990-N (Postcard)** – if your union normally has gross receipts of \$50K or less
- **990-EZ** – if your union has gross receipts less than \$200K and total assets at the end of the tax year less than \$500K
- **Form 990 (full form)** – which is filed if either gross receipts are greater than or equal to \$200K or total assets are greater than or equal to \$500K at the end of the tax year.

### When is the Form due to the IRS?

All forms are to be **filed electronically** and for organizations that have a calendar year end of December 31 the Form 990, 990-EZ, and 990-N is due **May 15th** (4 and ½ months after year end). Organizations can apply for an extension which will extend the time to **November 15th** (10 and ½ months after year end). Steep monetary penalties may apply for late filers.

### Ramifications for Non-Compliance

In addition to monetary penalties, if you do not file for three consecutive years, your local union's tax exemption will be automatically revoked and will be considered a taxable entity and possibly be subject to income taxes similar to for-profit entities. Once this occurs, **there is a fairly lengthy application process to get reinstated as a tax-exempt organization – so please make sure to comply with the annual filing requirements.**

# The Push to Eliminate Natural Gas: The Latest Example of Environmentalists Wearing Blinders



John Duffy  
National Vice President

Not long ago, the environmental movement's approach to address climate change started out with the goal of eliminating coal-fired power plants. At that time, the UWUA weighed in heavily on the need to keep those plants open. While our priority was, and still is, to preserve the livelihood of our affected members, the UWUA also continues to point out the effect plant closures have on entire communities, in addition to the rise in utility rates and decline in reliability.

Their attack on coal resulted in more than 15 UWUA coal plants being shut down in Indiana, Massachusetts, Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania and West

Virginia. As a result, our members lost their jobs, their communities lost a major part of their tax base and support for schools, police and fire protection, and other essential public services dropped. Market forces involving cheap natural gas also put a great deal of economic pressure on these plants.

We have also seen the slated closure of nuclear plants due to their profitability. The UWUA has also weighed in on this issue by advocating for legislation to keep these plants competitive. Although nuclear plants have zero emissions, the environmental movement, for the most part, sat on its hands while closures were on the horizon.

## Gas is vital

Not that long ago, environmentalists also recognized natural gas as "a bridge to renewables." They understood that their push for renewable energy required the continued use of natural gas. They did not have the "shut it down" attitude they had with coal.

Now, after conceding that natural gas must play a role in the transition to renewables, for no logical reason, some environmentalist's position has changed to "shut it down." Unlike the cases of nuclear and coal plants, where economic pressures played a role in their demise, natural gas is a competitive fuel. And unlike nuclear and coal, the push to eliminate natural gas goes beyond its use to generate electricity. Some environmentalists now want to eliminate the gas distribution infrastructure that delivers natural gas directly to commercial and residential users.

Our members in California Locals 132, 483 and 522 are on the front lines in the war against natural gas. That war is referred to as electrification. Those members work for SoCalGas, the largest natural gas distribution utility in the country, delivering gas to over 20 million people with a service territory of approximately 20,000 square miles.

On November 9, 2019, our locals at SoCalGas held a mass meeting in Pasadena where huge numbers of members from these locals and other UWUA locals joined together in a mass rally to energize the membership in the ongoing fight against this attack on natural gas and their jobs.

## Poor impacted most

While many of the proponents of electrification also claim to be concerned for poor people, it's the poor who will be impacted most. Natural gas has always been a more economical energy source than electricity. Electrification will actually drive up the cost of both electricity and natural gas. The increase in demand for electricity will no doubt drive up its cost, and the reduction

in demand for natural gas will cause a huge drop in revenue for SoCalGas. That, in turn, will require a rate increase to pay to maintain its gas infrastructure.

That's part of the plan, artificially increase the cost of natural gas legislatively to the point where electricity looks like an attractive alternative. Consumers who prefer natural gas would be priced out due to legislative market manipulation.

While the push for electrification in California is known by many of our members, it is important to note that lawmakers across the country are watching what is happening there and looking to do the same. The fight against electrification to protect our jobs is by no means limited to California.

The UWUA's 2020 Regional Educational Conferences, will give our members the tools they need to be effective leaders and build strong local unions. This year's conferences, along with workshops in labor law and empowering your local regarding safety, will include training to mobilize members to be an effective force to combat electrification and any others that attack their livelihoods. Beyond our educational conferences, as always, the full weight and resources of your National Union will be there in any fight that threatens the livelihoods of UWUA members!

**While the push for electrification in California is known by many of our members, it is important to note that lawmakers across the country are watching what is happening there and looking to do the same.**



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## Meet Your New National Safety Committee Reps.

The formation of the National Safety Committee last year has elevated the work of the National Union in advocating for, and delivering, safer workplaces in every industry where UWUA members are employed. New committee representatives are picking up the baton in 2020. They join existing committee members Jim Davis, Local G-555; Cliff Deem, Local 425;

Jesse Gil, Local 686; Brian Hannon, Local 369; Dale Heineman, Local 433; Leroy Huckleberry, Local 223; Mercurio Moore, Local 132; John Talarico, Local 132; Kevin Uraine, Local 283; Vincent Vales, Local 1-2; and Dean Wymer, Local 335. They will be running workshops at this year's regional conferences and scheduling visits to local unions nationwide.

For more safety resources and updates, visit [www.uwua.net/safety](http://www.uwua.net/safety)



### Mark Wineman

Local 102-D

*I have 34 years with West Penn Power, 32 as a lineman, and two as a safety observer.*



### William Breton

Local 257

*By trade I am a gasline worker in distribution. I started with my company in 2011; I got active in the union right away. In 2013, I became a gas steward and later the recording secretary with Local 106. By 2015, I was elected President of Local 257 and started getting involved in our union safety initiatives. In 2017, I started training to become a trainer in HP (human performance), became an SOS (systems of safety) trainer, got my CUSP (certified utility safety person) and I accepted the role as union safety rep., gas operations.*



### Jack Tornabene

Local 18007

*I have worked for eight years with Local 18007 as a utility worker. Over this period of time the safety of our members has become a passion of mine. I facilitate our safety efforts with our peer-on-peer safety team, "PEACE." I am also an OSHA Outreach Training Program Trainer for construction.*



### Jerry Lanham

Local 270

*I grew up in Cleveland, Ohio and after high school I joined the Navy for four years. After that, I spent three years working for Virginia Power in the Virginia Beach office in the lineman program. I got a break to get into First Energy where I've worked for 31 years as a lineman.*



### Ben McCrumb

Local 123

*I am an electric Union Safety Rep. from the Michigan State Utility Workers Council. I am a Journeyman Lineman from Local 123 in Lansing, Michigan. I have worked in the utility industry for 14 years, and have been involved in safety for my entire career. I started out on a meter reading grassroots safety team and have worked my way up to where I am currently at today. I am honored to be a part of the National Safety Committee and look forward to serving our membership.*



### Victor Villalba

Local 1-2

*I started working as a commercial/industrial electrician in 2002, and then in 2009 became a technician in the gas corrosion department at Con Edison. I got active in UWUA Local 1-2 right away. In 2011, I became a shop steward and started getting involved in our union's safety initiatives, was the recipient of the Safety Leadership Award in 2015, and, by 2016, I became a systems of safety facilitator. As a member of the gas safety committee, I routinely go on safety rides with our members and ensure that our members have the tools to put their safety first when performing their duties.*



### Ronnie Brooks

Local 393

*I have been a proud union member for almost 24 years now, working in a variety of departments from construction maintenance to customer service to water treatment. The last 14 years having been dedicated to the electrical department. I am currently on the executive board for my local union, as well as occupying the position as the safety committee representative for 14 years. I am looking forward to working with the National Committee and bringing a safer workplace to all of my union brothers and sisters.*

# Union Str

## Stepping Up, Stepping O



CA Local 132's newly formed Women's Caucus Committee did a phenomenal job of organizing members and supporters to participate in the Los Angeles Women's March. From left to right, back row, Cynthia Diaz, Lita Jimenez, Jill Varguez, Jaclyn Agredano, Claudia Magana, Kimberly Topete, Brenda Hernandez, Laura Doss, Andrea Nieto and Tara Quinones, front row, Nicole Kohrell and Liz Sapien.



**U**WUA locals proudly participated in the 4th annual Women's March on January 18. Led by the National Union's Women's Caucus, hundreds of members and supporters stepped out and let their voices be heard in the fight for women's rights, justice and equality throughout the land.

In New York, Locals 1-2 and 601 joined forces, while in Los Angeles, Local 132's newly formed Women's Caucus Committee mobilized to be a real presence in the 300,000 person strong Women's Solidarity March. Women from both tradi-

tional and non-traditional jobs showed up in force!

"UWUA women are W.O.W (Women Of Worth). Investing in their development is key to sustaining our union, and this year's 100th Anniversary of Women's Suffrage reminds us of the fortitude, and strength of determined women!," states National Rep/Women's Caucus Chair Valerie King.

The National Women's Caucus recently expanded the number of committee members. Local presidents appointed 17 new members with a goal of increasing participation within respective locals, regions and across the country. The new



**In New York, Locals 1-2 and 601 joined forces, while in Los Angeles, Local 132's newly formed Women's Caucus Committee mobilized to be a real presence in the 300,000 person strong Women's Solidarity March. Women from both traditional and non-traditional jobs showed up in force!**



# ong 2020!

# ut at the Women's March



## Join us

in building a caravan of women leaders throughout our locals, regions and National. We have **WORK** to do! And we need our **SISTERS** to **UNITE** and **MOBILIZE**. For more information follow us on

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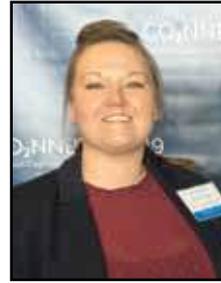
members have gotten right down to work, reviewing the UWUA's Resolution for a National Women's Caucus, the mission/vision statement, the model guide to establishing a women's committee, preparing for upcoming women's leadership development training, and getting to work on 2020 initiatives.

A "Call to Action" was put out to start a committee in each of the locals represented in the expanded National Women's Caucus. As of now, Locals 1-2, 223, 600, 601 and 132 have all answered the call.



# UWUA Hires New Staff Representatives, Establishes New Role to Support Renewable Sector Growth

**U**WUA recently announced several staffing changes to fill spots left by retiring staff members and to support the union's efforts to represent more members within the renewable energy sector. Jim Harrison (Senior National Representative for Region IV) is now UWUA's Director of Renewable Energy. Les Wutka, MSUWC Vice President of Safety, will fill Jim Harrison's position as Region IV Representative. Senior National Representative for Region V Jerry Acosta will retire at the end of March and Chauffé Schirmer, Secretary-Treasurer of Local 127 will become a representative for Region V. Additionally Deb York, Administrative Assistant to the President, will retire at the end of April. Congratulations Jerry and Deb! We wish you much happiness during your retirement.



Chauffé Schirmer



Les Wutka

## Saluting Our UWUA Retirees

The UWUA wishes all our retirees health and happiness during your "golden years." Enjoy it — you've earned it!

**Local 1-2**

Michael J. Babcock  
Peter Baldino  
Luis Boyer  
Alveraz Cowans  
Janice Euba  
Franklin M. Lawson  
Raymond Lopez  
Richard P. Martin  
Dennis Moylan  
William Murray  
Rocco Talarico  
Royle Thomas

**Local 102-G**

Todd A. Nyswaner  
Douglas L. Willis

**Local 127**

Robert P. Cooper  
Kayskaye Howard  
Robert E. McComas III

**Local 164**

Jeanne Davis  
Anthony Marazza  
Joe Mazzoni  
Mark Zagar

**Local 175**

Deborah L. Amos  
James R. Ellis Jr.

**Local 175 cont'd**

Rodney R. Rudisill  
Otis P. Stonecipher  
Jay C. Williams  
Phillip Henry Yaus Jr.

**Local 223**

Thomas Brown  
Holly Chreston  
Lamarr D. Christian  
Jeff Clements  
Franklin Harris  
Harold K. Hood  
Douglas R. Johns  
Thomas W. Lieberman  
Rich Martinez  
David Pasiak  
Dan Quattrocchi  
Douglas A. Staschke  
Gregg Stockman  
Clara Williams

**Local 254**

David Diel  
Martin Grashik

**Local 258**

Wendell Johncox

**Local 355**

Maria Cellan

**Local 358**

Glen Stewart

**Local 369**

Barbara J. Adams  
William Barden  
James Baugh  
Richard J. Ciardi  
Debra Cullinane  
Glenn Dickson  
Kevin Gregor  
David A. Grindrod  
Robert J. Kelley  
Todd La Rochelle  
William Marchant  
Scott W. MacDaniel  
Stephen Mills  
Charles Miner  
Kenneth Nelson  
Michael J. O'Driscoll  
Mary O'Hearn  
Mark O'Keeffe  
Anthony W. Patz  
Boetius Sullivan  
John 'Jack' Teal  
William Thompson  
Patrick Walsh  
William Washburn  
Kenneth Wilson

**Local 375**

Edward Council  
Roy Hill Jr.  
Lucille Kucher

**Local 395**

Gerald Coleman

**Local 398**

Sheila Brewen  
Mary Smith

**Local 417**

Mark Carollo

**Local 423**

Albert Nierodzik  
Stephen Webber

**Local 426**

Noel Vossen

**Local 430**

Herbert C. Ervin  
Deryl G. Jones  
Mark S. Moore

**Local 470-1**

James Capasso  
James Kelly  
Paul Washenko

**Local 478**

Emery J. Magyar Jr.  
Stephen J. Vavrek

**Local 525**

Kevin Dixon

**Local 534**

Kevin Bertone

**Local 568**

Robert C. Edmundson

**Local 588**

Robert Snyder

**Local 600**

Janice Martini  
Debbie Rogers  
Joyce Uhl

**Local 648**

Mike Frank

**Local 820**

Pat Hagins  
Walter Norman III

**Local 18007**

Jose A. Reyes



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## The 2020 UWUA Regional Conferences

will bring members together to tackle the challenges facing utility workers and prepare for future victories. The schedule for the conferences is as follows:

**EMPOWERING OUR LOCALS:**

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**Protecting our Legacy,  
Building our Future**

**2020 UWUA Regional Conferences**

<b>March 26 – 28</b>	<b>Region V</b>	<b>Redondo Beach, CA</b>
<b>June 4 – 6</b>	<b>Regions II &amp; III</b>	<b>Cleveland, OH</b>
<b>August 13 – 15</b>	<b>Region IV</b>	<b>Chicago, IL</b>
<b>September 17 – 19</b>	<b>Region I</b>	<b>Providence, RI</b>