

THE UTILITY WORKER



UTILITY WORKERS UNION OF AMERICA, AFL-CIO

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Owning Safety in an Unsafe World:
**Members Take Control of
WORKPLACE
SAFETY**

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ON THE COVER



Local 648 Safety Committee Members Dave Santarelli, Lisa Henry, Curt Lamoreaux, and Joe Murphy.

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James Slevin

Groundhog Day Lessons and What's in Store for UWUA in 2022

In the 1993 movie *Groundhog Day*, Bill Murray's character Phil Connors says, "Do you know what today is? Today is tomorrow. It happened." As we approach year three of the COVID-19 pandemic, we are all feeling emotionally and physically exhausted and to a certain extent like we're stuck in the same time loop as Phil Connors. Mask protocols and ever-changing COVID restrictions that have been imposed, lifted and imposed again are exhausting. Our collective grief from all of this illness and loss of life weighs heavy.

The pandemic has taught us a lot about ourselves, our families and our working lives. COVID reinforced the notion that while we're at work – whether it's during a global pandemic or anytime we face utility hazards – safety remains the highest priority. Job briefings, safety checks, wearing personal protective equipment (PPE) and the hyper-vigilance that comes with working in these conditions grinds on us. However, these routines and protocols have helped us all stay safe and go home to our families.

In this first edition of *The Utility Worker* magazine of 2022, we examine what the future of workplace safety looks like from a few locals that are innovating. In the cover story, *Owning Safety in an Unsafe World* we learn how union-led safety initiatives from locals in different industries from Wyoming, Ohio, Pennsylvania, New York, Missouri, and Massachusetts are working for members.

This important piece shows there's no wrong way to strengthen workplace safety culture; from employing full-time safety representatives (models used by Local 1-2, Michigan State Utility Workers Council and California Water Utility Council, for example), to a peer-to-peer model (used at Locals 127, 648, 369 and 335), or a statewide consortium (like that used by Locals 428, 397, 427, 425, 434), these locals are setting the bar high. I'm confident there's something we can take and apply in our work from all of these examples.

Sharing proven, effective strategies and best practices to protect ourselves at work and gain leverage with our

employers gives us strength and solidarity. It's part of the reason I look forward to finally seeing more of you in person during our four regional conferences this year. We've determined there is a path forward for us to safely meet and share organizing, safety and legal strategies to further build our strength. Check out this edition of the magazine to hear what's in store for the conferences and check back for updates at www.uwua.net.

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Finally, the energy sector has changed in more ways over the past few years than I've seen it change in my entire career. Two stories in this edition of *The Utility Worker* help us make sense of what some of those changes mean and what some locals are experiencing with regard to recent efforts by cities and states around the country attempting to ban new gas construction.

The first piece by Renewable Energies Director Jim Harrison explores what kinds of pressures utility sector employers face nationally in this existing regulatory and legislative environment and what kinds of investments we might expect from them in hydrogen, electric vehicle infrastructure, renewable energy and other sectors.

The other story I want to spotlight for you is an opinion piece that appeared in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* by Gas Workers Employees Union Local 686 President Keith Holmes. This article speaks to an issue a few locals faced in recent years. President Holmes explains possible impacts he sees on 1,000 workers who supply natural gas to Philadelphia and low-income residents if the city were to eliminate natural gas. It's a must-read column.

It's a new year and it's a good time to take a deep breath and move forward together more strategically and intentionally. This pandemic will not have a grip on us forever. There is an end in sight to this feeling that we're living *Groundhog Day*, the movie. Like Murray's character Phil Connors, we are finding a way to make the best of the situation. We will emerge from the pandemic stronger together and more resolute in the strength of our union.

UWUA Moves Ahead With In-Person Regional Conferences

After two years of meeting cancelations and attempts to replace in-person meetings with virtual meetings, the Utility Workers Union of America (UWUA) will return to hosting in-person events in 2022 with its regional education conferences. The conferences will begin with the Region V meeting in Redondo Beach, California, on March 24 – 26; followed by a combined Region II & III meeting in Cleveland, Ohio, on June 2 – 4; then Region IV in Chicago, Illinois, on August 11 – 13; and finally Region I in Providence, Rhode Island, on September 14 – 16. The decision to resume in-person meetings was not an easy one.

In early 2021, the officers were hopeful that the UWUA Power for America (P4A) Training Conference could be held in person later that fall; however, as the pandemic wore on, it became clear that the world was just not ready for large in-person gatherings. Therefore, the UWUA held its first large-scale virtual conference, the 2021 Power for America Training Conference, in November of 2021. Attendance at the virtual conference was certainly lighter in comparison to an in-person event, but the 2021 P4A Conference was successful under the circumstances. The UWUA committed a portion of the funds that would have been utilized for an in-person conference and created many training videos that will be used to form a video training library under the P4A. These training videos are important tools and are still available for viewing at www.P4ATrainingInAction2021.com.

As the officers contemplated the 2022 regional conferences, the number one concern was the health and safety of the members, staff, and guests who would be in attendance. As luck would have it, while the officers were making the decision to hold the conferences in-person, I, as a trustee of the Power for America Training Trust Fund, attended the first in-person large meeting I had been in almost two years. Executive Director Jonathon Harmon, fellow fund trustee Adrian Duenas from Local 18007, and I attended a three-day Department of Labor required trustee training in San Diego, California. The training was attended by approximately 300 people and provided me with the confidence that UWUA could safely and effectively

hold in-person events. I have attended this training a couple of times over my time as a trustee to the P4A and can honestly say that, even though attendees were continually reminded of COVID safety protocols, including maintaining social distance and mask-



Patrick Dillon
Executive Vice President

wearing, the training was not negatively impacted.

One of the challenges in returning to large-scale in-person meetings is determining the proper level of precautions and protections to take. This is made even more difficult when building a plan that must be applied in multiple cities across the country, all of which have their own COVID safety requirements. As mentioned earlier, our primary concern is for the health and safety of the attending members, staff, and guests, all the while attempting to establish requirements that do not significantly infringe on our members' personal choice. After lengthy discussion involving the UWUA's officers, legal counsel, and safety director, and to protect all attendees,

especially those who may be immunocompromised, a plan was developed that includes requiring attendees to be vaccinated or provide proof of a negative viral COVID-19 test within 24-72 hours before the start of the conference. Attendees will be required to wear masks and practice social distancing during attendance, as well as adhere to any additional local requirements for large gatherings.

The officers of the UWUA are confident that returning to in-person conferences can, with the necessary precautions and protections, be done safely. We look forward to the membership's attendance at the 2022 UWUA Regional Training Conferences. This year's conferences will include a focus on organizing, both internally and externally, as well as presentations on public campaigns, and a legal and safety update. For additional details, check with your local union leadership as your region's conference approaches.

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The Biden NLRB Returns Federal Labor Law to the Side of Workers and Unions

With key new appointments at the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), President Joe Biden is delivering on his campaign promise to be the most pro-union president in history.

First, out with the old and in with the new. Within hours of taking office, President Biden fired Peter Robb, the most anti-union general counsel in the NLRB's 85-year history and appointed Jennifer Abruzzo to the post. The general counsel is a powerful position that sets the NLRB's policy and agenda.

A former NLRB lawyer and special counsel to the president of the Communication Workers of America, Abruzzo immediately hit the ground running, reversing the anti-union initiatives Robb had put in place during his tenure under the Trump administration and issuing a memo that outlined the Board's agenda for the next four years. Every item on Abruzzo's agenda will change the law to promote collective bargaining, give employees more rights to organize and engage in protected actions such as pickets and strikes.

President Biden has also named two union lawyers to fill NLRB openings: David Prouty, who worked for SEIU in New York, and Gwynne Wilcox, also of New York and who often represented UWUA Local 1-2. Both Prouty and Wilcox have dedicated their careers representing workers and unions. They have expert knowledge in the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) and how it affects workers and unions. Wilcox and Prouty joined Democratic Board Chair Lauren McFerran to establish a pro-worker and pro-union majority on the NLRB.

General Counsel Abruzzo and the new NLRB have been working tirelessly to reestablish the NLRA as a law that protects workers' rights, promotes collective bargaining, and advances union organizing efforts. Among the action items to watch, there are several of particular interest for the UWUA and its members:

- Expand the joint employer test to make companies that outsource work more likely to be jointly responsible for unfair labor practices (ULPs) committed by contractors.
- In Stericycle, Inc., the NLRB will address whether it should adopt a new rule to limit employer work rules which interfere with the right to organize and engage in protected activity.
- In Atlanta Opera Inc., the NLRB will consider changing its standard for determining the status of workers in a manner that would make it harder for employers to misclassify workers as independent contractors rather than employees that have the right to form unions.
- In American Steel Construction, the NLRB will address the issue of unit determinations to make it easier for unions to petition

for the group of employees it (the union) wants to organize rather than what the employer wants.

- In Thryv, Inc., the NLRB will consider whether it should expand its traditional make-whole remedy for employees who are discharged, laid off or otherwise discriminated against to fully account for the actual damages caused by the employer's violation of federal labor law.
- Expand the definition of protected concerted activity to outlaw retaliation for employee speech and action to protest or improve working conditions.
- Reverse a Trump NLRB case that severely limited employee use of employer e-mail systems for workplace communications related to union activity.
- Expand union organizers' right to have access to employer property.
- The general counsel will seek full remedies for unfair labor practices in settlements and curtail blanket "non-admission clauses" in settlement agreements.
- Seek bargaining orders against employers that violate the law when workers are seeking to organize and the illegal actions affecting the union's support.
- Reverse the Trump NLRB decision that allowed employers to unilaterally implement new work rules without bargaining with the union.
- Return to the previous precedent that an employer must show it has a good faith doubt when it refuses to recognize a union after the union presents evidence of majority support. If this rule is adopted, it would make it significantly easier for unions to organize.
- Use of the NLRB's injunctive powers to seek federal court injunctions to stop employer illegal actions, especially in union organizing drives.

With General Counsel Abruzzo's leadership and the new Democratic majority on the NLRB, we are likely to see significant changes in federal labor law that will help unions. These will assist the UWUA and all of organized labor to build on the momentum of the past couple of years where unions have won significant strikes and important organizing victories.

Polls show American public approval of unions is at its highest level in decades, and a pro-union NLRB is necessary for unions and workers to exercise their rights to form and join unions and bargain strong contracts that create good middle-class jobs.

— UWUA General Counsel David Radtke

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UWUA Members: Taking Ownership

While COVID-19 has made safety and Personal Protective Equipment topics of discussion worldwide, workplace hazards are nothing new for utility workers. We've been dealing with dangers on the job our entire careers. From the very first days of our nation's industrialization to today, utility workers have faced live wires, leaking gas lines, open pits, gushing water, and other dangers too numerous to list here. The majority of the time, we've left the job site uninjured at the end of the day.

How do we do it? We've learned first-hand that to be truly safe requires more than a mask and gloves. When we dig deeper,

The single most important determinant of a safe workplace is worker involvement and ownership of that process.

we find what really counts is understanding that safety is a *process*, not a *thing*, and that *who* controls that process can make or break its success.

Most of us are familiar with the elements of the safety process: situational awareness and

job hazard, systems of safety and incident analyses. What many people may not fully understand is the single most important determinant of a safe workplace is worker involvement and ownership of that process. It ensures that our members return home uninjured at the end of their shifts, and that is the most fundamental goal we can have as a union.

Union Ownership

Taking ownership means tapping the collective experience of those who do the work to set standards that will ensure true workplace safety. This means not relying on management to tell us how to be safe. Union ownership employs a 'no name, no blame' practice that aims to learn from each experience for the benefit of all.

When the union owns safety, the culture changes from one of 'safety cop' to one of 'safety advocate.'

Union ownership means we determine who sits on our safety committees, who chairs our meetings, and who sets the agenda. We take responsibility for knowing our companies' safety policies and procedures so that we can ensure that our members — as well as management — stay in compliance.

The Building Blocks of an Effective Safety Program

Accountability

Committee members are selected for the job because they are dedicated to the safety cause, and available 24/7 to address member safety concerns. Committee members hold themselves accountable to each other and to members. They hold management accountable to members. They hold members accountable to each other.

Accountability is achieved through communication and follow-through. Once an issue is identified in the field, the union safety committee works with their company counterparts to determine an appropriate course of action and secure the resources needed to fix the problem. An effective safety committee sets — and meets deadlines — and reports back to members on status, next steps and a proposed resolution.

Resource Allocation

An effective program requires resources. For safety committee members, this means time and expertise. For the company, it means a willingness to allocate funds necessary for the committee to do its job and address issues. For the local union, it may mean a willingness to invest in training for committee members to improve their skills, such as how to conduct incident analyses.

rship of Safety

UWUA members are taking ownership of safety in different forms. A few larger locals have full-time safety representatives, selected by their union leadership and funded by the companies, who visit worksites each day and train members on best practices. Others have secured release time and company vehicles for union safety committee members. In Ohio and Michigan, having a common employer enabled several small locals to band together to form statewide safety initiatives.

For locals that don't yet have a union-led safety program, there's a model out there that will work for you. Use the basic building blocks outlined here and tap the resources available to you through the UWUA's National Safety Committee and Power for America Training Trust; they will help you navigate a course that best meets the needs of your members.



Local 1-2 Senior Safety Inspector Jason Ayala (left) on a field visit with Local 1-2 member Lowell Gilkes, a ConEd Distribution Splicer.



Models Achieving Success



Peer to Peer

What does it mean to have a peer-to-peer safety program? At Local 648 in Scranton, PA, it means you may see Heather Novak or another member of the local's safety team when they conduct weekly ride-alongs. At Rocky Mountain Power, it means if you miss Local 127's mandatory monthly safety meeting, you'll arrange to meet safety chair Ray Summa for a personal review of what was covered. For Local 369 members at Eversource, it means you've seen a shift in focus from get the job done quickly to get the job done safely.

Peer-to-peer committees empower members to own their safety. Committee members make worksite visits to talk about safety, provide training, and gather feedback from members. Local 369's Michael Medeiros sees his job as helping members put their actions into context: "I try to get them to think beyond the job at hand. If you get hurt, it's not just you that pays the price. It's your husband or wife. It's your kids. It's your parents. It's the other members who witness the injury and have to live with it." He and the Local 369 team find many injuries happen when workers rush through the job, or work without the proper materials, so they've worked to change that mindset.



Local 648 Safety project: an example of a water regulation vault before (A) and after (B) with a new, secured ladder and entrance.

At Rocky Mountain Power, the union determines the size of the crew needed for each job. "You and your crew are out there alone in the wilderness. You literally have to rely on each other for your life," Summa explained. Every morning, Local 127 members have a pre-job tail board, where they talk about the job — what trucks they'll need, logistics, and other materials.

Safety wasn't always a priority at the company. Summa credits the union with shifting the focus. When he first joined, the

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Peer to Peer

company would try to limit safety meetings to five minutes. “Then we had three consecutive years where we lost a journeyman lineman to a workplace fatality. We waged a safety standdown and took ownership.” Today, management gives the union time every morning and monthly to run the program. “We set the agenda, we set the tone, and participation from the union body is very high.”

The change at Eversource has been equally dramatic, according to Brian Hannon, a 369 Joint Safety and Training Committee member who also chairs the UWUA’s National Safety Committee’s electric subcommittee: “We started our program three years ago and have gone from being seen as guests at management’s meetings to being full partners.”

Local 369’s committee has tackled big ticket safety issues. When the committee reported concern about the absence of field defibrillators, Eversource agreed to purchase hundreds of AEDs, which are now in all company trucks and stations.

For Local 648 members, safety ownership came in 2019 with the election of Ed Kastreva as their new president. In a short period, there’s been a complete shift in member attitude. “Safety had always been management-dominated with no worker participation,” said committee chair Curt Lamoreaux.

Kastreva is proud of his team’s achievements: “Our members come back from field visits with feedback on how to do the job better, not just in terms of safety but also efficiency or productivity.”

In its short tenure, the committee has addressed issues big and small and resolved items that members had been complaining about for many years. After only two years, injury rates are down.

Local 335 in Missouri is another American Water UWUA local seeing results with its peer-to-peer program. The company is pleased, as well, and is considering expanding the program to other locations.

2

Statewide Consortium: Innovating for Safety

Aqua Ohio’s 10-member peer-to-peer safety committee was born of tragedy. In 2016, Local 428 member Alex Marcotte, a 28-year-old distribution technician, was crushed to death. Both the union and the company were devastated and called for change.

The challenge was to find the right structure. Aqua Ohio’s service area covers hundreds of square miles in the northeast quadrant of the state, and at that time, three UWUA locals represented members in different locations. It was a relatively new company with a corporate safety program still in its infancy, largely consisting of requiring employees to watch videos and answer some follow-up questions.

From the start, Local 425 President Cliff Deem had a strong relationship with members of Aqua Ohio’s upper management, including its president. In 2017, Deem was named a charter member of the UWUA’s National Safety Committee and arranged for UWUA National Safety Director Scotty MacNeill to broker a meeting between Aqua Ohio’s parent corporation and Local 1-2 and Consolidated Edison (ConEd) to observe the workings of a seasoned program. Local 1-2 safety representatives took Aqua America executives along on safety rides, brought them to committee meetings and introduced them to ConEd safety managers.

Back in Ohio, Locals 425, 427 and 428 were already working together on joint bargaining and agreed to add safety to their relationship. Later, when Aqua Ohio purchased a few American Water properties, Locals 397 and 434 came on board. Aqua Ohio’s Tiffin and Franklin divisions are represented by the International Union of Operating Engineers (IUOE) so the



The consortium of locals in the UWUA - Aqua Ohio Peer-to-Peer Safety Committee

committee extended an invitation to IUOE Local 18, which was readily accepted.

The program will soon celebrate its fifth anniversary. Deem credits the peer-to-peer committee with improving rapport with management. “There’s trust now. When we come to them with an issue, our word means something, and they take it seriously.” The proof is in the data; the company has recorded no serious injuries or illnesses and seen a significant drop in incidents.

3

Full Time Safety Reps

In some locals and state councils, the UWUA's peer-to-peer program has been elevated further. Companies employ full-time union safety representatives chosen by the local for their safety background, relationships with members and management, and demonstrated dedication to the union's safety ethos. The representatives report to both the union and the company and spend all day, every day in the field on safety. Companies commit to equip them with the resources they need to do their jobs properly and give them access to all levels of management for troubleshooting field issues.

It's important to understand that full-time safety representatives do not replace the work of the peer-to-peer committees; they supplement it. They work with the various divisional and departmental committees within their companies, adding another level of safety that can help to resolve issues and expedite resolution of bigger ticket issues.

Two examples are Local 1-2 and Consolidated Edison in New York and the Michigan State Utility Workers Council (MSUWC) and Consumers Energy.

Members of Local 1-2 established the full-time safety representative model in 2005, when both the union and company recognized that too many workers were getting hurt, and ConEd agreed to finance a demonstration project. Today, six senior safety inspectors cover both electric and gas in all six counties of ConEd's NYC-metro area service area.

Senior Safety Inspector Jack Mota brings members from various committees together monthly. "We figure out if what we're seeing in the field are one-offs or if they signal a bigger trend." When management joins later in the meeting, findings are shared and assignments made. With nearly 8,000 members, Local 1-2 is large enough to also have its own safety director, who Mota can tap when he needs an extra level of help.

The MSUWC and Consumers Energy started their program shortly after Local 1-2 had launched its own. In 2005, Consumers Energy reported a record high number of recordable injuries, numbers that alarmed both the union and the company. At that time Steve Van Slooten represented the MSUWC on the UWUA executive board. He shared what Local 1-2 was accomplishing with officers from the two dozen locals that comprise the MSUWC.

In 2006, a union-management Safety Culture Action Team was established, and in 2010 Consumers Energy agreed to hire two full-time union field safety consultants — one for gas and one for generation. Today, there are thirteen safety consultants covering gas, electric and generation, and all are also certified utility safety professionals (through the Utility Safety and Ops Leadership Network).

Every MSUWC local has peer-to-peer safety guidance teams for all the different areas and divisions. "They're in touch with us and we're in touch with them. They'll escalate higher level

safety issues to us," said Will Breton, a union field safety consultant who also serves on the UWUA's National Safety Committee. Breton and his team report to both Consumers and MSUWC's vice president of safety.

In 2017, Consumers Energy reported record low recordable injuries. Not content to sit on its laurels, the team asked, "are we lucky or are people hiding things and not reporting?" To find out, they established a 'good catch' program that enables workers to report near misses. "Without fear of reprisal, members opened up about what was happening in the field," Breton said, "and last year we collected data on close to 2,000 near misses."

Both the near miss and stop-the-job programs are completely union-run and owned. Field Safety Consultant Luke Roose says that members' trust is key: "Every morning, we review our data with management. We keep the names out of the conversation and can flag high risk cases for problem solving before they have a chance to escalate. These daily calls help deliver faster results for members and that helps build accountability."

Field Safety Consultant Dennis Hyek highlighted the benefits to customers, as well, "We're also there to protect the 1.9 million Consumers' customers in Michigan. Every accident we prevent has a ripple effect into the larger community."



One of the hundreds of AEDs Eversource purchased and installed in its trucks and stations as a result of the work of 398's Joint Safety and Training Committee.

TAKE THE FIRST STEP

If you're interested in owning your safety, take the first step by talking to your local president and contacting your region's safety representative. Reach out to Safety Director Scotty MacNeill and find out who your Safety Committee representative is at uwua.net/safety. They'll put you in touch with UWUA resources that can best help you find the right model for your needs.

Missouri Rallies to Aid Local 398's Black River Co-Op

On October 24, as five twisters touched down throughout the Midwest one took aim at Fredericktown, in southeast Missouri. In a matter of seconds, the Black River Electrical Cooperative's 25 service trucks were out of commission. UWUA Local 398 members working for Black River — linemen, engineers, warehousemen and office workers — quickly discovered they faced significant obstacles in restoring outages after this particular weather disaster.

The level EF-3 tornado had lifted the metal roof off the utility shed housing the co-op's fleet and brought it crashing down on the trucks housed within. "The only trucks that were spared were those that were out on the job," said Local 398 President Jeremy Rehkop. When it was all over, the garage and warehouse were demolished. The storm broke windows in the dispatch center and main office and downed or damaged 100 poles in the co-op's service area.



Local 398 lineman Charlie Bittle (left) with a Black River line supervisor survey the damage.



Local 398 member Doug Massey, a meter tester/warehouseman, searches the rubble for usable materials at the tornado-damaged co-op warehouse.

Workers quickly removed debris that had piled on top of the trucks but found all were too damaged to be used. With its trucks disabled and UWUA linemen and other members unable to access tools stored in the damaged buildings, help poured in from other member utilities of the Association of Missouri Electric Cooperatives' Mutual Assistance Program, some of whose members are represented by the UWUA. Two days later, dispatch was back in operation and Local 398 members were starting to restore service to the 6,000 customers who had lost power. For Rehkop, the most important thing is that "we're all still here and came through it without any major injuries."

Local 600 Women's Committee's Good Deed Snowballs to Make a Greater Impact



Local 600 officers, including President Steve Kowolonek and Vice President Mike Hoffman, and Women's Caucus members Holly McLaughlin, Stephanie Bailer, and DL Wallace, along with family members and other volunteers helping out at a ReSet Ministries sober house back in October.



Some of the many provisions collected for residents of the sober houses.

When members of UWUA Local 600's women's caucus chose ReSet Ministries Women's Sober House in Newport, Kentucky, as their first philanthropic project, they never imagined their example would inspire so many others to join their efforts. Members' initial volunteer outreach in October 2021 soon led to a \$500 donation from the Local 600 general board.

Committee member Holly McLaughlin shared: "Another local group, Sisters Give-Back, and the Wallace-Barnes Family wanted to help when they heard about what we were doing." Together, the groups started collecting and assembling baskets of provisions for women residing in ReSet Ministries sponsored sober houses. While shopping for the project, a Local 600 women's committee member had a chance meeting with a Proctor & Gamble representative who on the spot donated whatever company products she had in her car and promised to deliver a pallet of toothpaste after the start of the new year. A random stranger overheard the conversation and gave a cash donation.

The Local 600 Women's Committee credits the UWUA National Women's Caucus with providing the leadership to make it happen, along with an overwhelming level of support from Local 600's President Steve Kowolonek and the local's entire executive board. Caucus member Donna Wallace summed up the experience: "We are a small committee, just getting started, but are excited to see the great things that can happen when like-minded people put their hands and hearts together for a common goal."

Photo: Jim McCarty, Rural Missouri magazine

New Year Brings Fresh Start for Local 580 Members

UWUA members working for Indiana Borough, a municipality about two hours east of Pittsburgh, started 2022 off with a great start. At its January 3 meeting, the borough council appointed a new borough manager, and within days had inked a new contract with its parking, street crew, wastewater and office workers — all members of UWUA Local 580 — who had been working without a contract for two years.

“We’re very happy, and very relieved, to have a new contract,” said Local 580 President Denise Brudnock. “It was a long, hard struggle, but we stayed united and achieved our priorities in the end.” The new agreement keeps health care costs in check, with no increase in out-of-pocket costs over the five-year

term. Wage increases are substantial: a bonus to cover retroactive pay, 3.5% increase for 2022, 4.5% for 2023, and 2024’s increase will be somewhere between 3% and 4.5%, depending on CPI.



Local 580 members in June 2021, picketing for a fair contract outside of the Indiana Borough headquarters.

An important new contract benchmark sets a floor of 3% for annual wage increases — even if CPI falls below that level (and likewise, a cap of 4.5%).

Since the expiration of the prior agreement at year-end 2019, members had been frustrated by lack of progress at the bargaining table. The former borough manager and its outside counsel had caused repeated delays and didn’t

appear ready to find a resolution, according to Brudnock. “There was a real lack of communication. We had trouble getting them to commit to bargaining dates, and in the rare instances when

we would come together there was a lot of one-sided pushing paper across the table, with none of the usual back and forth that leads to progress.” Not only that, about a year ago, the borough attempted to impose a change in health benefits. Local 580 immediately

filed an unfair labor practice, which was ruled in the union’s favor.

After a single bargaining session with the borough’s new management team, workers walked away with a tentative agreement and were soon celebrating their ratification vote. This fight demonstrated Local 580 members’ solidarity paid off and resulted in a solid contract moving forward.

Small Unit Sets High Bar for First Contract Negotiation in NJ

Local 601 members recently wrapped up their first contract negotiations with the Bordentown Sewerage Authority. The four-year agreement sets a strong foundation for the unit of nine members who run the town’s wastewater plant and also perform public works maintenance.

The vote for UWUA representation back in June 2021 was spurred by a desire for a greater voice at work and in response to managers paying themselves bonuses while leaving workers behind. For these individuals, benefits are determined by the state of New Jersey, so bargaining focused on wages, differentials, and non-economic areas.

Quentin Nixon, who was elected by his peers to the four-person negotiating committee, said members are thrilled

and voted unanimously to accept the agreement: “We won a fantastic first contract! The new agreement includes annual three percent wage increases and longevity bonuses, improved new hire rates, provides additional paid holidays, more money for work boots, and establishes many work rule improvements.”

Importantly, Bordentown agreed to fully pay for all training needed to acquire up to eight levels of certification, and once licenses are earned, members are eligible for additional pay bumps of \$0.60/hour for each of the first six licenses and \$0.85/hour for the final two.

“Under this agreement, a member who earns all licenses will earn \$5.30 more per hour than they did before joining the UWUA — and that’s on top of the across-the-board percentage increases



Bordentown members give a thumbs up to their first contract as UWUA members.

and longevity bonuses we won,” said Local 601 President Noel Christmas. “With Bordentown now paying the full freight of the training, it costs members nothing but their time to earn the licenses and then the higher pay.”

In terms of non-economic gains, Nixon said members are most pleased that their new agreement establishes a safety team that gives union members an equal voice with management. “We now have a formal structure that creates much-needed accountability on safety issues.”

2022 Energy Outlook

By Jim Harrison, UWUA Director of Renewable Energies

Numerous factors are driving utilities to focus on lowering their carbon output and examine the ways they generate and deliver power. At the same time, they're re-examining their business models in the wake of significant competition from non-utility power producers, particularly of renewables. A 2021 report by Hitachi found 88% of all utility-scale wind and solar generation capacity in the U. S. is owned by independent power producers. This is significant for UWUA members working in power generation because the overwhelming majority work for either an investor-owned or publicly run utility.

One of the biggest drivers of change is compliance with targets aimed at cutting greenhouse gas emissions in half by

2030 and reaching carbon neutrality in 2050. This will require large scale shifts in power generation, and significantly reducing emissions in the transportation sector, buildings, and industrial processes now running on fossil fuels. The Electric Power Research Institute (EPRI) projects we will need to build more than 500 GW of new capacity in the coming decade to meet both demand growth and replace generation currently provided by fossil fuels.

The UWUA is working to understand what these changes mean for our members. The types of work we do now, and who we work for, have the potential to look much different in the not-too-distant future. Presented below are key areas to watch in 2022.

Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act

The 2021 Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act allocates \$73 billion for grid resiliency. These funds will be distributed to investor-owned, as well as county, co-operative, and municipal utilities, through the DOE's Energy and Power project. Key provisions include:

- \$2.5 billion over five years for public-private partnerships to replace or enhance transmission lines — funding for alleviating transmission constraints, line replacement, increasing capacity, and connecting microgrids to existing transmission.
- A DOE grant program to support investments to protect the grid from the impact of extreme weather, wildfires, and natural disasters. Congress amended a 2007 law to allow smart grid investments that quickly rebalance the grid during disruptive events and facilitate aggregation and integration of distributed energy resources such as energy storage and other grid hardening investments to protect the distribution grid against extreme weather events. The 2021 Act adds to this by allowing state regulators to develop rate mechanisms that allow utilities to recover costs of promoting demand response practices.
- Funding for pumped storage hydropower projects, along with wind and solar generation integration, for long-duration storage.
- \$7.5 billion for nuclear generation infrastructure to include micro reactors, small modular reactors, and a process to reduce inefficiencies for allocation of credits to build with advance certification.

- \$7.5 billion for construction of electric vehicle (EV) charging stations and additional funds for states to accelerate the use of EVs for state-owned fleets, taxis, ridesharing and school buses (watch for more on this — and hydrogen — in the April-May-June issue of *The Utility Worker*).
- \$7.5 billion for hydrogen specific programs and expansion of the DOE's research, development, and commercialization of hydrogen production processes, delivery, and end-use technologies.

Department of Energy

Last June, the DOE launched its Earth Shot Initiative, aiming to bring significant federal resources together for hydrogen and fuel cell production and to direct resources for developing long-duration grid scale storage systems. The initiative includes manufacturing hydrogen from renewable energy and advanced technologies and is also geared toward creating pathways for using natural gas as a feedstock for manufacturing hydrogen for use in industrial, transportation and power generation processes. Hydrogen is the most common element on earth, but it is mostly attached to other atoms and is therefore rare by itself. The excitement over manufacturing hydrogen is that it can be used widely in several hard to decarbonize sectors of the economy.

This year, all eyes will be watching Long Ridge Energy's recently completed 485 MW power generation center in Ohio. The plant is the first full-scale U.S. power plant built to use hydrogen as part of its fuel mix. Its initial generation will be fueled by natural gas but by April it expects to incorporate 5% hydrogen, phasing in more over time; the goal is to be completely hydrogen-fueled by 2030.

Photos above: Beyond Zero Emissions; 100% Renewable; Hapety Aam; iStock.com/Blue Planet Studio.

In January, the DOE unveiled its Building a Better Grid Initiative which provides funding for demonstration projects that help coordinate electrical transmission planning and construction, increase energy storage access to the grid, and build electrical distribution systems that enhance grid resiliency. In addition, this initiative enables the DOE to encourage collaboration on a cost share basis between states and publicly regulated utilities for these potential investments.

Federal Energy Regulatory Commission

Industry watchers are expecting significant activity from FERC this year, especially in the areas of electrical transmission planning, deployment, and cost allocations. FERC has a significant role in channeling funds earmarked in the Infrastructure Bill for transmission investment.

FERC will be focused on reducing the backlog of projects approved — but still waiting to connect to the grid — as well as policies that result in more coordinated planning across states and regional transmission areas. FERC has expressed concern that previous orders that it issued have not resulted in envisioned transmission investments. Utilities will be concerned about right of first refusal for construction projects as well as cost allocations that may not benefit customers in their service territory. For UWUA members who do transmission work, a utility's right of first refusal can mean the difference between UWUA members getting work or the work going to third party developers.

Also expect FERC to focus on policies allowing energy storage projects in the wholesale power markets and to address an update of criteria for reviewing proposed natural gas infrastructure projects, which haven't significantly changed since 1990. Possible changes could affect how FERC decides if infrastructure is needed and how it measures a project's climate impact.

Coal, Natural Gas, Wind, and Solar Generation and Utility-scale Battery Storage

Last year's higher natural gas prices made coal generation more competitive, temporarily delaying some planned coal plant retirements. The U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA) expects retirements to resume, and that 12.6 GW will go offline in 2022. If realized, this will outpace the 11 GW in average annual retirements seen in the 2015-2020 period. Natural gas is expected to replace the lion's share of retired coal generation capacity, with wind and solar filling the rest of the void. New natural gas power plants are slated to go online this year in Connecticut, Florida, Massachusetts, Michigan, and Ohio.

Total current U.S. utility-scale electric generation capacity is approximately 1,200 million megawatts, with nuclear, hydro, and wind together providing just over a quarter. Industry analysts project that renewables will account for an additional 71 GW in 2022. This means that in just a single year, renewables will provide an additional 6% of the generation pie — an impressive growth rate.

States moving toward lower emission goals will continue to invest in renewable energy, energy storage, distributed energy resources and EV infrastructure:

- At the end of 2021, 31 states and the District of Columbia had renewable portfolio and/or clean energy standards.
- In the eastern U.S., utility-scale solar will be the primary generation addition this year; wind will dominate in the Midwest; and western states will place their largest investments in solar and battery storage.
- Nearly all east coast states are in a race to be seen as the preeminent leader in offshore wind development, but no projects are scheduled to become operational in 2022. The Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) recently held a lease auction for the New York Bight, the largest leasing area for offshore wind to date. UWUA has provided comments to BOEM on several leases requesting that labor standards to be attached to lease awards.
- Battery storage projects will see a robust build out in 2022. Last year, 4.7 GW of utility-scale storage came online, mostly in California and Arizona. Standard & Poors projects 8 GW of battery storage will be added nationally this year.
- A key driver of battery storage growth is the shift from fossil fuel to renewable generation. Several states with utility-scale solar are looking to add battery facilities (up to 5 MW) to connect to the distribution system. The UWUA's Power for America Training Trust has a DOL-certified training program for work with battery storage and is available for locals in need of member training.

Natural Gas and Electrification

Natural gas fueled roughly a third of U.S. electricity generation last year — a rate the EIA expects will hold into the foreseeable future. At the same time, EIA expects home usage of natural gas to fall over time (today almost half of all homes use natural gas for heating and cooking) and commercial use to flatten or slightly decline over the next decade. Much of the continued reliance on natural gas has to do with its low relative cost; the DOE estimates that the cost of electricity nationally to be 3.6 times higher than that of natural gas.

Look for more cities and states to weigh ordinances or new building codes pushing for all electric building stock. Denver recently passed an ordinance for building electrification and renewable energy deployment for commercial and multifamily housing. New York City is phasing out gas for buildings 7 stories and under, and Philadelphia has called for a study looking at business diversification options for its municipal gas utility (see page 14). In reaction, we may see other states consider “fuel choice” or “ban-the-ban” bills that allow natural gas to remain a customer choice.

If your local needs assistance on providing input at the city or state level ensuring that natural gas continues to be part of the energy mix, contact the National union, which has assisted several locals on this issue.

Good-paying PGW jobs would be irreplaceable if Philly moves away from natural gas | Opinion

On January 15, The Philadelphia Inquirer published this opinion piece by Local 686 President Keith Holmes. Philadelphia is not the first city to undertake such an effort to eliminate natural gas or prevent new natural gas hookups. In 2021, efforts were made by cities and states around the country to attempt to ban new gas construction and limit the use of gas appliances. Although, to date, these efforts have not yet met with widespread success, these are moves that will almost certainly continue for the foreseeable future and will likely gain more traction as time goes on.

The more than one thousand workers of Philadelphia Gas Works have been supplying natural gas to residents of Philadelphia for 185 years. PGW has long been a vehicle to provide good-paying, stable jobs to residents of the city's poorest neighborhoods. Philadelphians know PGW workers and rely on us to provide an essential service: heating Philadelphia's homes. Most members of UWUA Local 686 have made this our only career, staying until retirement while honing the unique skill of maintaining the city's heating infrastructure and providing natural gas to consumers.

Recently, the City of Philadelphia published a study looking at diversification options for PGW — ways for the company to generate revenue that are not natural gas. While the union recognizes the dangers from climate change and is an advocate of steps to reduce emissions while protecting PGW's workforce and Philadelphia's low-income residents, we believe that most of the alternatives set forth in the study ignore key priorities that city officials identified in its outreach to members of the community and stakeholders. This mainly includes "safeguarding low-income households" and "retaining PGW's workforce and creating new opportunities for jobs and economic growth." The current diversification proposals are in direct contrast to these stated goals and both the workers and the poor have been left out of the equation.

If the city were to eliminate natural gas as a source of energy and heat, all of these good jobs would be lost and could not be replaced with a viable alternative. For the 1,150 unionized employees of PGW, that would mean losing the economic stability that these jobs have provided — and critical benefits such as health care.

Working on live gas, repairing broken mains and dangerous leaks, and safely restoring service require a unique skill set that cannot be duplicated anywhere else. Altering the type of power supplied is not like changing a product on an assembly line. Our skills are unlike those in any other kind of utility industry, and with the proposed changes, our workforce will be abandoned, just as will an entire network of underground gas mains. Local 686 members enjoy a base wage rate for gas utility workers based on industry standards, along with a pension and strong family health care. These benefits exceed those of most public-sector workers and will likely not be duplicated by the few replacement jobs that could be created.

The study recommends looking into electrification or geothermal heating as alternatives to natural gas. Following these recommendations would single-handedly guarantee that Philadelphia's poorest residents cannot keep warm in winter or place hot meals on their tables. Customers would be required to pay for the

replacement of natural gas heating equipment with expensive fuel heat pumps and electrical appliances along with the necessary upgrading of wiring and higher-capacity circuit breakers, and then face the higher average monthly cost of electric energy. These strategies would result in an unjust transition. Good union jobs would be lost, and an even greater financial burden would be placed on Philadelphia's poorest residents.

The only strategy discussed in the diversification study that appears to meet all the professed goals for the future of PGW — reducing harmful emissions, protecting the workforce, and protecting the poor — is the use of Renewable Natural Gas sources, such as injecting biogas, hydrogen, or synthetic natural gas into the PGW gas system. These Renewable Natural Gas sources would reduce the impact of greenhouse gas emissions while maintaining the existing infrastructure. While we cannot endorse it at this time, this strategy is worthy of further consideration to determine whether it is a viable alternative to natural gas.

The union intends to remain a partner with the city and PGW in conversations about the future of the utility, and whether a just transition can occur, so long as the goal to "maintain a financially sound utility that continues to maintain safety and reliability and sustain good union jobs in Philadelphia" is met.

Unless and until the city can craft a strategy where thousands of workers are not suddenly unemployed and without health care, one of the most critical goals that the study identified will not have been met and PGW's reputation as a partner of organized labor will be tarnished.



Photo: iStock.com/FotoCuisine

Utility Workers: Our Unity Is Our Strength



John Duffy
National Vice President

There is no worker more vital and connected to our everyday lives than the utility worker. And there is no union that has, since its inception over 75 years ago, been more able to enhance the livelihoods of these unsung heroes known as utility workers than the UWUA.

On March 1, I'll be retiring from my position as your National vice president. It's been an honor and privilege to be a member of this great union for the past 47 years, and a member in good standing of New York Local 1-2. Thank you for allowing me to serve you!

In this, my final column as a National officer, I'd like to leave you with a few lessons I've learned in my five decades of trade unionism:

- The National union's mission is to support and defend all our locals — from the smallest to largest. We know employers would love to roll over our smaller locals, squeezing out concessions that other employers would then try to use against our larger locals. That's why we all look out for each other. Unity is what binds members within a local to each other, and it is unity that extends beyond the local to build our National union and our labor movement.
- Utilities, like most employers, try to circumvent the union whenever possible through their human resources (HR) departments. HR strives to create the impression that they are there to help our members, but don't be fooled: HR is *always* there to represent the interests of the employer. So if the company encourages you to go to HR with your concerns, go with your eyes open. Remember, when it comes time to adjudicate grievances and bargain contracts, it's HR that is sitting across the table representing the company, and they are not on our side.
- The hypocrisy of many employers we deal with is astonishing. While they often appear eager to discipline our members for violations of company policy, that same management team won't think twice about violating the terms of the collective bargaining agreement. If our members repeatedly violate and ignore company policy, they would eventually be fired. Meanwhile, we see some managers make a career out of violating the contract.
- As the face of the company at the bargaining table, HR is there to do the dirty work of the top executives, and it's pretty much the norm that the company comes to the table with as much deceit and trickery as a three-card monte dealer. When a tentative agreement is reached, and it's time to draft what has been agreed to, we've seen companies attempt to slip in changes to key wording, thinking we

wouldn't notice. In some cases, they've even tried to add back proposals that had been either rejected by the union and/or withdrawn by the company earlier in negotiations.

- Stay vigilant because such deceit and trickery doesn't end with the conclusion of negotiations. For example, once members ratify a contract, and it comes time for the company to roll out and administer improvements in medical benefits, our members will receive a letter from the company stating, "As a result of the new collective bargaining agreement we are pleased to announce..." What they don't say is that during bargaining they fought tooth and nail against the improvement that they are now "pleased" to announce, so take the hype for what it is.
- Producing good collective bargaining agreements is at the core of what we do as a labor union. And while the skill and tenacity of our union negotiators play a big role in achieving successful contracts, equally critical are the solidarity and support of the rank-and-file membership. It is your continued unity and support over the years that has made the UWUA the strong and effective union that it is today.

In closing, it's hard to put into words the pride I have as a union member. Recently two members sent these comments to the UWUA website, which I think say it all:

40 years as a Utility Worker. Before that 3 years UAW, 3 years Food & Commercial Workers, 2 years Textile Workers Union, 5 years AFSCME. My mother and father were Union, both grandfathers were Union, my great grandfather was Union; I guess I can say I'm from a Union family! To this day I do not understand why, when given the opportunity, people decline to join a Union.

I am a retired Union employee from United Water NJ, now Suez. An article in today's local paper gave current minimum wage in every state. I took out my old Union card and studied it for a while. I wept. As a Union employee, I made more an hour in 1986. Thank you, UWUA.

God bless you all, your families, and God bless the Utility Workers Union of America and all its local unions.

In Solidarity,
John Duffy

What do you think the recent high-profile votes to unionize and a series of strikes mean for the future of the labor movement in our country?



Ken Bickle

South Central Labor Council Delegate, Local 150

“Corporate America has been very successful in attacking the social fabric of our country by suppressing opportunities for the future using off-shoring, out-sourcing, and other effective union busting tactics. They are posting record profits off of our labor.

Now, we’re swinging back to an era where workers are seeing through the lies of trying to go it alone without representation and a voice of unity in the workplace. The younger generations are seeing the value of standing up together and using solidarity to win contract negotiations and the power of labor strikes. It’s organized labor’s turn in history once again to fight for what is ours.”



Jorge Villagomez

Steward, Local 18007

“The working class is fed up: fed up with subpar wages and benefits while CEOs get rewarded for the labor the working class provides; fed up with the cost of living going up and wages staying the same. I believe we must show our support to the fellow workers that are trying to unionize. There is strength in numbers and together we can influence and keep this movement going. The more unions, the better and stronger the working class will get.”



Jaques Berie

Local 428

“Workers are fed up; they want better wages, workplace safety and the protections that come from being in a union. Without a union contract you can’t have any disagreements with the company, you have no protections. Workers are seeing the value of a union. Even if the big unionization efforts, like at Amazon, don’t succeed, they get the wheels turning for workers at other companies who want protections and higher pay.”

AFL-CIO Strike Map



Workers who are on strike (red) or who have issued a strike authorization (purple) as of February 10, 2022.



Daniel Bonilla

Steward, Local 18007

“I believe that this gives us solidarity and hope for the future of the unions. It symbolizes and embodies oneness which are foundational traits that unions can build off of. I see the Starbucks employees in Buffalo who have moved to unionize along with Amazon employees which is amazing news. John Deere and Kelloggs had to strike in order to wake up their companies. We can’t forget that employers will pull out all the stops and undermine employees trying to unionize. Support for the labor movement itself is steadily growing with 68 percent of Americans supporting labor unions according to a poll from Gallup. When I read and see this type of awareness happening it gives me great hope not only as a union member but as a steward. I believe we have a bright future ahead of us.”



Jason King

Delegate, Local 600 General Board

“I believe that more workers are realizing that they have leverage to ask for better wages, better healthcare and overall better quality of work-life balance because of the skills they bring to the table and the lack of a qualified workforce to do the job. The pandemic has started to crumble the status quo between labor and employers. Unionized employees have more confidence to go on strike to fight for better pay, working conditions, etc. If they’re not yet in a union, they can form one and collectively sit at the bargaining table to work out what is good for both parties.”

Key Filing Compliance Requirements



Michael Coleman
Secretary-Treasurer

This article is a reminder that it is that time of year to review our year-end financial records and execute our compliance requirements. We have seen a large number of retirements in our ranks and many younger members are getting involved in their local leadership. This new energy is encouraging and exciting and will require education and mentoring. Fiscal responsibility is vital; therefore, in addition to our scheduled in-person regional conferences for 2022 we are actively scheduling quarterly fiscal training sessions for financial officers that will be conducted via video conference or in-person when possible.

The UWUA maintains our commitment to assisting and reinforcing the importance of regulatory compliance and the protection of our Union's funds and assets. **Please note that the COVID pandemic does not change any of our regulatory requirements.**

The UWUA continues to work with the 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) Maintaining the 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 the 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 of less than \$200K and total assets at the end of the tax year of 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 ½ months after year end). Organizations can apply for an extension which will extend the time to **November 15th** (10 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 it 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.**





Stand Up for Democracy!

The late John Lewis once said, "My dear friends: Your vote is precious, almost sacred. It is the most powerful nonviolent tool we have to create a more perfect union." Last year, we saw a number of proposed and newly enacted voter suppression laws. In recent years, over 400 anti-voter bills have been introduced in 48 states. With this unprecedented attack on democracy, we must educate our members.

Today, legislatures in 19 of the 50 states have made it categorically more difficult to vote by closing polling stations, making absentee voting more difficult, and gerrymandering districts to silence certain voters. For example, new laws passed last year in Georgia, Iowa, Kansas and Texas impose criminal penalties on election officials, according to the Brennan Center. These new restrictions intimidate individuals from assisting voters, including handing out water to voters in line.

Historically, union leaders have stood side-by-side with civil rights leaders, as a central tenet of unionism is that all of our members matter, regardless of their background. In the past we have participated in campaign walks, door knocking, and cold calling for candidates who support our interests. However, in 2022, it is evident that not all candidates stand on the side of democracy,

as the Senate has repeatedly voted against proposed efforts to expand voting rights. The 2022 midterm elections have now become perhaps the most important elections in recent history.

It can be easy to brush off the issue because many of our locals are in states where voting hasn't been restricted. It may not affect members directly, but that doesn't mean we should simply stand idle. When we step back and look at the bigger picture though, we can see what it means for our ability to grow, expand and provide others with the same great benefits and quality of life that we've been able to enjoy.

Recent studies have shown unions currently have a 68% favorability amongst Americans, but only account for 9% of the workforce. Of the 19 states that have made it more difficult for Americans to have a voice, 16 are right-to-work states, where unions have struggled to expand. If we ever hope to reverse the trend and increase union density once again, we will need our future brothers and sisters to have a voice, and make it heard.

As we prepare to enter midterm election season, the Young Workers' Initiative Committee aims to make sure that our members understand what is at stake and why we must not lose sight of what is truly important.

BROTHERHOOD OUTDOORS OPEN SEASON IN 2022



NEW STORIES. NEW PLATFORM. SAME GREAT CONTENT.
WATCH ON  **YouTube** ALL YEAR LONG

NO CABLE? NO PROBLEM.

Brotherhood Outdoors kicked off its 14th season of showcasing everyday union sportsmen and sportswomen on extraordinary adventures - **exclusively on YouTube.**

Now you can watch anywhere, anytime.



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WOMEN'S CAUCUS

Valerie King, *Co-Chair, Women's Caucus*

Women's Caucus Builds Strength, Solidarity Through Coalition of Labor Union Women Partnership

Alliances and relationships matter; building a community of women leaders requires connection, mentorship and finding commonality as we advocate for causes that impact women. As a part of the National Women's Caucus' 2022 priorities, we acknowledge the important work of the Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW), which is one of the AFL-CIO's constituency groups, whose primary purpose is to unify all union women who face shared concerns in a strong organization.

In an effort to build our power and shift the dynamic from a transactional to a more transformational union that creates change and develops leaders, the Women's Caucus is working more closely with CLUW. Our affiliation with CLUW allows UWUA members to join a host of other women from across the labor movement including the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), Communications Workers of America (CWA), United Autoworkers (UAW), and more to build our pipeline of women leaders. We are working to develop a collaborative effort that will further our commitment to women. These partnerships will provide another path toward leadership/officer training while increasing our members' ability to connect with other women mentors and support the work of the labor movement through networking and forging a stronger union. Alignment of purpose, goal setting, and consistently re-evaluating our blueprint to sus-



tain the labor movement, building back stronger with women at the helm is essential. The road towards mobilizing our power has been planted.

All current National Women's Caucus members received a CLUW membership as part of their appointed position. I'm excited to share this membership opportunity which is now being offered to any woman who is appointed to our Safety, Human Rights, Veterans, and Young Workers Committees. Moreover, this membership benefit is also being extended to any woman who is actively involved in her local women's committee. Membership will be renewed yearly for any active member on the national and local level. This partnership with CLUW grants our members access to a wide range of network and educational programming that's relevant and value-added to the work we all do. Participation in organizations like CLUW are a powerful way to transform your relationship with your union family from transactional to transformational. I encourage you to explore these opportunities further by participating in both the National Women's Caucus and your local's respective organization.

For more information on how to sign up, contact your local committee chairs or Valerie King at vkking@uwua.net or Ursula Grant at ursula.grant@uwua1-2.org. CLUW's membership application is available online at www.CLUW.org; however all applications must be submitted through UWUA's National Women's Caucus leadership.



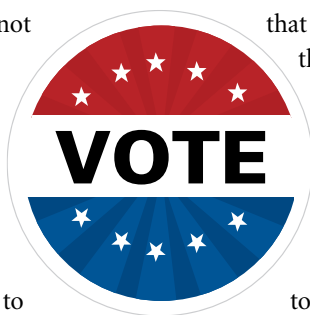
HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE

Nate Waters, *Chair, Human Rights Committee*

Channel Your Passion in Defense of Voting Rights

The annual celebrations of Dr. King's birthday and Black History Month are opportunities for reflection on the struggles our nation has endured to achieve not only civil rights but labor rights. There is a strong, proud shared history of partnership between the union movement and the civil rights movement. We have worked together to push our nation forward for the benefit of all.

Yet the current environment in our country reminds us daily that our work is not yet nearly done. Black youths are still disproportionately more likely to be incarcerated or shot by law enforcement. In most cases, there are still major obstacles to gain union recognition in the workplace. Most disturbing of all is the movement to reverse hard won gains in voting rights.



The Voting Rights Act of 1965 removed barriers to Black enfranchisement, banning poll taxes, literacy tests, and other measures that effectively prevented blacks from voting. It, along with the Civil Rights Act of 1964, was fought for and defended by people from every culture, every nationality, and every creed. Who could have ever imaged that a half century later, this bedrock of the modern era would be under attack?

Attacks on voting rights gained traction in part because of the breakdown in civil discourse and the desire to win at all costs. It saddens me to think we have lost the desire to listen respectfully to those with dissenting views and work across the aisle to reach compromise. I fear that something very precious has been lost, and this loss could not come at a worse moment.



Utility Workers Military Assistance Program Adds SoCal Gas as Employer-Partner in California

On January 18th, the Utility Workers Military Assistance Program (UMAP) in partnership with Utility Workers Union of America (UWUA) Local 132 and Southern

California Gas launched a new program that supports lowering veteran homelessness rates through training and employment opportunities. This agreement was years in the making. The California program will benefit 40 veterans in California over the next several months.

According to a Pew Research study, 1 in 6 veterans struggled during their transition to civilian life. Many veterans encounter challenges in moving forward without the mission-driven work the military offered, without a clear sense of purpose or supportive team environment. UMAP continues to develop new ways to help veterans better navigate that process.

I had the pleasure of emceeding the inaugural cohort kick-off at SoCal Gas' state-of-the-art training facility. I saw firsthand the impact this outpouring of support had on the first cohort of five veterans as they embarked on this journey.

Distinguished speakers at the opening ceremony included SoCal Gas' Erin Smith, P4A's Jon Harmon, Local 132's Tony Duran and William Attig, National Director, AFL-CIO Union Veterans Council.

Representatives from the military including Colonel David Grant with U.S. Army Soldier for Life and Colonel (Ret) Sam

Whitehurst with the Dixon Center for Military and Veterans Services braved inclement weather to be there for the inaugural class of veterans as they took this step forward into new careers.

The UMAP/SoCal Gas partnership creates a clear path forward for veterans who otherwise may have faced uncertainty about what to do next after leaving the military.

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SoCal Gas joins Consumers Energy, American Water and others as the latest employer to join UMAP. Nationally, this program has a record of nearly 100 percent job placement and benefits veterans who want to work in the gas, electric or renewable energy sectors. Each partnership program

is built to the employer's needs, recognizing the potential of the students to enter the workforce and become UWUA members.

Through close working relationships with the Department of Defense and Department of Veterans Affairs, UMAP is a certified SkillBridge Provider. This accreditation allows current service members to learn about and access on-the-job training before they fully separate from the military. This streamlines the transition and lowers the likelihood of lapses in employment and the detrimental health and economic impacts that may result.

For more information about training opportunities visit www.power4america.org.

As the chair of the UWUA's Human Rights Committee, I am asking all of those who believe in the right to vote, who believe in freedom and civil liberties and the ability to have a voice, to put aside whatever other differences we may have in defense of this most fundamental of our rights.

Imagine the possibilities if we all pledged to defend the Voting Rights Act with the same passion we show on other issues. Case in point: the fervor I've witnessed from people in my community, my union, and my employer over the COVID-19 vaccine mandate. I've seen people tirelessly research any and all things they could use in defense of their position: medical, religious or any other avenue they can pursue to win their argument. I've watched the issue get expedited straight up to the Supreme Court.

Imagine the gains we could achieve if these folks applied the same tenacity in support of voting rights? After all, you would think that voting rights, unlike the vaccine, is an issue we can all agree on. You would think. But sadly, there are those out there that benefit from the disenfranchisement of certain groups, and

they don't care if they destroy our democracy in the process.

People from all walks of life, especially people of color, have had ancestors, relatives, friends, and family beaten, murdered, hanged, shot, threatened and subject to all sorts of atrocities to keep them from voting. It's a tragedy that in our supposed enlightened era we see our right to vote slipping away because some politicians think they can't win an election without passing laws that keep certain people from the polls and everyday folks won't take a stand to stop them from chipping away voting rights that they think don't impact them personally.

Let's get one thing straight: an attack on one voter is an attack on all. Once the door opens to voter suppression of one group, it will open wider to suppress the votes of others.

As your Human Rights chair, I urge every UWUA member to reflect on this and commit to apply some of your passion to support and strengthen voting rights. It is a matter of human rights, and it is critical to the viability and future of our democracy.

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 (2019)

David May
Brenda McKinney
Lennell Powers
Joan Sandiford
Robert Torres
Glenn W. Volk

Local 1-2 (2020)

Kazimerz Butryn
Barry Green
Janet Gucciardo
Neil E. Hawkins
Lincoln Joseph
Orlando Martinez
Peter Modica
Robert Roundtree
Diana Siddons
Leonard Taylor
Michael Tingling

Local 1-2 (2021)

Adam B. Benitez
Anna Cerrato
Enrique De Armas
Rogelio Dixon
Rosendo Felipe
John Hernandez

Local 1-2 (2021) cont'd

Richard R. Iannelli
Linda Isom
Douglas McNally
Cluny Mesidor
Angel Navarro
June O'Keefe
Linda Parsons
Sandra Powell
Hector Ramos
Evelyn Rosado
Inshan Saladeen
Wilma Santiago
John Terzuoli
Modesto Tunon
Gina Wemberly

Local 1-2 (2022)

Steve Cassidy
Dante Cosini
Fred Fester
Steve Miller
Ken Reynolds
Migadalia Vargas
Elford T. Verette

Local 101

Barry A. McCarrell

Local 101 cont'd

Dean Schuette
John J. Sieblecki
Richard J. Sierminski

Local 123

Patrick Griffin
Randy Telfor

Local 127

Stephen C. Anderson
John F. Kessock
Glenn P. Lehar

Local 144

Holly G. White

Local 223

Michael Bergeron
Timothy Hyden
Thomas Sadler
Steven Schuldt
John Walter

Local 347

David Butler
James Wilhelm

Local 355

John Dunn

Local 358

Mark Ferkowicz

Local 365

Michael Pergola

Local 388

Curt Lorenz
Wayne VanHuis

Local 417

Steve Hill
Mike Gorowski

Local 423

Michael Cassidy
Robert Urban

Local 426

Joseph Ross

Local 430

Randy C. Lively
Dan Spencer
Jeanette Springer

Local 470-1

Hector Molina

Local 483

Eric Casillas
Robert Chapman
Monica Clemens
Pat Didia
Fernando Marquez
Richard Minor
Cindy Reed
Gabriel Rodriguez
Steve Romo
William Scates
Geoff Taylor

Local 534

Paula Michalski
Steve Chase

Local 582

Ron Cook

Local 588

Ray Kovalchick

Local 648

Frank Seris

Local 175 Nominations and Election of Officers

The nomination of officers will take place at the March 10, 2022, membership meeting. Nominations will be accepted for the following positions:

- President
- Secretary/Treasurer
- 3 Service Operations Representatives (Divisions 1, 2, 3)
- Vice-President
- Trustee
- 2 Gas Representatives (North, South)

Nominations may be made either in person at the March membership meeting or in writing. If the latter, nomination(s) must be signed by the member placing the nomination and sent to Local 175's Secretary/ Treasurer during the 30 days prior to the membership meeting. Elections will take place in April.

2022 Regional Conferences

Mark your calendar for your 2022 regional conference and plan to attend! The conferences will be packed with great sessions on organizing, national committee work, bargaining, and effective advocacy. Watch www.uwua.net for more information.

Region V	March 24 – 26	Sonesta Redondo, Redondo Beach, CA
Region II & III	June 2 – 4	Westin, Cleveland, OH
Region IV	August 11 – 13	Palmer House, Chicago, IL
Region I	September 14 – 16	Omni, Providence, RI

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To me, Black History means acknowledging the accomplishments of Black men and women who were not recognized. Black history means a lot because it will continue spreading the knowledge of the Black men and women who built this country, fought for freedom, fought for civil rights, and those making history currently by being the first to do something.

I am currently an administrative assistant for Con Edison in New York. For my local, UWUA Local 1-2, I'm a financial observer, shop steward, and chair of the women's committee, and for the National union, I'm a human rights advisor. Lastly, I own a clothing store in Jamaica, Queens, NY, We All In Clothing. I am currently in school to get my degree in business management, with a focus in labor studies. When time permits, I always love to feed

the homeless with food that I make at home and give it out or go to a soup kitchen to help feed the less fortunate.



Sharon Griffith, UWUA, Local 1-2



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