

# THE COMMUNICATOR



Volume 1 Number 2 | Printing Packaging & Production Workers Union of North America | Oct.-Nov.-Dec. 2023

Need ‘Decisive’  
Action to  
Protect Future  
Of TMRP



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Bankruptcy  
Filing Kills  
Santa Barbara  
News-Press



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After 1 year,  
Pittsburgh  
Strikers Still  
Seek Justice



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## A Confident PPPWU Looks Toward Future At First Convention

By Fred Bruning  
*The Communicator*

Las Vegas – Delegates to the first convention of the Printing Packaging & Production Workers Union of North America swiftly remade the organization in three work-filled days, transforming it from the former GCC/IBT into what leaders said was a nimble and resilient union that would safeguard its independence and confidently meet any challenge in the years ahead.

“This is a momentous occasion,” said PPPWU President Kurt Freeman. “The future is as bright as we can imagine.”

For more than a year, Freeman said, union officials had prevailed against an abrupt decision by Teamster leaders to scuttle a 2004 GCIU-IBT merger agreement and oust the GCC/IBT unless it surrendered autonomy.

The union showed courage and fortitude during a period of “heavy” struggles, Freeman said, and not only kept the organization intact as an autonomous body but prepared it for continued success as the most effective labor organization in the printing, packaging and production sectors.

Delegates applauded leaders who guided the union through a difficult period and showed resolve in dealing with a powerful rival. “They punched the bully in the nose,” said Jim Longerbone, president of Local 1-M, St. Paul.

At several points, the convention turned toward national issues bearing on workers’ rights, the labor movement, and union-related politics.

Leaders urged delegates to support labor-friendly candidates and emphasized the importance of

*continues on PAGE 8*

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### FREEMAN TO RETIRE; NOBLES NEXT UP

After four years as president of the GCC/IBT and its successor, the PPPWU, Kurt Freeman, left, will retire Oct. 31. In Las Vegas, PPPWU convention delegates elected Secretary-Treasurer/Vice President Steve Nobles to succeed Freeman.



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**THIS ISSUE OF THE COMMUNICATOR INCLUDES A NOTICE ON WORKER OBJECTIONS TO AGENCY FEES. PAGE 16.**



## THE COMMUNICATOR

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## A Change in Name But Not Values for 'Illustrious' Union

VIVA LAS VEGAS, MAYBE, BUT "VIVA THE PPPWU," FOR SURE.

The first convention of our new union was a winner.  
Delegates worked hard and did their due diligence.

The result was a smooth process establishing the Printing Packaging & Production Workers Union of North America as a resilient, autonomous, forward-looking labor organization resolved to decide its own future, resist outside pressure and continue securing the best contracts in our industry.



Scanning the rows of attendees from around the United States and Canada, I felt enormous pride and gratitude for our organization and its dedicated leaders and members.

In committee meetings, private discussions and comments from the convention floor, delegates showed themselves to be informed, resourceful and unbowed by recent events.

Yes, the GCC/IBT-Teamster dispute demanded time and energy but we came through – all of us – while demonstrating grit

and dignity at every turn.

With a history tracing back more than 100 years, our union is at an unprecedented moment. In a sense, we are starting over after nearly two decades of partnership with a large labor organization that has seen fit to sever that relationship.

So be it.

The mood in Las Vegas was one of undiminished optimism. There was little bitterness. We don't have time for resentment or petty politics. We are going in only one direction – forward. We will honor the power and wisdom inherited from our past but we will not look back.

It is a time for a renewed sense of mission – to assert again the importance of every individual whether in the rank-and-file or at the



leadership level. From one another, we draw energy and strength.

While we are charting a new course for the PPPWU, our principles remain the same.

We will fight for fair contracts, affordable health care, reliable pensions and workplace safety. We will demand that our members have a voice in the workplace. We will deal fairly with employers, but from a position of strength.

Those objectives will never change.

As I told delegates and guests in Las Vegas, the convention was a momentous occasion – a new chapter in the annals of an illustrious labor organization. We came together as custodians of a precious past and protectors of a common future. That was the message of our three days in Las Vegas. We left strong, united and ready to get to work.

But, for personal reasons, I departed with mixed feelings.

After a long union career in Philadelphia and Washington – the last four as president – I am going to retire.

It's time to spend more time with my wife, Terry, and our family – and get out the spackle and paint rollers at our home in New Jersey.

Stepping into the leadership role will be secretary-treasurer/vice president Steve Nobles, among the most able union professionals I have known. The PPPWU is in good hands.

It has been the honor of my life to serve this great labor organization. I will miss colleagues, our incredible staff, and friends around the nation. The challenges of the last year have only made me more confident of our union's promise and indomitable spirit. Keep the faith. Keep moving forward. Though at a distance, I'm with you every step of the way.

## OUTLOOK

HAROLD MEYERSON

## Public Investments on Fast Track Under Biden

IT IS UNIVERSALLY ACKNOWLEDGED THAT GOVERNMENT is slow — that if you want something done quickly, you turn to the private sector.

But sometimes government can be more swift and effective than critics imagine as implementation of the three signature pieces of Biden administration demonstrates.

The Infrastructure Act, the CHIPS Act, and the Inflation Reduction Act have spurred the economy well beyond anything the private sector could have accomplished by itself, and in less time than establishment economists thought possible.

America is building factories again: The spending on factory construction is up by 76 percent from last year. Business spending on all forms of infrastructure—not just factories but also transportation equipment, software, and the like—is up by 56 percent.

And bolstering all this investment is the consumer purchasing power that has resulted from Biden's initial stimulus legislation which ended the covid-19 recession much more quickly than any recession in American history.

The scope, speed, and success of Biden's public investments compare to the Depression-era effectiveness of Franklin D. Roosevelt.

Facing the prospect of widespread starvation in the winter of 1933-1934, FDR's public-works program managed to employ 3 million Americans—in a nation of 130 million — in just 60 days. Defense



THE AMERICAN PROSPECT

spending that began in 1940 built an army that ranked 39th in the world into one that was the world's largest by 1944. Production of planes, ships, and tanks exceeded the combined total of all other nations.

Learning from Roosevelt's successes – and the failure of President Barack Obama to sufficiently highlight his economic achievements — Biden is volubly touting infrastructure projects that stimulus programs engendered, many of which are underway.

Given the public's skepticism about the durability of economic revival – and Republicans insistence that no such revival exists – Biden & Company know they will have to keep making this case straight through November of next year.

That said, can we acknowledge that Bidenomics is not only successful but speedy? Yes, we can.

Harold Meyerson is editor at large at The American Prospect magazine. This piece first appeared on the American Prospect website, prospect.org, and is reprinted with permission of the author.

## Convention Message: Political Choices Affect Labor Rights

AT A GROUP PHOTO SHOOT IN LAS VEGAS, delegates to the inaugural convention of the Printing Packaging & Production Workers Union of North America gathered shoulder to shoulder on the dais and gave a shout of solidarity.



It was a moment of fellowship and resolve that captured the spirit of the new union – and the commitment of leaders who met unprecedented challenges over the past year.

For three days, officers and delegates took steps to reorganize after the Teamsters unexpectedly overturned the 2004 merger agreement that formed the GCC/IBT. By the time conventioners headed home, the PPPWU was poised for a bright future – a labor organization that had been tested by

events and prevailed (Pages 1, 8, 9, 10).

The dominant sentiment in Vegas was one of unity and determination. “We’ll be fine if we stick together,” delegates said time and again. “Organize, increase our numbers, get the word out.”

Steve Nobles, who will replace Kurt Freeman as president following Freeman’s retirement at the end of this month, left no doubt about the direction he and incoming secretary-treasurer Clark Ritchey would pursue.

“My vision is for the union to grow,” Nobles told delegates. “We have the people in this room to make it happen.”

George Tedeschi, who negotiated the GCC-Teamster merger with former IBT general president Jimmy Hoffa, and who now serves as PPPWU president emeritus, also offered words of encouragement.

Greeted by a standing ovation, Tedeschi said it was time to move forward. “Show faith in



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our union,” he urged. “Have pride.” And, Tedeschi said, pay attention to the national political scene.

Freeman, Nobles and Tedeschi hailed the record of President Joe Biden – “the most pro-labor president in my lifetime,” said Freeman – and urged members to remember Biden’s support next year when it appears the President and Trump will meet in a rematch. Only a couple of weeks later, the difference between Biden and Trump was underlined again when Biden endorsed a strike by the UAW against Big Three automakers and Trump denounced UAW officials for selling members “down the river.” (Page 16).

Political choices always have an impact on organized labor as illustrated by the nearly two-decade saga of the Santa Barbara News-Press in California (Page 5).

In her long assessment of the paper’s downfall, Dawn Hobbs, who was a veteran reporter at the paper, shows how an opinion by Republican-appointed federal court judges deprived newsroom organizers – Hobbs, included – of a fair settlement after they had been fired by owner Wendy McCaw.

Now the paper is out of business – McCaw filed for bankruptcy rather than pay another group of reporters a \$3.5 million judgment – and the city is deprived a vital news source. “It’s a terrible story,” Melinda Burns, another former News-Press reporter told Hobbs. “There is so much wreckage.”

Readers of *The Communicator* know Hobbs as a regular contributor and author of the Local Stops news roundup (Page 11). In this edition, Hobbs also wrote a piece on the one-year anniversary of a strike at the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette by the PPPWU and other union workers (Page 13).

Hobbs and her Santa Barbara colleagues lost their jobs to a vindictive owner in an effort to protect journalistic integrity at the News-Press. Tedeschi, who, as GCC/IBT international president was personally involved in the News-Press unionization effort, lamented the loss of the newspaper and hardship imposed on courageous editorial organizers. “An awful outcome,” he said.

■

### COMMENTARY JIM HIGHTOWER

## ‘No Labels’ Brand of Reform Is a Winner for Big Business

As folk-rock star John Mellencamp sings: “You’ve got to stand for something or you’re gonna’ fall for anything.” True. And here’s an equally true twist on that aphorism: “If you stand for everything, you won’t amount to anything.”

In a remarkable achievement, a newly formed political party calling itself, “No Labels,” has managed to fall into both traps – standing up for everything and nothing at all.

The fledgling entity is using every synonym in the book to assure everyone that it is a middle-of-the-road, bipartisan, centrist, both-sides party, offering hybrid liberal-conservative solutions that won’t offend anyone.

But wait – they’re looking toward a coal baron, West Virginia senator, Joe Manchin, and the multimillionaire son of a global plastics producer, Jon Huntsman, as possible standard bearers in the 2024 presidential election. Manchin, a Democrat, and Huntsman, a Republican, probably would unite voters of both parties – against them!

While they don’t stand for much, there is one huge, overriding issue

that the No Labels hucksters strongly agree on: Corporate money contaminating American politics.

These “reformers” are in favor of it! Indeed, secret fat cat donations are the No Labelers’ financial lifeline, having already hauled in hundreds of thousands of dollars from right-wing corporate interests. Such as? No-no, say the founders, we can’t tell you who’s buying the No Labels label,



for the funders don’t want the public to know their names or their special interests.

Of course, secret-funding of elections equals secret government – of, by, and for the funders. By standing against the people’s right to know, the group has put a flaming neon FRAUD label on their hokey “reform” party. Huntsman even admits it, saying financial disclosure would be the right thing to do, but “that’s not the way you play the game.”

“The game?” Just what we need – another gang of corporate politicians who think governing America is a game to be won by hook or crook.

Populist author, public speaker, and radio commentator Jim Hightower writes the *Hightower Lowdown*, a monthly newsletter chronicling the ongoing fight by America’s ordinary people against rule by plutocratic elites. Annual subscription rates for the *Hightower Lowdown*: \$10, digital; \$15, print. Information at [Hightowerlowdown.org](http://Hightowerlowdown.org)



# 'Decisive Action' Urged to Guarantee TMRP

The TMRP trustees and administrators have determined that a benefits cut is essential to the plan's future. In this piece, Maggie Peck, TMRP executive director, discusses major issues and urges members to take "decisive action" by voting for a reduction in monthly pension payments.

By Maggie Peck

Despite the TMRP's multi-year effort to increase participation in our plan and our modest success in achieving that goal, our active population has not kept pace with our retiree population creating an imbalance in the number of active members to non-active members.



Maggie Peck

Coupled with retired members living longer and an investment market that has continued to be volatile, unpredictable, and at times unforgiving, the plan has become underfunded to the point where, if decisive action to correct the funding situation is not taken now, the plan will not have sufficient assets to pay retirement benefits in the near future.

In response, trustees are proposing benefit reductions across the board with the goal of saving the plan and preserving the highest level of benefits for all of us.

If no benefit adjustments are made, the plan is projected to terminate in 2030 or earlier with all remaining contributions not already paid out returned.

Upon this termination, pension benefits will cease for any retiree who has already received the value of their contributions in the form of pension payments, and no further pension benefits will be paid in the future.

The 2024 proposed benefit changes are different from those in the past in an important way: They are projected to increase the plan's funding level to 100 percent (not 80 percent as has been the funding goal in the past) and eliminate the necessity to bring new members into the plan to sustain that funding level.

At a 100 percent funding level, the plan should be able to make all promised lifetime benefit payments without making further cuts provided the plan's assets earn the assumed rate of return.

Additionally, there have been quite a few inquiries regarding the financial assistance provided by the federal government agency known as the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation (PBGC). The special financial assistance paid to union pension plans is only available to underfunded multiemployer pension plans.

TMRP is not a multiemployer pension plan but rather an IRC Section 501(c)(18) plan. As such, the plan was not eligible to receive financial assistance from the federal government despite the trustees' efforts to get legislation passed to provide financial assistance to the TMRP.

The plan was established in 1950, long before the Employee Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA) of 1974, which guarantees benefit payments through the PBGC if a pension plan runs out of assets. Our plan is not an ERISA plan and consequently is not covered by PBGC insurance.

All members — active, terminated vested, disability pensioners, retirees, and spouses receiving benefits — will share in the cost of saving our plan. Since its inception, the plan has paid out several billion dollars in benefits.

Now, in challenging times, the trustees feel it's important that everyone pull together to protect the plan's long-term financial security by voting YES to the benefit adjustments to bring our benefits in line with our assets and investment return projections and significantly reduce the chance that there will need to be additional benefit cuts in the future.

The plan will then be able to continue to provide a lifetime benefit to you and your spouse to supplement and enhance other retirement income.

The proposed benefit changes, if approved by the membership, will be effective Jan. 1, 2024.

## Active Members

Reduced Past Accrual Rate: The accrual rate for active



## RETHINK RETIREMENT

members on contributions made through Dec. 31, 2023 will be reduced to 1.225 percent. This represents a 30 percent accrual rate reduction on contributions made through Dec. 31, 2023.

No Change to Future Accrual Rate: There is no proposed change to the accrual rate for contributions made on or after Jan. 1, 2024. The accrual rate will return to 1.75 percent.

Increased Adjustment for Early Retirement Benefits Effective for Normal Retirements, Spouse's Pensions and Disability Benefits on or after Jan. 1, 2024:

The adjustment for retirement and other benefit commencements before age 65 will increase beginning with benefits effective on or after Jan. 1, 2024. Currently, TMRP subsidizes the pension of anyone who retires (including on Disability or a Spouse's Pension) before age 65.

The proposed change will increase the early retirement adjustment so that the value of a pension (or other benefit) for those who retire before age 65 is equal to (on an actuarial basis) the value of a pension (or other benefit) for those who retire after attainment of age 65 (all else being equal).

The reason for this proposed change is that the plan no longer has sufficient assets to subsidize early retirement pensions.

## Retirees

Benefits for retired members will be reduced by 40 percent. This reduction is somewhat greater than the reduction for active members in order to encourage active members to continue contributing to the plan. Those contributions will help the plan pay lifetime pension benefits to all current and future retirees and spouses.

**Important Note:** Over 85 percent of our retired members have already recouped their entire investment in the plan (their contributions). For those retirees, although the proposal represents a benefit reduction, they will continue to receive a lifetime monthly pension benefit over and above

the amount they contributed to the plan for the rest of their and their surviving spouse's life (provided they elected to retire on a Joint and Survivor Option).

## Terminated Vested Members

Benefits for terminated vested members will be reduced by 50 percent. Therefore, the accrual rate applied to plan contributions to determine the monthly pension benefit is 0.875 percent (reduced from 1.75 percent). Terminated vested members will have a slightly larger benefit reduction because these members, who are no longer contributing to the plan, have not yet retired and can increase their retirement income through other means.

## Approving the Benefit Adjustments

Two votes are required to approve the proposed changes. Each participating local union must hold a vote of its active and retired members who participate in the TMRP at a regular or special meeting.

In order for a local union to approve the benefit adjustments, a majority of active and retired TMRP members present at the local union meeting must vote to approve the benefit adjustments.

Provided that local unions representing at least two-thirds of our membership vote in favor of the benefit adjustments, ballots for a subsequent referendum vote will be mailed to all active and retired TMRP members in October and will be due back to the plan office in November.

We are looking for support from all of our members. A YES vote means the first time in decades that the plan will be at a 100 percent funding level, which is critical to help to avoid any future benefit reductions.

If these benefit changes are not approved, the plan will have to terminate, and this will almost certainly result in members receiving less benefits than they would under this benefit change proposal.

The trustees and I are devoted to providing our members with a sustainable supplemental plan. Over the coming months, we will continue to educate members on the proposed changes and welcome any questions. We appreciate your support and look forward to a continued, long-lasting relationship with members.

*Maggie Peck, former Sycamore, Illinois, city administrator, has been serving as TMRP executive director since April, 2022. She earned a bachelor's degree in business management and leadership and a master's degree in organizational leadership at Judson University, Elgin, Illinois.*



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PHOTO BY JOHN DALPE

With widespread community support and a strong case advanced by union attorneys, fired News-Press reporters sought reinstatement and back pay in Washington, D.C. federal court but a panel of conservative jurors ruled for owner Wendy McCaw. Recently, McCaw filed for bankruptcy and closed the award-winning newspaper after 20 years of 'self-inflicted' turmoil.

# McCaw's Bankruptcy Bid Dooms News-Press

By Dawn Hobbs  
Special to *The Communicator*

The agonizingly long and self-inflicted demise of the award-winning Santa Barbara News-Press came to an end after nearly 20 years of turmoil when its embattled owner, Wendy McCaw, recently filed for bankruptcy.

McCaw's decision followed years of legal battles that began when she fired eight reporters who campaigned successfully in 2006 for GCC/IBT representation.

The bankruptcy filing relates to a court order demanding McCaw pay nearly \$3.5 million to a second group of editorial employees whose pay increases and bonuses were suspended when the union attempted to gain a first contract.

Word of the bankruptcy filing spread quickly – and resulted in media coverage nationwide, ranging from a long retrospective in the Los Angeles Times to a wide-ranging report in the Washington Post examining “tumult” at the News-Press under McCaw's ownership.

“In my 40 years as a labor organizer, I've never seen anything like this,” said former conference representative Marty Keegan, who led a successful 2006 organizing drive by the GCC/IBT, now the PPPWU.

A group of News-Press reporters sought union representation in 2006 when McCaw interfered with coverage of her celebrity and wealthy friends. Organizers and the reporters made clear the fight wasn't about traditional wage and benefits issues but preserving journalistic integrity and workers' rights.

Keegan, who retired in 2015, said the bankruptcy filing stirred feelings of anger and frustration.

The original organizing campaign “would have succeeded except for the individual who hurt the community, destroyed the newspaper, and caused pain for the very talented reporters involved,” he said. “To watch all of this happen to such good people has brought me to tears many times.”

Keegan said he was particularly dismayed by the unfair treatment of the original eight reporters who were fired after the 2006 unionization drive and never recovered financially because of weak labor laws and contrary court decisions.

The eight reporters were not included in the \$3.5 million settlement awarded a subsequent group of editorial workers. Two of that second group were fired and a court found they were entitled to back pay. The other editorial staffers in that group were owed raises and bonuses put on hold when the original eight won the election, the court ruled.

“I wanted all of the reporters to win and to get what they deserved – and that was justice,” Keegan said, adding that it was “unconscionable” for McCaw to abandon the News-Press rather than meet her obligations.

Also criticizing McCaw's bankruptcy gambit was George Tedeschi, president of the GCC/IBT at the time of the News-Press organizing effort and now president emeritus of the PPPWU.

“This is further proof that Wendy McCaw had no interest beyond her own,” Tedeschi said. “With the invaluable help of courageous newsroom workers, we waged an efficient and successful unionizing effort. McCaw could not accept defeat and spent a fortune attempting to overrule the will of the newsroom staff. She ruined careers and killed a fine newspaper. An awful outcome – and for what?”

The effects of the Chapter 7 bankruptcy filing remain unclear. Lawyers said McCaw's purpose is to declare Ampersand Publishing without sufficient funds to avoid the pursuit of creditors.



JOSHUA MOLINA / NOOZHAWK FILE PHOTO VIA GOOGLE IMAGES

During a telephone proceeding in September conducted with a bankruptcy trustee, creditors attempted to determine what assets, if any, Ampersand had available. McCaw stated in a document filed in July that Ampersand Publishing had only \$500 in the bank.

In addition to the \$3.5 million owed former employees in lost wages and attorney fees owed the union, records show Ampersand owes \$150,000 to Southern California Edison and \$50,000 to the city and county of Santa Barbara. Other debts amassed by McCaw and co-publisher Arthur Von Weisenberger amount to \$2.15 million, documents show.

Union lawyer Ira Gottlieb, who was on the bankruptcy call, pointed to questionable real estate transactions conducted by McCaw involving the main Santa Barbara News-Press building and the nearby printing press building in what might have been an attempt to skirt financial responsibility.

“We'll see if anyone can unravel her questionable transfers of valuable real estate in 2014 out of Ampersand Publishing, apparently for no financial consideration,” said Gottlieb, who characterized McCaw as “evasive” during questioning.

Properties were transferred to two entities McCaw controlled, Gottlieb said, but there is “serious question as to whether the transactions were legitimate.” A sale of the property, he said, could be used to pay off Ampersand's debt.

“Ideally, I would like to see the real estate transactions voided, the two properties – the historic newspaper building and the printing press building – placed in the bankruptcy estate, and then used to pay the workers and the union,” Gottlieb said.

While creditors and the bankruptcy trustee attempt to untangle McCaw's financial web, former employees and community members remain shaken by developments.

“Given McCaw's intransigence and deep pockets, we were not surprised when she

continues on PAGE 12

# GOP One Reason Why Union Approval High But Membership Low

The first convention of the Printing Packaging & Production Workers Union of North America was a success by any measure. In Las Vegas terms, it was a big winner.

Delegates at the Flamingo Hotel worked hard to establish bylaws for the new union and assure its future. They exchanged ideas on bargaining strategy and organizing. Officials gave a frank assessment of the union's reorganization after an abrupt split with the Teamsters.

Underlying the event was a strong sense of purpose and loyalty to a venerable labor organization whose history dates back more than 100 years. As PPPWU president Kurt Freeman said, "We're still around and here to stay."

The convention took place at a pivotal moment for the labor movement.

Public approval of unions continues on the rise and – as always – latest figures show that union members make far more money and enjoy better conditions and benefits than non-affiliated workers.

But a familiar – and baffling – contradiction still is evident: While union popularity remains on the ascent, membership is at its lowest point on record.

Why can't we break this exasperating cycle?

Under Joe Biden, perhaps the nation's greatest pro-union president, the White House has studied the question. Answers are not surprising: globalization, technology, employer resistance, implementation of right-to-work laws in more than half the states.

To that list might be added unrelenting Republican opposition to pro-union legislation, phony GOP claims that collective action compromises individual choice and integrity, and fear that a powerful workforce will rob employers of their considerable advantage.

Analysts say that even Republicans interested in expanding worker power oppose organized labor because unions tend to favor the Democratic Party.

This is the GOP's same old circular thinking: The party consistently opposes union-friendly initiatives, blasts the very idea of organized labor and demonizes union leadership. Then it complains that unions gravitate toward Democrats where labor is assured respect and a fair deal.

Oren Cass, executive director of the conservative think tank, American Compass, told The Guardian newspaper that, in fact, it would be a good time for Republicans to align more with working-class voters because "constituents are significantly and increasingly working class." But in GOP Land, supporting workers does not mean backing unions – often just the opposite.

"This fiercely anti-union takeover of the Republican Party is driven by the likes of the Koch Brothers and other ultra-right elites and pushed by their extensive web of policy, media and advocacy groups in states across the country," said Roberta Lynch, executive director of AFSCME Council 31 in a website essay.

So this is the state of play: Unions are the best bet for workers but – prompted by the GOP propaganda – many union members and other blue-collar Americans continue to vote against their own best interests and keep Republicans in a position to undercut labor rights.

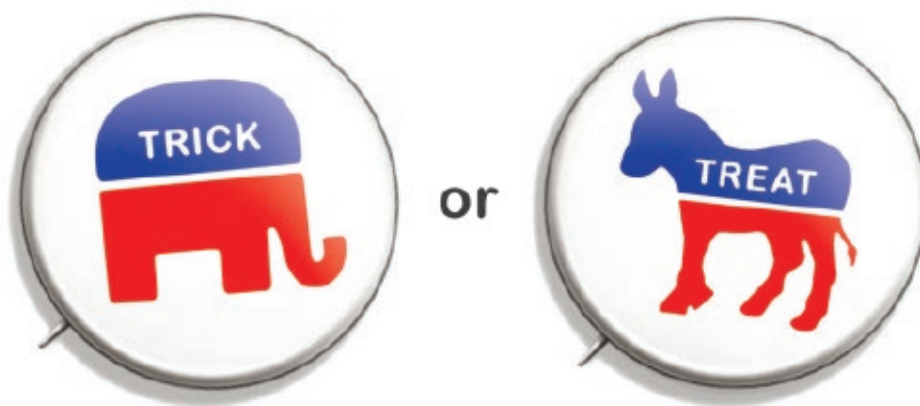
Kurt Freeman often addresses this dilemma.

In Las Vegas, he told delegates they must become aware of issues facing organized labor and get involved in politics at the local level. They should know which elected officials are allies and which are enemies. And they must take individual responsibility for building the union through aggressive organizing and information sharing.

"Nobody will do this for us," Freeman said. "We have to take the initiative and push our agenda forward."

The inaugural PPPWU convention ended with a new sense of purpose and conviction. Now comes the test – building a vibrant network at the local and district levels to keep the union strong.

Freeman and other leaders at the Flamingo told delegates that with energy and commitment, the PPPWU is sure to succeed. As they say in Las Vegas, the possibilities are endless. ■



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## Point of View

BY ROBERT B. REICH

# Scrap the Social Security Cap

Here's the real reason Social Security is in danger that nobody's talking about.

It's not just because too many boomers like me are retiring. It's because of inequality.

Now, I don't want to alarm you. Social Security is still helping us oldies enjoy our golden years — but only for so long.

Social Security is one of the most popular and successful government programs ever created, not only helping retirees — but it's also keeping 26 million people out of poverty. Yet here is the problem:

It's going to run out of money before you can ever receive it if the rich don't start paying their fair share.

The trustees of Social Security — of which yours truly was once a member back when I had thicker hair — say the program will only be able to pay full benefits until 2033. After that, Social Security will only be able to dole out roughly 77 percent of benefits.

Why? It's not the reason that many seem to think.

Boomer retirees like me might be soaking up some sun, but we're not soaking up all the program's funds.

The Social Security trustees anticipated the boom in boomer retirements.

This is why Social Security was amended back in 1983, to gradually increase the age for collecting full retirement benefits from age 65 to 67. That change is helping finance the boomers' retirement.

What did the trustees fail to anticipate? How much income would be going to the top.

A big part of the American working population today is earning less than the Social Security trustees anticipated years ago — reducing revenue flowing into the program.

At the same time, a much larger chunk of the nation's total income is now going to the top compared to decades ago.



But income subject to the Social Security payroll tax is capped. No dollar of earnings above the cap is taxed. The cap in 2023 is \$160,200.

So, as the rich have become far richer, more and more of the nation's total income has escaped the Social Security payroll tax.

For example, a CEO earning \$20 million a year pays Social Security taxes on roughly 1 percent of income while a worker earning under

the cap pays Social Security taxes on 100 percent.

The rise in the amount of income above the cap due to inequality has cost the Social Security Trust Fund reserve an estimated \$1.4 trillion since 1983.

The solution is obvious: it's time to scrap the cap, and make the rich pay more in Social Security taxes.

One plan introduced in Congress would eliminate the cap on earnings over \$250,000 and also subject investment income to Social Security taxes. It's estimated that this would extend the solvency of Social Security for the next 75 years without raising taxes on 93 percent of American households.

This is where you come in. Help spread the word about the real threat to Social Security.

If we want to ensure Social Security's long term future, and that working people can retire with dignity, we must make the wealthy pay their fair share. ■

*Robert B. Reich served as secretary of labor in the Clinton administration and is Chancellor's Professor of Public Policy at the University of California at Berkeley. He has written 18 books, including, "The System: Who Rigged It, How we Fix It," and is co-creator of the documentary, "Saving Capitalism," streaming on Netflix. This piece appeared originally on the robertreich.org website and is reprinted with permission of the author.*

# Bidenomics Work, Big Time



It's time to give President Joe Biden credit. In addition to being perhaps the most labor-friendly leader in American history, Biden has piled up a remarkable record of achievement.

Problem is, no one seems to know – and the Republican Party does all it can to cast Biden as an aging incompetent and hint that his troubled son, Hunter, has compromised his father,

Let's look at Bidenomics – the snarky term slapped on White House policies by the GOP and subsequently embraced by Biden in a neat public relations double-reverse.

By any measure, the President's initiatives have been a smashing success. Even David Brooks, the conservative New York Times columnist, declared: "Bidenomics is working—big time."

Brooks said the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) that Biden passed is giving low-income Americans without college degrees a shot at middle-class life.

"I know many of you think Biden is too old but I'd vote for a 100-year-old who could deliver results like that," Brooks said.

The IRA allows Medicare to negotiate drug prices for seniors – a common sense idea the GOP fought for decades – and caps senior costs for insulin at \$35 a month instead of the hundreds of dollars it had been costing.

Other provisions of the IRA combat climate change, set a minimum corporate tax rate of 15 percent and strengthen the IRS so it can crack down on tax evasion. Not bad for just one piece of legislation.

But wait. There's more.

Inflation is down impressively and the recession predicted by many economists never materialized.

And how about the \$1.2 trillion Infrastructure bill designed to rebuild highways, bridges, water pipes and extend high-speed internet to rural communities?

It is amusing to see GOP elected officials standing at rebuilt bridges or roads and claiming credit when they actually voted against Biden's bill. They should be ashamed.

On top of everything else, Biden policies have curbed inflation and – via the Chips and Science Act – boosted the U.S. electronics industry to give us a much-needed competitive boost with China.

From the start, Biden was on the side of working-class Americans.

In 2021, the President and Democrats pushed through the \$1.9 Trillion American Rescue Plan that provided stimulus checks, better unemployment benefits and a child tax credit during the worst days of the covid pandemic.

Donald Trump thought covid would disappear on its own and downplayed the dangers.

Biden looked at an economy in shreds and did something. Republicans would like to forget Biden's stewardship and success. On Election Day next year, we should all remember.

*Jerry Morgan is a former Newsday business writer and member of Local 406-C.*

# Guest Spot

BY MELINDA BURNS

# We Had Hope. It Wasn't Enough

I was a senior writer at the Santa Barbara News-Press and the first reporter fired in the fall of 2006 barely a month after the newsroom voted to join the GCC/IBT, now the Printing Packaging & Production Workers Union of North America.



Melinda Burns

Five top editors had resigned, alleging that Wendy McCaw, a local billionaire who had bought the paper in 2000, was interfering in news gathering and reporting on behalf of her friends. Nine more firings followed. Dozens of newsroom staffers quit to escape McCaw's punitive regime.

But we had hope. We were leading a widespread boycott of the paper. The community was behind us, and so was the nation's most prominent printing trades union.

Hope wasn't enough. Eight of us lost our case for reinstatement and back pay to a right-wing panel of federal appeals court judges. In 2017, the same court found that McCaw had engaged in bad faith bargaining and had illegally hired temps, suspended merit pay and fired two more writers. Yet six years later, our former colleagues have not been able to collect a penny in recompense!

Confronted with a National Labor Relations Board ruling – upheld in the courts – ordering her to pay \$3.5 million for flagrant violations of federal labor laws, McCaw declared bankruptcy this summer. She claimed her paper had only \$532.96 in the bank.

Rather than meet her responsibilities, McCaw destroyed the professional, profitable, respected, award-winning regional paper she had reportedly bought from the New York Times for more than \$100 million.

McCaw's bankruptcy filing is not stopping the labor board from seeking a contempt citation against her in federal appeals court for demonstrating "inexcusable neglect" of its judgment and "willful refusal to comply."

I hope McCaw finally is forced to pay retribution to my former colleagues. But no matter the outcome of pending legal cases, we can't put our old paper back together.

Our bitter experience at the News-Press has been a case study in how loopholes in labor law can embolden oligarchs such as Wendy McCaw. We need to hold bosses accountable when they delay union elections, fire union members and refuse to sign contracts in a timely fashion.

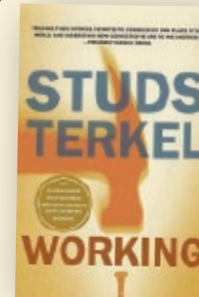
Nobody should have to endure what we went through at the News-Press simply for seeking a union contract. Let's strengthen our laws, protect organized labor and take the country back for American workers.

*Melinda Burns was a staff member at the Santa Barbara News-Press for 21 years. She continues her journalism career as a freelance investigative reporter.*

# All the Best

## Print

**Working: People Talk About What They Do All Day and How They Feel About What They Do**  
*Studs Terkel*



It's been nearly 50 years since Studs Terkel, an author and radio interviewer, drew raves for his taped conversations with working-class Chicago residents – truck driver, washroom attendant, switchboard operator – who reveal their hopes and dreams in this classic collection that was a finalist for a National Book Award. Much has changed in a half-century but the poignant comments of Terkel's subjects continue as testament to the dignity of all work and heroic determination of the millions of unsung Americans who, year after year, do what they must to get by. *The New Press, prices vary.*

## Music

**Love for Sale**  
*Tony Bennett/Lady Gaga*



Tony Bennett, whose warm, jazz-inflected interpretations of the American Songbook and reputation for decency and compassion won him generations of adoring fans, died in July at age 97. Despite a diagnosis of Alzheimer's Disease in 2016, Bennett continued to perform and two years ago released his final album, "Love for Sale," a second collaboration with pop superstar Lady Gaga. The album, crisp and professional, includes songs of the sort Bennett loved singing – the brilliant melodies and lyrics of American composers who wrote standards like, "Just One of Those Things," and, "I Get a Kick Out of You." Away from the stage and recording studio, Bennett was a staunch advocate of liberal causes who took part in the famous 1985 Selma-to-Montgomery civil rights march and once sang for Nelson Mandela who, at that point, was president of South Africa. Frank Sinatra once called Bennett "the best singer in the business" – and, as legions of fans might add, one of the finest human beings, too. *Interscope, price vary.*

## Video/Streaming

**The Bear**  
*Christopher Storer, creator*



What happens when a world-renowned chef comes home to Chicago to manage his family's greasy spoon sandwich shop? Sounds like a setup for big laughs and slapstick kitchen episodes but, "The Bear," created by Christopher Storer and starring Jeremy Allen White as the prodigal son and Ayo Edebiri as his brilliant young kitchen sidekick, is a study in ambition, remorse and redemption – a television series that leaves aside schmaltz and silliness and looks at working class life with candor, compassion and good-hearted humor, too. Every character is a story and Storer does justice to them all. So far, there are two seasons of, "The Bear." Here's hoping for at least one more helping. *Streaming on Hulu.*

## Internet

**The Guardian**  
*theguardian.com/us*



The U.S. version of the famous progressive British newspaper is a terrific source of reliable information presented on an attractive, user-friendly website. Dedicated to aggressive reporting and unflinching coverage, The Guardian is a must for news junkies who favor in-depth accounts, bright writing and a spunky sense of what matters most. No charge but when the Guardian makes a pitch for a few bucks, you'll want to click, "yes."



PAUL SMITH/CONVENTION SERVICES UNLIMITED

## Celebrating Courage and Solidarity

continued from PAGE 1

re-electing President Joe Biden, who Freeman called the “most labor-friendly president in my lifetime.”

Biden also drew the endorsement of George Tedeschi, PPPWU president emeritus.

Tedeschi acknowledged that many union members had voted for Donald Trump because the former president exploited emotional cultural issues.

He urged delegates not to be distracted by inflammatory rhetoric and warned that Trump, at this point the likely GOP candidate, had promised to support working people but did little for labor while in the White House.

On the other hand, Tedeschi said, “Joe Biden is not afraid to say ‘I’m a union guy.’ Trump may talk the talk but doesn’t deliver.”

Working sessions at the convention were devoted to essential matters intended to assure a strong foundation for the PPPWU – updating the union’s constitution, electing leaders and developing strategy in committee meetings. “Each of us plays a pivotal role,” Freeman said. “Your presence here symbolizes your dedication to the cause that has brought us together.”

The convention provided a particularly poignant setting for Freeman, who likely made his last major appearance as the union’s leader. After four years in the top position, Freeman, 65, announced he would retire on Oct. 31 to spend more time with his wife, Theresa, and family in New Jersey.

“It has been the honor of my life to serve this great labor organization,” Freeman said in his final Communicator column on Page 2 of this edition.

He will be succeeded by Secretary-Treasurer/Vice President Steve Nobles. Replacing Nobles, 64, in the new part-time role of secretary-treasurer – the title “vice

### ‘Keep the faith, my friends.’

– Steve Nobles, PPPWU secretary-treasurer/  
vice president and incoming president

president” has been eliminated – will be Clark Ritchey, 57, secretary-treasurer of District Council 2.

Nobles and Ritchey were elected to their posts by convention delegates, according to a provision that allows delegates to vote on international officers and board members.

Nobles immediately sounded a resolute tone.

He warned of “vindictive forces” seeking to “bust our union” and hailed the strength of Freeman and general board members for resisting IBT demands for “complete surrender.”

With the Teamsters now waging a campaign to recruit from within PPPWU ranks, Nobles said, members and leaders must guard against efforts to “destroy us.”

Nobles said the 2004 merger was “skillfully” negotiated by two outstanding union leaders – George Tedeschi, then president of the GCIU and now president emeritus of the PPPWU and IBT General President James Hoffa – and that the move by new IBT officials to scrap the agreement was an attempt to “rewrite history.”

Ritchey also vowed to protect PPPWU independence consistent with “the ideas of a progressive” labor organization.

“Our goal is to build a better future for a long-standing union, to provide benefits for members and their families and negotiate fair contracts for hard-working men and women across the country,” Ritchey said. “We stand together stronger in solidarity.”



The IBT ultimatum, issued in June 2022, led to arbitration and a court challenge initiated by the GCC/IBT. Both continue under consideration but Peter Leff, PPPWU general counsel, said he was confident the union would prevail in court and in arbitration hearings.

As it reorganized, the PPPWU made certain its updated constitution – passed by convention delegates – was “properly situated” to establish an independent union with a “focus” on representing members, Leff said.

Taking note of IBT recruitment efforts, Leff said the strategy was regrettable. To counter IBT “fishing”

‘Each of us plays a pivotal role. Your presence here symbolizes your dedication to the cause that has brought us together.’

– Kurt Freeman, PPPWU president





## OFFICERS ELECTED TO 5-YEAR TERMS

Las Vegas – Delegates elected international officers and general board members to five-year terms by voice vote at the inaugural convention of the Printing Packaging & Production Workers Union of North America.

New PPPWU provisions make the office of secretary-treasurer a part-time post and specify that the secretary-treasurer no longer serve in a dual role as vice president.

Elected by acclamation were:

### INTERNATIONAL OFFICERS:

**President:** Steve Nobles

**Secretary-treasurer:** Clark Ritchey (Local 747-M, Seattle)

### GENERAL BOARD MEMBERS:

**Atlantic Region:** Patrick LoPresti (Local 1-L, New York)

**Canadian Region:** Greg Morley (Local 100-M, Toronto)

**Central Region:** Israel Castro (Local 25-M, Detroit)

**Mountain Region:** Marty Hallberg (Local 1-B, Twin Cities)

**Pacific Region:** Danny Cabada (Local 388-M, Los Angeles)

**Southern Region:** Eddie Williams (Local 527-M, Atlanta)



FRED BRUNING/THE COMMUNICATOR

expeditions, he said, it was essential that union leaders make clear the advantages of remaining a member of the PPPWU.

“We have to point out that our contracts are the best in the industry,” Leff said. “Also important to emphasize is that signing a petition with another union could lead to loss of representation entirely, lengthy delays in contract talks, and, accordingly, delays in gaining pay and benefits increases.”

Officials said the IBT was contacting individual PPPWU members with postcards and phone calls. “This is just the beginning of their efforts to bust our union,” Nobles said.

Despite a tumultuous year, delegates and leaders at the Flamingo Las Vegas Hotel expressed confidence that the new union would prosper.

“If we stay united – and this convention shows we are – we will weather the storm,” said Mike LaSpina, president, Local 406-C, Long Island. “We’re going to be okay.”

Delegates said it was essential that older members give newcomers a sense of union history.

“We have a lot of new blood and need to remind them of where we came from and know where we’re going,” said Jeremiah DeArcos, president, Local 568-M, Peoria, Illinois. “We have to establish ourselves as a new union. We’re not just printing anymore but packaging and production, too. We have to expand the notion of the union.”

Janice Bort, secretary-treasurer of Local 72-C, Washington, D.C. also urged more attention on the origins story of a union that dates back more than a century.

“I’m excited that the oldest union in the United States is the newest,” Bort said. “We’ll keep it going because we’re proud of our history.”

While optimism prevailed, delegates and leaders warned against over-confidence as the union continues to establish itself amid legal battles, outside threats and

## ‘Have pride – I know you all do.’

– George Tedeschi,  
PPPWU president emeritus

daunting challenges for organized labor amid continued loss of membership.

In a video presentation, Alejandro Guzman, the PPPWU’s full-time organizer, urged that all elements of the union – leaders and rank-and-file members – commit themselves to reversing the years of membership declines. “We don’t have to reinvent the wheel,” Guzman said. “Executing an organizing plan creates success. Look at the power you have.”

Freeman underlined Guzman’s call to action. “Nothing is more important going forward than organizing and fighting Teamster raiding,” he said.

Members agreed.

“We have to get the word out and stay together,” said Reuben Silva of Local 388-M, Los Angeles. “Organize and get bigger, stronger, in solidarity.” Added Pat LoPresti, president of Local 1-L, New York: “We must organize and maintain our high standards.”

In a final word to delegates, Tedeschi, recalled past triumphs and urged delegates to return home committed to the hard work ahead.

“Have pride,” he said. “I know you all do.” Delegates and officers responded with a standing ovation – the second afforded Tedeschi, who had led the GCIU and GCC/IBT for nearly a quarter-century. As the PPPWU moves forward, officials said, there likely will be need for consolidation – smaller locals merging with larger – and possible affiliation with another labor organization. “One that treats us with the respect we deserve,” Nobles said.

## FUNDS FOR CARUSO SONS

Las Vegas – An impromptu fund-raising drive at the PPPWU convention produced nearly \$20,000 following an announcement that Lucas “Luke” Caruso, son of former GCC/IBT conference representative Nick Caruso and a member of Local 1-M, St. Paul, died Aug. 14.

Individual contributions to aid Caruso’s sons, Carter, 16, and Blake, 15, amounted to \$561. Eight locals pledged \$2,000 each and the PPPWU promised \$2,500.

An online obituary described Caruso, who worked as a press operator at National Checking Co., St. Paul, as a “kind man with a big heart and great sense of humor.” The tribute noted Caruso’s commitment to family. “He was a fun and caring uncle, incredible son and brother, and a good friend.” Another posting said Caruso “was a loving father whose greatest joy was spending time with Carter and Blake.”

Lucas Daniel Caruso is survived by his father, Nick, who retired in May after 19 years as an international representative; mother, Dawn; sons, Carter and Blake; sister, Nicholl; a twin brother, Marcus; another brother, Matthew, and by many nieces, nephews, aunts, uncles and cousins.

Contributions can be made at:  
<https://gofund.me/37fbe0dd>

For an organization that had been through a difficult and eventful year, the PPPWU appeared strong and united.

Nobles said he and Ritchey would work diligently to achieve progress and assure the union’s future.

“Keep the faith, my friends,” he said.

‘We have to establish ourselves as a new union. We’re not just printing anymore but packaging and production, too. We have to expand the notion of the union.’

– Jeremiah DeArcos, president, Local 568-M, Peoria, Illinois



# Freeman to Retire; Nobles Takes Top Post

**K**urt Freeman, a skilled labor professional who led Local 14-M, Philadelphia, and District Council 9 before assuming duties as GCC/IBT president in 2019, will retire next month and pass leadership responsibilities for the new Printing Packaging & Production Workers Union of North America to another labor movement stalwart, Secretary-Treasurer/Vice President Steve Nobles.

Announcing his decision in August at the first PPPWU convention, Freeman said it had been an “honor” to serve and that he believed the union had a promising future but acknowledged the organization – and its new leaders – faced unprecedented challenges.

For more than a year, Freeman and Nobles have been contending daily with an abrupt move by Teamster leadership to scuttle the 2004 merger agreement that formed the GCC/IBT and demand the union surrender autonomy or be ousted from the Teamster realm.

GCC/IBT leaders said the conditions were untenable, pursued legal remedies, denounced Teamster attempts to raid local unions and reorganized as the PPPWU. “We’re not going anywhere,” Freeman promised.

Convention delegates offered Freeman a standing ovation for his guidance through difficult times before electing Nobles to the top union job by acclamation and elevating DC-2 secretary-treasurer Clark Ritchey to the PPPWU’s second spot on a part-time basis.

Nobles said protecting union independence and countering IBT “union-busting” tactics would be top priorities. “We have to meet this head-on in defense of our members,” he said.

Freeman leaves the top union post with a solid record of success built on strong financial stewardship and an emphasis on organizing.

Under Freeman’s leadership, the union recruited a national organizer, Alejandro Guzman, launched a series of video conference organizing workshops during the covid pandemic that continue on a regular basis and observed strict policies of fiscal discipline.

Freeman, 65, became GCC/IBT president upon the retirement in 2019 of George Tedeschi, who now holds the title PPPWU president emeritus, and after serving two years as secretary-treasurer/vice president following the retirement of Robert Lacey.

Over the course of his union career, Freeman developed a deep interest in pension matters and was a trustee of two national pension programs and the International Foundation of Employee Benefit Plans. He also served as chairman of a Philadelphia-based health, welfare and retraining program.

Philadelphia colleagues hold Freeman in high regard.

“Kurt understood that the union was about lifting up the members and always promoted ‘union pride’ on the shop floor,” said John Potts, who became president of Local 14-M, Philadelphia, when Freeman left to assume duties as GCC/IBT secretary-treasurer/vice president in Washington, D.C. “He was a skilled and knowledgeable negotiator who always was honest and straight forward with the members in any and all situations.”

Among DC-9 colleagues, Freeman was known as a stalwart ally, Potts said. “Officers always knew Kurt had your back, whether on a picket line or in heated contract negotiations. His leadership abilities gave confidence to the union membership.”

Peter Leff, PPPWU general counsel, denounced Teamster efforts to cast doubt on Freeman’s integrity as a means of persuading members to align with the IBT. “Kurt Freeman is the most upstanding and moral a union leader as anyone could want,” Leff said. “He always puts the interest of members before his own.”

Freeman, a graduate of Rowan University, Glassboro, New Jersey, is married to Theresa A. “Terry” Freeman, a professor in the department of orthopaedic research, Sidney Kimmel Medical College at Thomas Jefferson University, Philadelphia. Married 41 years, the Freemans have two adult sons.

Announcing his retirement, Freeman told convention delegates in Las Vegas he had confidence the union would prevail and that Nobles would “serve with distinction.” Freeman added: “I feel good about our future.”



**Kurt Freeman, left, who served as union president for four years and guided the organization through a challenging year after Teamster leaders ended the GCC-IBT 2004 merger agreement, will retire Oct. 31. PPPWU Secretary-Treasurer/Vice President Steve Nobles will replace Freeman and vows to ‘work to grow our union, live within our means and fight back when pushed.’**

Nobles brings decades of union experience to the PPPWU presidency.

After going to work at Bland Printing, Detroit, as a bindery assistant in 1985, Nobles served as a steward in GCIU Local 20-B, which later merged with 289-M. He was elected to the executive board, became a part-time organizer and rose to the 289-M presidency.

Nobles helped lead a move to merge 289-M with Local 2-C in 2002. He served as vice president of the merged local, became president two years later when 2-289-M affiliated with District Council 3. Nobles was elected president of DC-3 and subsequently became secretary-treasurer/principal officer.

He was named to the GCC/IBT general board in 2016 and, when Freeman moved from GCC/IBT secretary-treasurer/vice president to the union presidency in 2019, Nobles became Freeman’s replacement.

In addition to his work for the GCC/IBT, Nobles served as president of the Michigan and Northwest Ohio Allied Printing Trades Council and as a trustee for the Joint Pension Trust Fund and TMRP retirement plan.

“His record of service is outstanding,” Tedeschi said at the time.

Nobles comes from a family committed to organized labor.

His mother was recording secretary at Local 20-B, his stepfather served on the local’s executive board and Nobles’ father was a shop steward at an A&P supermarket warehouse.

Nobles’ wife, Beth, worked in the pension office of Local 13-N, Detroit, until retirement. Married for 11 years, Steve and Beth Nobles each have two daughters from previous marriages.

In Las Vegas, Nobles, 64, said he might have retired at this point in his career but felt duty-bound to serve the PPPWU in its formative stages and help withstand attempts by the IBT to undercut the new union.

The PPPWU’s strength is in the determination of leaders and members to assure success no matter the challenges, Nobles said. “They have the heart to get this done.” — **Fred Bruning**

## STRAIGHT TALK FROM PPPWU LEADERS IN LAS VEGAS

### KURT FREEMAN

*‘It’s truly an honor to stand before you as we gather from across North America, united by our shared commitment to collective bargaining and bettering the work lives of our members and their families.’*

*‘We stand at a unique juncture of time today – a moment where we look ahead toward an uncharted future while acknowledging the power and wisdom inherited from our past.’*

*‘I feel good about our future as long as we stay committed to each other, to our membership, and to the union movement.’*

*‘We must not only look inward at our struggles, heavy as they are, but we also need to be aware of issues facing organized labor and get involved in politics at the national and local level.’*



### STEVE NOBLES

*‘Let me begin by thanking all of you for your support in allowing me and my good friend, Clark Ritchey, to lead this great union into the future. Our union has a great history of helping workers for well over 100 years. Both Clark and I want to continue this great tradition. I know we will not be doing this alone...Some of the best leaders are right here in this room.’*

*‘For 18 years I was a proud Teamster and, mainly because I was from Michigan, I became friends with President Hoffa. James P. Hoffa is a man with integrity who honored his word and commitment...Unfortunately for us, Mr. Hoffa moved on to a well-deserved retirement and the new administration came in bound and determined to re-write history.’*

*‘We are going to work to grow our union. We have to continue to consolidate through mergers and affiliations. Through attrition and restructuring, we will live within our means but fight back when pushed. We will start a search for possible new merger partners that will treat us with the respect we deserve...’*

*‘Keep the faith, my friends. We will get through this for — and because of — our members.’*



**Printing Packaging & Production Workers Union of North America (PPPWU)**

### NEW PPPWU WEBSITE CALLED A 'GREAT' AID TO MEMBER SERVICE

Along with a new name and vibrant logo that symbolizes strength and unity, the PPPWU is launching an informative and user-friendly website to further promote awareness and solidarity.

Outgoing president Kurt Freeman said the website had "great potential" and is another indication that the PPPWU puts high priority on member service.

"The website gives us an excellent opportunity to provide important updates and news about organizing workshops and other events of interest to members," Freeman said. "We look forward to making the most of this useful tool."

Newly elected PPPWU president Steve Nobles said the website presented valuable opportunities as an organizing tool. "We are determined to use all means of modern communication to build our union," Nobles said.

The site was designed by Appletree MediaWorks, a PPPWU shop in Kalamazoo, Michigan, that employs four members of District Council 3.

"The main purpose of the website is to be a communication tool for the international and the membership," said Kathy Schneider, principal web executive at Appletree and a fourth-generation union member. "It will make it easier for members to learn, locate and evaluate information about being a PPPWU member."

Featured on [www.pppwu.org](http://www.pppwu.org) will be union news, history, information about pension funds, links to The Communicator and a guide to union print shops.

Schneider, whose firm also designed the new PPPWU logo, said her team was focused on creating a site that emphasized member service. "We really want to put the site to use for our union," she said.

### CHICAGO TRIB CONTRACT SHOWS VALUE OF UNION REPRESENTATION

Local 458-M workers at the Chicago Tribune recently won an "amazing" contract that leaders say is a prime example of what can be achieved with union representation.

"This should be a motive for other employees at union newspapers to see there is room for positive movement in this industry going forward," said Kurt Reissenweber, president of District Council 4, which represents 40 PPPWU press operators at the Tribune.

The union secured a 10 percent wage increase over three years, earlier hours for night-differential, paid sick days, and guaranteed jobs or severance pay for workers transferred to the Tribune's new suburban plant.

Union members had been working without a contract since 2017. Shortly after contract expiration, Alden Global Capital acquired a principal stake in the Tribune and decided to move the paper's facilities, a development that demanded attention in negotiations.

Reissenweber said negotiators received useful guidance from the international union in Washington, D.C.

"When the Alden group bought and moved the paper to the suburbs, we reached out for help," Reissenweber said. "We were able to do a lot of work behind the scenes to get this to the table. It was an amazing win."

With guidance from the PPPWU and the efforts of local officer Mike Consolino and committee members Scott Seno and Rick Certa, DC-4 was able to reach an agreement that members approved overwhelmingly Aug. 4.

Reissenweber said the contract would help set a standard for workers throughout the metropolitan area.

"It's important people see what we got in Chicago," he noted, "Hopefully, it will help others."



### ATLANTA, CHATTANOOGA LOCALS MERGE TO CONSOLIDATE STRENGTH

A PPPWU local in Chattanooga, Tennessee, has merged with Local 527-S, Atlanta, to bolster resources and better serve the membership, leaders say.

In August, members overwhelmingly voted in favor of a merger between Local 197-M, and 527-S to form Local 527-M. The arrangement became effective Sept. 1, following approval by the PPPWU general board.

The new local will be headed by Eddie Williams, formerly 527-S president and Ralph Meers, former 527-S secretary-treasurer.

Meers thanked Local 197-M president Robert Kelly and secretary-treasurer Larry Best for their assistance in the transition. He also thanked Williams for the work he had done on the merger.

"We congratulate both locals for their foresight and their commitment to consolidating the base within the PPPWU," said Steve Nobles, incoming PPPWU president.

Leaders and members said the merger had obvious advantages.

"Both groups are very similar – a lot of small mom and pop shops, and a lot of silk screen, folding cartons and corrugated boxes in both areas," Meers said. "We see this as a stronger way of building our own group and developing new leadership in both areas."



### DISTRICT COUNCILS PREPARE FOR A NEW GENERATION OF LEADERS

In an effort to prepare rank-and-file members for leadership positions, District Council 3 held an advanced training session that drew participants from the Midwest and East Coast while District Council 2 announced plans for steward training workshops on the West Coast from October through December.



Steve Nobles, PPPWU secretary-treasurer/vice president, led a session in Warren, Michigan aimed at training members to be future union leaders.

"We are moving forward with the new PPPWU," said Israel Castro, DC-3 secretary-treasurer. "And these trainings are vital to our success."

Preparing for a new generation of leaders is essential, Castro said.

"We are training our folks because they will be the next leaders of our union," Castro said. "We always have to be educating everyone about every single aspect of what we do."

About 20 participants from district councils 1, 3 and 9, and locals 1-M, 415-S and 503-M attended the officer training June 26-28 in Warren, Michigan, which included a presentation by incoming PPPWU president Steve Nobles.

"Participants did a great job of sharing experiences from the shop floor," Castro said. "It really gave them an opportunity to learn from each other."

Feedback was positive, Castro said, and leaders already have decided to hold a similar training in March. Castro urged those interested to contact DC-3 directly at 586-755-8041.

Plans for DC-2 training sessions also are taking shape. DC-2 will hold beginning and advanced steward training classes this month through December in California, Oregon and Washington.

"It's important we do this type of training to keep stewards educated and up to speed on current laws and board decisions," said Clark Ritchey, DC-2 secretary-treasurer, who will serve in the same role at the international PPPWU beginning next month.

To keep members "fresh and sharp," training opportunities should be offered frequently, Ritchey said. "We want everyone to be properly trained – from stewards to local officers – as our new union goes forward."

Local Stops wants to hear from you. If your PPPWU local has been involved in organizing efforts, community outreach or volunteer work, e-mail a brief summary to reporter Dawn Hobbs at [dawnhobbs@cox.net](mailto:dawnhobbs@cox.net) or call 805-284-5351.

# Nobles será presidente tras la jubilación de Freeman

Fred Bruning  
*The Communicator*

Kurt Freeman, un experto profesional laboral que dirigió la Oficina Local 14-M, Filadelfia, y el Consejo de Distrito 9 antes de asumir funciones como presidente de GCC/IBT en 2019, se jubilará el próximo mes y pasará las responsabilidades de liderazgo del nuevo Printing Packaging & Production Workers Union of North America a otro partidario incondicional del movimiento sindical, el Secretario-Tesorero/Vicepresidente Steve Nobles.

Al anunciar su decisión en agosto, en el primer congreso del PPPWU, Freeman dijo que había sido un «honor» servir y que creía que el sindicato tenía un futuro prometedor, pero reconoció que la organización —y sus nuevos líderes— se enfrentaban a retos sin precedentes.

Durante más de un año, Freeman y Nobles han tenido que lidiar a diario con la abrupta gestión de la dirección de los Teamsters de echar por tierra el acuerdo de fusión de 2004 por el que se formó el GCC/IBT y exigir que el sindicato renuncie a su autonomía o sea expulsado del ámbito de los Teamsters.

Los dirigentes del GCC/IBT dijeron que las condiciones eran insostenibles, buscaron soluciones legales, denunciaron los intentos de los Teamsters de invadir los sindicatos locales y se reorganizaron como PPPWU. «De largarse, ni hablar», prometió Freeman.

Los delegados del congreso aplaudieron su consejo en tiempos difíciles antes de elegir por aclamación a Nobles para el máximo cargo sindical y elevar al secretario-tesorero de DC-2, Clark Ritchey, al segundo puesto del PPPWU a tiempo parcial.

Nobles afirmó que la protección de la independencia sindical y la lucha contra las tácticas «antisindicales» de la IBT serían

sus principales prioridades. «Tenemos que afrontarlo de lleno en defensa de nuestros miembros», afirmó.

Freeman deja el máximo cargo del sindicato con un poderoso historial de éxitos basados en una sólida gestión financiera y en el énfasis en la sindicalización.

Bajo la dirección de Freeman, el sindicato contrató a un organizador nacional, Alejandro Guzmán, puso en marcha una serie de talleres de organización por videoconferencia durante la pandemia de COVID que continúan celebrándose con regularidad; el gremio además observó estrictas políticas de disciplina fiscal.

Freeman, de 65 años, se convirtió en presidente de GCC/IBT tras la jubilación en 2019 de George Tedeschi, que ahora ostenta el título de presidente emérito de PPPWU, y después de servir dos años como secretario-tesorero/vicepresidente tras la jubilación de Robert Lacey.

A lo largo de su carrera sindical, Freeman desarrolló un profundo interés por los asuntos relacionados con las pensiones y fue fideicomisario de dos programas nacionales de pensiones y de la International Foundation of Employee Benefit Plans [Fundación Internacional de Planes de Beneficios para Empleados]. También fue presidente de un programa de salud, bienestar y capacitación con sede en Filadelfia.

Los colegas de Filadelfia tienen a Freeman en alta estima.

«Kurt entendía que el sindicato consistía en elevar a los afiliados y siempre promovió el “orgullo sindical” en el taller», dijo John Potts, que se convirtió en presidente de la Oficina Local 14-M, Filadelfia, cuando Freeman se marchó para asumir las funciones de secretario-tesorero/vicepresidente de GCC/IBT en Washington, D.C. “Era un negociador

hábil y experto que siempre fue honesto y directo con los miembros en todas y cada una de las situaciones”.

Entre los colegas del DC-9, Freeman era conocido como un aliado incondicional, dijo Potts. «Los directivos siempre sabían que Kurt te cubría las espaldas, ya fuera en un piquete o en acaloradas negociaciones contractuales. Su capacidad de liderazgo daba confianza a los miembros del sindicato.»

Peter Leff, director jurídico del PPPWU, denunció los esfuerzos de los Teamsters por poner en duda la integridad de Freeman como medio de persuadir a los afiliados para que se pusieran del lado de la IBT. «Kurt Freeman es el líder sindical más íntegro y moral que nadie podría desear», afirmó Leff. «Siempre antepone el interés de los afiliados al suyo propio.»

Freeman, licenciado por la Universidad Rowan de Glassboro (Nueva Jersey), está casado con Theresa A. “Terry” Freeman, profesora del departamento de investigación ortopédica del Instituto Superior Sidney Kimmel de la Universidad Thomas Jefferson de Filadelfia. Casados desde hace 41 años, los Freeman tienen dos hijos adultos.

Al anunciar su jubilación, Freeman dijo a los delegados del congreso en Las Vegas que confiaba en que el sindicato prevalecería y que Nobles «serviría con honor». Freeman añadió: «Me siento optimista sobre nuestro futuro».

Nobles aporta décadas de experiencia sindical a la presidencia del PPPWU.

Tras entrar a trabajar en Bland Printing, en Detroit, como ayudante de encuadernación en 1985, Nobles ejerció de enlace sindical en GCIU, Oficina Local 20-B, que más tarde se fusionó con la 289-M. Fue elegido miembro de la junta directiva, se hizo organizador a tiempo parcial y ascendió a la presidencia del 289-M.

Nobles ayudó a liderar una iniciativa para fusionar la 289-M con la Oficina Local 2-C en 2002. Ocupó el cargo de vicepresidente de la oficina local fusionada y se hizo presidente dos años después cuando la 2-289-M se afilió al Consejo de Distrito 3. Nobles fue elegido presidente del DC-3 y posteriormente pasó a ser secretario-tesorero/directivo principal.

Fue nombrado miembro de la junta general de GCC/IBT en 2016 y, cuando Freeman pasó de secretario-tesorero/vicepresidente de GCC/IBT a la presidencia del sindicato en 2019, Nobles asumió el cargo de Freeman.

Además de su trabajo para el GCC/IBT, Nobles fue presidente del Michigan and Northwest Ohio Allied Printing Trades Council y fideicomisario del Joint Pension Trust y del plan de jubilación TMRP.

«Su historial de servicio es excepcional», dijo Tedeschi en aquel momento.

Nobles procede de una familia comprometida con los obreros sindicados.

Su madre era secretaria de actas en el la Oficina Local 20-B, su padrastro formaba parte de la junta directiva de la oficina local y el padre de Nobles era enlace sindical en un almacén del supermercado A&P.

La esposa de Nobles, Beth, trabajó en la oficina de pensiones de la Oficina Local 13-N de Detroit hasta su jubilación. Casados desde hace 11 años, Steve y Beth Nobles tienen dos hijas de matrimonios anteriores.

En Las Vegas, Nobles, de 64 años, dijo que ya podría haberse jubilado a estas alturas de su carrera, pero que sentía el deber de servir al PPPWU en sus etapas de formación y ayudar a resistir los intentos de la IBT de socavar el nuevo sindicato.

La fuerza del PPPWU radica en la tenacidad de sus dirigentes y afiliados por garantizar el éxito sean cuales sean los retos, afirmó Nobles. «Tienen los bríos para conseguirlo.»

## News-Press ‘Meltdown’

*continued from* PAGE 5

shamelessly declared bankruptcy,” said Melinda Burns, a veteran reporter who had worked 21 years at the paper and was one of the leaders in the newsroom unionization effort.

A 2009 documentary, “Citizen McCaw,” which premiered to a sold-out audience in Santa Barbara and gained a wide university audience, was screened again locally in late September. The event drew a number of former News-Press staff members who lamented the loss of a cherished institution and the gap in community news coverage that followed.

“The impact of the News-Press meltdown on our local news was swift and irreparable,” Burns said. “The loss of a daily paper of that size and influence is a big loss for democracy.”

Once a thriving paper with a daily circulation of more than 45,000 and a newsroom staff of about 50, the News-Press withered to an online only publication with an editorial staff of less than 10 – including several student interns – as McCaw drastically cut back on resources.

When newsroom employees campaigned for union representation, the demise of the paper could not have been anticipated, former staff members said. But McCaw’s draconian steps led to an outcome that now seems inevitable, they said.

“It’s a terrible story,” said Burns. There is so much wreckage.”

Despite rulings from the National Labor Relations Board that consistently favored the GCC/IBT and cited McCaw for unfair labor practices, she appealed the

rulings every step of the way and stymied efforts to reach a contract.

Meanwhile, fired editorial workers found themselves without jobs, or many prospects.

“The year 2006 was a real reversal of fortune for all of us,” Burns said. “At 59, I was at the top of my game. I had won local, state, regional and national awards for my reporting and I hoped to work at the News-Press for the rest of my career.”

Most devastating was a 2012 hearing in District of Columbia federal court then dominated by Republican-appointed, conservative jurors.

Despite the strong case of union attorneys, judges ruled for McCaw. The decision effectively doomed any possibility of back pay or reinstatement for editorial staffers who had put careers and livelihoods on the line to guarantee journalistic integrity and workers’ rights. “Labor law is broken in this country, and we have to fix it fast,” Burns said.

Union attorney Gottlieb agreed and said the case revealed a “chronic failure of labor law” for failing to hold accountable a vindictive owner who resisted “collective bargaining no matter the cost.”

Without strong sanctions against the tactics used by McCaw, workers will remain at a significant disadvantage, Gottlieb said. “That’s why we find ourselves in the tragic position we are in today.” ■

*Dawn Hobbs, a leader of the News-Press organizing effort, was a reporter at the paper for nearly 10 years when she was fired for union activity. She subsequently worked with the Teamsters as an organizer and communications consultant and then taught journalism at the university level. Hobbs now works in real estate and is a regular contributor to The Communicator.*

# In Memoriam

Listed here are members for whom death benefits were paid, according to the Graphic Communications Benevolent Trust Fund. Locals wishing to list members who died but did not participate in the death benefits program should contact The Communicator.

Local	Date of Death	Local	Date of Death
<b>Death Benefit Claims Paid December 2020</b>			
853T Daniel Der Loo	10-13-20	25M Joseph J Russo	11-01-20
853T George Olewinski	10-26-20	25M Daniel J Smolik	08-12-20
853T Gunter H Petersen	05-04-20	25M Richard S Tabaka	11-19-20
853T Thomas Wareing	07-28-20	100M Kenneth J Macdonald	12-26-19
996t Agnes S Nagasawa	10-01-20	197M Howard G Miller	10-04-20
996t Jerry Y Oshiro	07-28-18	235M Dorsey G Glover	12-02-20
999ML June C Brandner	04-27-20	285M Franklin L Myers	09-27-20
999ML Edwin C Heintzman	12-22-13	355T Charles A Oliver	11-10-20
999ML Phyllis A Lange	06-12-20	458M Martin Barnat	11-17-20
999ML Paul H Rubach	04-12-20	458M Elmer D Wegener	11-25-20
6505M Melvin R Doney	10-20-20	503M Donald C Stone	10-09-20
6505M Helen Gaskins	10-13-20	543M Frank B Jordan	10-29-20
6505M Raymond E Link	02-10-20	555M Jean La Perriere	04-29-20
6505M David C Phelps	04-03-20	555M Jean Seguin	09-11-20
<b>Death Benefit Claims Paid January 2021</b>			
1B Joseph L Beaubien	02-13-20	568M Michael E Patterson, Sr	10-03-20
1B Jeanette B Kedrowski	11-19-20	572T Ivan Theodore Burke	01-31-20
1B Ruby L Kopping	10-31-20	612M John B Andelora, Jr	10-19-20
1C Phillip E Barbour	08-16-20	612M Jean M Charles	04-14-20
1L Walter C Bender	11-10-20	625S Harold A Pulscher	06-24-20
1L John Bostonian Jr	09-12-20	853T Stewart A Clark	11-08-20
1M Edmund E Hajder	10-24-20	999ML Robert W Grugel	08-18-11
1M Dennis A Strange	11-13-20	999ML Ralph R Stukenberg	11-25-20
3N William J O'Driscoll	11-15-20	6505M Ruth O Coleman	08-04-20
4C William H Given, Jr	09-19-20	6505M Frederick G Mcclure	11-06-20
14M Frank P Borghero, Sr	11-11-20	6505M Dorothy M Sanders	09-11-20
14M Francis J Duffin	06-09-20		
14M Ronald H Hawthorne	11-16-20		
14M John A Reick	11-07-20		
25M James K Blaske	10-13-20		

Local	Date of Death	Local	Date of Death	Local	Date of Death
1L Charles A Hill	11-23-20	458M Kenneth L Kulpa	11-15-20	1M William Stenach, Jr	01-14-21
1M Lloyd E Lundstrom	11-20-20	458M Kerry J Morrissey	12-05-20	2N John J Cosgrove, Jr	12-13-20
1M Frank V Nitti, Jr	11-25-20	458M Thomas S Mullens	11-14-20	3N Albert A Basler, Sr	09-19-20
1M Nettie H Pederson	10-18-20	458M William T Olney	12-03-20	3N William C Cook	12-17-20
1M Gilbert B Thoele, Jr	03-28-20	458M James A Ruzicka, Sr	11-16-20	3N Justin R Courtney	01-16-21
2N Edward Banoff	12-09-20	458M Russell Sabatino Jr	12-02-20	3N Barry F Pritchard	01-06-21
2N Thomas Gangi	11-23-20	458M Kenneth E Shubinski	11-29-20	3N Robert J Reynolds, Sr	12-22-20
3N Leighton B Duncan	11-28-20	458M Charles E Stein	11-14-20	3N Dennis H Runnels	12-20-20
3N Robert S Gregory	04-15-20	458M John R Terry	11-13-20	3N Harry Sahagian	01-09-21
3N George M Oneill	12-04-20	458M Anthony G Welter	11-19-20	3N Lawrence A Schell, Sr	10-29-20
4B Richard L Gezelle	11-29-20	493M Robert Eugene Reed, Sr	11-13-20	3N Simonne R Turgeon	12-13-20
17M Henry J Sorg	11-20-20	503M Allan H Craddock	01-31-20	4B John M Miller	12-28-20
17M Charlotte M Sylvester	11-30-20	508M Russell H King	10-13-20	4C Ylli Ceka	01-02-21
25M Rex I Ashley	12-13-20	514M Irene M Dittman	12-22-20	14M David M Alpignini	04-17-20
25M Jack M Dieck	12-14-20	514M Charlene C Van Horn	12-03-20	14M Michael R Austin, Sr	01-04-21
25M Richard J Escott	12-04-20	555M Denis Leger	11-15-20	14M Ronald N Bonczkiewicz01-04-21	
25M James W Garrison, Sr	12-12-20	555M Armand Pelletier	11-23-20	14M Raymond F Houser	01-10-21
25M Edward L Irick	06-06-20	555S Patrick M Sullivan	11-25-20	14M Rita T Quigley	01-02-21
25M John W Jacob, Jr	08-15-20	568M Norman E Steiner	10-15-20	14M David P Woods	12-30-20
25M Michael G Lorentz	11-04-19	577M John A Diciaula	11-05-20	17M Nannie M Jones	11-29-20
25M John F Powell Jr	11-23-20	577M Steven L Fuerstenau	10-23-20	23N Leroy F Perone Jr	12-13-20
25M Paul W Rishaw	12-02-20	577M Scott C Ide	07-21-20	24M Ralph J De Julio	12-08-20
38N Robert O Hanser	10-29-20	577M Joseph B Kowalski	10-04-19	24M John E Steele, Sr	12-13-20
38N Richard H Meyer Sr	11-23-20	577M Jakob Kramer	09-10-20	25M Joseph K Ertter	01-12-21
38N Roy M Steele	03-07-19	577M Philippe L Secker	10-13-20	25M Peter A Hagedorn	12-20-20
72C Stella M Higgs	09-08-20	612M Jean S Laurore	12-05-20	25M Michael J Huetter	12-08-20
72C Robert J Wilson	11-24-20	612M Anthony Mazzucco	12-31-20	25M James C Jeffery	01-25-21
77P Richard C Ruedinger	12-08-20	612M Mathilda Schmitz	01-01-21	25M Arthur E Kirkpatrick	12-13-20
77P Michael C Trafka	12-07-20	612M Luc Valme	12-14-20	25M Stephan E Richardson	11-24-20
77P Albin J Udovich	11-25-20	853T Rudy S Meraz	08-24-20	25M Lester J Sandoe	06-07-20
100M Albert B Hudson	11-22-20	999ML Janice K Embrey	11-11-20	25M Nelson G Scholl	01-07-21
119B Richard D Keenan	11-24-20	999ML Cecelia M Mapp	12-30-20	25M Julia A Semon	03-26-18
119B Marion Pattinger	12-05-20	6505M Kenneth R Mccuiston	12-10-20	25M Harold L Smith	12-24-20
137C Donald M George, Sr	02-24-20	6505M Donald L Roubidoux	11-17-20	58M John Patrick Fitzmauric	11-24-20
197M Robert A Rogers	11-09-20	6505M Laverne I Walker	11-16-20	77P Thomas J Dobyms	01-01-21
241M Helen D Sporko	11-09-20			77P Thomas G Pawlowski	01-13-21
285M Harry T Lynch	09-24-20			77P James C Quall	12-19-20
406C Robert J Haller, Sr	06-24-18			77P Jerome C Resch	12-09-20
458M John E Barry	10-23-20			117T Richard W Field	11-02-20
458M Gregory J Blake	11-06-20			117T Agnes Y Sakata	12-29-20
458M George L Cornille, Jr	12-03-20			117T Jeffrey P Weidert	12-06-20
458M Alfred W Eichmann	12-03-20			119B Portia L Woodson	12-20-20
458M William C Kirkolis	11-23-20			197M Johnnie W Bowman	06-08-19
458M Richard F Klimas	10-17-20			197M James B Jones	12-17-20
458M Jerome F Kubiszyn	11-26-20			197M Constance Y Meadows	12-26-20
<b>Death Benefit Claims Paid March 2021</b>					
1B John W Bobeck	11-26-20				
1B Elizabeth J Leitner	12-20-20				
1B Ann V Whelchel	01-15-21				
1L Jean K Rybka	12-26-20				
1L Robert F Sessa	04-30-20				
1L George W Wright	08-17-20				
1M Steven L Randen	09-12-12				

# Rough Year but Pitt Strikers' Solidarity Undiminished

By Dawn Hobbs  
Special to the Communicator

Solidarity matters most. Demonstrating a steadfast sense of unity, GCC/IBT pressroom operators at the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette joined seven other unions a year ago to strike when negotiations failed and the company yanked health care benefits.

The eight pressmen from Local 24-M/9-N walked off the job on Oct. 6, 2022, with approximately 140 other workers from the Teamsters, NewsGuild, Pittsburgh Typographical Union, Pittsburgh Newspaper Printing Pressmen/Paper Handlers, Pittsburgh Mailers and Newspaper, and the Newsprint, Magazine and Film Delivery Drivers Helpers and Handlers.

Editorial workers affiliated with NewsGuild initiated the strike. Other unions quickly backed up the reporters and editors.

"We are determined to seek justice and we will continue to fight," said Chris Lang, president of Local 24-M/9-N.

Even though it's been a rough year, union solidarity is undiminished – and workers continue to hold their ground on the strike line, Lang said.

Recently Keith Wytiaz and his German Shepherd, Jackson, trudged out at 10 p.m. to spend another night on the picket line.

"Our pressmen are assigned to man the picket lines there," said Wytiaz, who has worked at the paper for 25 years. "I take it upon myself to go where the action is. I've gone above and beyond."

Wytiaz and other PPPWU press operators have been pulling six-hour shifts on the picket line at least 3-5 times per week ever since Day One.

"Running presses is what I did seven days a week," said Wytiaz. "It was my life, my passion."

The strike followed six years of stalled contract negotiations with the various Post-Gazette unions and a provocative move last year by the newspaper's owner, BCI Block Communications Inc., to pull health care benefits.

Union leaders filed an unfair labor practice complaint with the National Labor Relations Board in response – one of many.

The board ruled against the company in that case and several others but BCI Block has appealed in another effort to delay and stymie the unions.

Although there are a number of unresolved issues related to pay, seniority and guaranteed hours, the dispute now focuses on what union leaders say would be a cost of \$19 per worker to provide health care.

"We estimate that over the past seven years the company has spent \$9-10 million to keep us out – all over \$19 per week per employee for health care," said Lang.



*Intrepid strikers found warmth in friendship and solidarity during bitter winter months and, like PPPWU press operator Keith Wytiaz, right, reliably showed up on picket lines for regular six-hour shifts. Wytiaz was accompanied by Jackson, his loyal, pro-union German Shepherd.*

The paper previously printed about 100,000 copies on weekdays and 135,000 on Sundays. Now they are down to 16,000 for the one weekday they still print and 30,000 on Sundays, Lang said.

If the company's end goal is to go completely digital, Lang said, BCI Block should be forthright and conduct negotiations accordingly.

Lang said the company is paying extraordinary amounts for security guards and legal fees to the union-busting King and Ballow law firm that could better be used to hire workers back with health care and a raise or negotiate a decent severance package.

Meanwhile, workers continue to show resiliency despite the difficulties.

Erin O'Neill, a press operator at the paper for 26 years and one of the first women in the Post-Gazette pressroom, says she and her colleagues have endured the freezing cold and stifling heat on the picket line.

"We were going out there every day during winter sitting in a shed with a burn barrel like the homeless," she recalled.

Despite "so much uncertainty," O'Neill said, she's not relenting and Lang vows the Post-Gazette's unions will resist cynical company maneuvers.

"We are determined to seek justice," he said. "Workers want their jobs back. They are proud of what they did and they were good at it. We are going to stay strong and keep fighting."

That fortitude is evident at every level of the union, Lang said.

He thanked the international GCC/IBT and, now, the PPPWU, for continued support and providing benefit checks to striking press operators. "We appreciate our union's commitment to the cause," Lang said.

## Dems Press for Hike in Min Wage

Democrats in the House and Senate introduced legislation that would lift the hourly federal minimum wage from \$7.25 to \$17 by 2028 – a move that supporters say would provide \$86 billion in additional pay to workers at the lower end of the compensation scale and prove an economic boost for the nation.



“Raising the minimum wage is good for workers, good for business, and good for the economy,” said Rep. Robert C. “Bobby” Scott (D-Virginia) who introduced the Raise the Wage Act in the House. “When we put money in the pockets of American workers, they will spend that money in their communities.”

A companion bill was advanced in the Senate by Bernie Sanders, a Vermont independent who caucuses with Democrats.

Sanders called the current \$7.25 rate a “starvation wage” and denounced circumstances that produced booming corporate profits and enormous private wealth while millions struggle to get by. “Congress can no longer ignore the needs of the working class of this country,” Sanders said. “The time to act is now.”

Polls show overwhelming public support for raising the minimum wage but moves to hike pay over recent years have met only opposition from Republicans. The latest attempt, which has drawn broad backing from organized labor, is being pushed by 146 Democrats in the House and 29 in the Senate.

According to an analysis by the Economic Policy Institute, raising the minimum wage to \$17 would benefit nearly 28 million workers and hike the pay of low-wage workers by an average of \$3,100 a year.

Despite GOP obstruction, Scott and Sanders said they would continue campaigning for passage of the Raise the Wage Act. “In the year 2023, a job should lift you out of poverty not keep you in it,” Sanders said.



## GOP Still Blocking Su Appointment

Seven months after Marty Walsh resigned as secretary of labor, his intended replacement, Julie Su, awaits Senate confirmation and may serve “indefinitely” as acting head of the department, according to a report in the online news agency, Politico.

Su, who served as deputy DOL secretary under Walsh, has failed to gain the votes of Democratic senators Kyrsten Sinema of Arizona and Joe Manchin of West Virginia prompting the White House “to move forward in defiance of the Senate confirmation process,” Politico said.

Labor Department rules place no limit on the time a deputy can serve as acting secretary.

With no Republican support for Su’s confirmation, Democrats need all 50 of their Senate votes to confirm.

But Sinema, who often bucks party leadership, has not indicated her intentions and Manchin said, that while he respects Su, he could not vote in her favor because of the nominee’s “more progressive background.”

Manchin, who is expected to run for re-election in his deep red state next year– or possibly even as a third-party presidential candidate – frequently criticizes the Democratic agenda and Biden administration policy.

However, Su continues to have White House backing – and the support of her former boss who resigned in February to become head of the National Hockey League Players’ Association.

“However long Julie Su is the acting secretary or secretary, she’s going to put her mark on the job,” Walsh told Politico. “I don’t think the word ‘acting’ is any part of it.”

## Sweat Shops

Record breaking heat through the Summer of 2023 made for scorching worksites worldwide and posed health risks to millions of employees working in sweltering conditions without air conditioning, officials say.



“Those who work in some of the most dangerous conditions for heat

exposure with few worker protections, such as those in agriculture, construction, grounds maintenance, landscaping, road work, roofing, and warehouses, are particularly at risk,” said a bulletin on the website of the City of Boston.

In late July, the Occupational Health and Safety Administration issued a heat hazard alert in late July reminding employers of their “obligation to protect workers” and increase workplace inspections.

Assistant Secretary for Occupational Safety and Health Doug Parker emphasized the vital role management plays. “Employers have a duty to protect workers by reducing and eliminating hazards that expose workers to heat illness or injury,” Parker said.

Union leaders and elected officials also urged employers to assure worker safety by providing adequate drinking water, access to shade and buddy systems so employees can aid one another in event of heat-related distress.

“The implications of this extreme heat are beyond what any of us have imagined,” Mary Kay Henry, president of the Service Employees International Union, told the New York Times. Workers must “perform their jobs,” Henry said, “regardless of what the weather forecast is.”

PPPWU President Kurt Freeman urged union members to observe best safety practices on the job and take steps to avoid heat exhaustion in their personal lives.

“It was an extraordinary summer and, because of climate change, we may see this kind of extreme weather more frequently,” Freeman said. “We want members to be informed and protect themselves, their families – and their pets, who feel the heat, too.”

## Monument Honors Emmett Till

Last year, President Joe Biden signed the bipartisan Emmett Till Antilynching Act making hate-related offenses that involve kidnapping or lead to death or serious injury federal crimes punishable by up to 30 years in prison.



Biden again honored the memory of Till – a black teenager murdered in Mississippi 68 years ago – and the boy’s mother with a proclamation this summer setting aside two protected sites in Mississippi and one in Illinois as the Emmett Till and Mamie Till-Mobley National Monument.

The gesture was another attempt to confront the nation’s troubled racial history, Biden said.

“We can’t just choose to learn what we want to know,” the President said at a White House ceremony. “We have to learn what we should know.”

In August, 1955, Emmett Till, a black resident of Chicago spending part of his summer with relatives in the Mississippi Delta, was abducted by two white men. Three days later, Till’s body – badly mutilated and with a gunshot wound to the head – was pulled from the Tallahatchie River.

Two suspects – Roy Bryant, husband of a woman who claimed Till had made improper advances and whistled at her; and J. W. Milam, Bryant’s half-brother – were arrested quickly and tried for murder. An all-white jury acquitted the men in 67 minutes but later, in a paid interview with Look magazine, the two admitted killing the teenager after first planning only to “scare some sense into him.”

Till’s body was returned to Chicago and his, mother, Mamie Till-Mobley, insisted on an open casket funeral so onlookers could witness the extent of her son’s injuries. “Let the world see what I’ve seen,” she said.

The case drew wide news coverage and, in the view of many, helped launch the civil rights movement of the 1960s and 70s. But equal justice advocates said there never was complete reckoning with the brutal murder of Emmett Till or fierce – and often lethal – racial attitudes that allowed for the crime.

At the White House, Biden denounced efforts by conservative politicians to mute the often painful realities of race in the United States.

“At a time when there are those who seek to ban books, bury history, we are making it clear – crystal, crystal clear,” the President said. “While darkness and denialism can hide much, they erase nothing.”

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THE WHITE HOUSE VIA FLICKR



THE TRUMP WHITE HOUSE ARCHIVED VIA FLICKR

# Biden-Trump Rematch a Test for Labor

**D**espite legal troubles, lackluster public approval and a host of Republican challengers, Donald Trump remains far ahead in the GOP race for the party's 2024 presidential nomination.

A contest between President Joe Biden and his White House predecessor would again pose a stark – and obvious – choice between pro- and anti-labor candidates, union leaders say.

Biden, a friend of organized labor throughout his 60-year political career, is widely regarded as the most union-friendly president since Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

"He's been an ally forever," said PPPWU President Kurt Freeman. "When we need Joe Biden, he's there."

As president, Biden has strengthened the National Labor Relations Board, upgraded workplace standards under the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, rescued faltering union pension funds, signed an executive order demanding that contractors come to terms with unions on major federal jobs, and nominated two aggressive pro-labor officials to lead the Department of Labor – Marty Walsh, who left the Administration in February, and now, Julie Su, who awaits Senate confirmation.

And that is the short list.

Trump is another story, labor officials say.

The former president, who continues to be the wide favorite of Republican primary voters but earns only 40 percent public approval, often poses as a friend of working people but rarely delivers.

"At every turn Donald Trump and his appointees have made increasing the power of corporations over working people their top priority," the Communication Workers of America said during the Trump presidency. "The list of the damage done to working people by the Trump Administration is long, and growing every day."

Among the worst Trump actions cited by the CWA:

- Packed federal courts with anti-worker judges.
- Installed anti-union appointees on the NLRB.
- Vowed to veto the Protect the Right to Organize Act (PRO) if passed.
- Changed overtime rules making millions of workers ineligible.
- Reduced the number of OSHA inspectors and lowered standards aimed at protecting workers during the covid epidemic.

Leaders are urging union members who might have favored Trump to consider the records of the two likely candidates – and to keep in mind that recently Biden endorsed the UAW strike against Big Three automakers while Trump said UAW members were being "sold down the river" by union officials.

"Biden's a reliable partner," Freeman said. "Trump is the opposite. If President Biden and Trump face each other next year, the choice should be clear – for organized labor, and the working people of America."

## NOTICE ON WORKER OBJECTIONS TO AGENCY FEES

Annual notice is hereby given of the policy on worker objections to agency fees which has been adopted by the General Board in response to the United States Supreme Court's 1988 decision in *Beck v. CWA*. The policy sets forth a formal procedure by which an agency fee payer may file an objection to the payment of that portion of his or her dues which is attributable to expenditures for activities which are not germane to collective bargaining. The policy applies only to agency fee payers who work in the United States. The policy applies to the International, district councils, and local unions.

Agency fee payers (also referred to as "financial core members") are those individuals covered by a union security agreement who meet their financial obligations by paying all dues, fees, and assessments, but elect not to become or remain actual members of the union. Agency fee payers may not exercise the rights of membership such as running for union office, electing union officers, ratifying contracts, and voting on strikes. They may be eligible to receive strike benefits if they are participants in the Emergency and Special Defense Fund, but they are not eligible to receive benefits from the Graphic Communications Benevolent Trust Fund whose benefits are for members only.

The policy adopted by the General Board includes the following elements:

1. The agency fee payable by objectors will be based on the expenditures of the International, district councils, or local unions for those activities or projects normally or reasonably undertaken by the union to advance the employment-related interests of the employees it represents. Among these "chargeable" expenditures are those for negotiating with employers, enforcing collective bargaining agreements, informal meetings with employer representatives, discussing work-related issues with employees, handling employees' work-related problems through the grievance procedure, administrative agencies, or informal meetings, and union administration. Based upon an independent audit by the International's auditors, it has been determined that eighty-four percent of the International's expenditures for the year ending December 31, 2022 were for such activities. Because at least as great a proportion of district council and local union total expenditures are spent on "chargeable" activities as are spent by the International's, in calculating the amount of local union dues

to be paid by objectors, district councils and local unions may exercise the option of presuming that the International's percentage of chargeable activities applies to the district council or local union also. Alternatively, district councils or local unions may calculate their own percentage of chargeable activities.

2. Objectors will be given an explanation of the basis for the fee charged to them. That explanation will include a more detailed list of categories of expenditures deemed to be "chargeable" and those deemed to be "nonchargeable" and the accountants' report showing the International's expenditures on which the fee is based. Objectors will have the option of appealing the union's calculation of the fee, and a portion of the objector's fee shall be held in escrow while he or she pursues that appeal. Details on the method of making such a challenge and the rights accorded to those who do so will be provided to objectors with the explanation of the fees calculation.

3. Objections for the year 2024 must be filed on or before December 31, 2023 for current agency fee payers unless a prior objection was filed on a continuing basis. Timely objections are for one year and will expire on December 31, 2024 unless they are filed on a continuing basis. Objections filed on a continuing basis will be honored until they are revoked. If an employee is not an agency fee payer, the employee must assume non-member status and file an objection to be eligible for a reduction of dues for the period beginning with the timely receipt of the objection. New employees who wish to object must not obtain member status and must file an objection within thirty days of first receiving notice of this policy for a reduction of dues for the period beginning with receipt of a timely objection.

Objections should be sent to the attention of the Agency Fee Administrator, Office of the Secretary-Treasurer, Printing Packaging & Production Workers Union of North America, 12301 Old Columbia Pike, Suite 310, Silver Spring, MD 20904-1637. The objection should be signed and contain the objector's current home address, place of employment, and district council and/or local union number. Copies of the full text of the procedures for worker objections to agency fees are available upon request from the Agency Fee Administrator.