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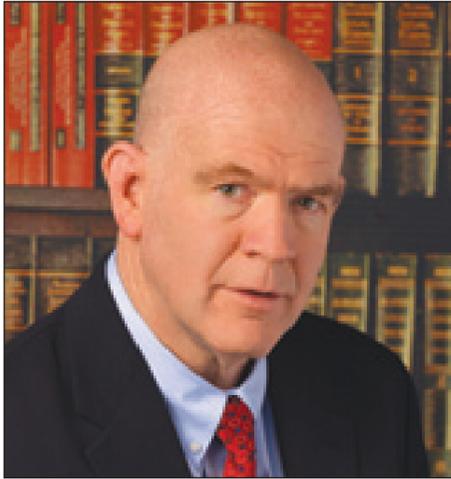
OPEIU CONNECT

Issue 548, Spring 2022



YES

Working professionals throughout the country are turning to OPEIU to secure dignity and respect on the job



Democracy is the Only Way to Ensure Working People's Voices are Heard

By *Richard Lanigan*
President

Recently, workers at Amazon filed for a second election to determine whether they will have a union. Elections are the most common way working people join unions.

In the first election, Amazon harassed employees who were trying to bring about the election. It also installed a mailbox on company premises visible to management when workers cast their mailed ballots. The National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) ruled Amazon's installation of the mailbox was a violation of labor law as it was surveillance intended to influence the way workers felt about voting. The NLRB directed Amazon to move the mailbox to a less visible location and there should be a second election.

Amazon's actions are typical. Employers often resist workers who are trying to get a fair election. One employer practice is to insist the polling place for the on-site union election be near the human resources office or anywhere voters might be easily seen by management when they cast their ballots. Management will use other questionable tactics to win elections, including threatening to close down and/or firing employees. These tactics are meant to establish and maintain management authority in the workplace and leave workers without the means to question their decisions. In other words, without an election there is no legitimate way to discuss management initiatives.

In most cases, if the union wins the election and is recognized, the bargaining unit has a right to vote with respect to whom their shop stewards are, what the contract proposals will be, whether their contract passes, whether the group goes on strike, who their union leaders will be, how much they will pay in union dues and many other issues. You could say voting is the essence of the way unions function.

As organizations supporting the right to vote on workplace issues, unions also support and encourage their memberships to register to vote and to cast their ballots in local, state and federal elections. Unions see voting as their members' civic duty. They believe one person, one vote, should be the standard of our national institutions because it is the best way to make decisions.

Americans fought in wars to preserve a country where people have the right to vote. Just like those workers at Amazon, unions have strong concerns when people act to threaten other peoples' voting opportunities. Behavior that makes it difficult or impossible to vote is not only undemocratic, it is unacceptable.

Recently, a number of legislatures changed their states' voting laws. In every case the new laws make it more difficult for otherwise eligible Americans to vote. In states where voting rights are being eroded, a consistent change has been making voting by mail more difficult. Sound familiar?

Democratic countries work to expand voting rights and expand democracy. Authoritarian governments weaken voting rights and try to destabilize democratic countries. Authoritarian governments are often administered by a chief executive who has unlimited decision-making powers regarding the affairs of government. Such autocrats usually have little accountability to citizens. One only needs to look as far as the war in Ukraine to see how an authoritarian government, in this case Russia, can so easily get off track.

Union busters work hard trying to strengthen the employer's authority and keep wages down. They do this by repressing the right to vote in a fair election. Like union busters, opponents of democracy have an agenda behind their work to limit the right to vote. It's simple enough: Free elections benefit working people!

Democracy may be difficult, but it is the only form of government where working people have a voice in their country's decisions. So, when you hear media people or politicians talk about the benefits of authoritarian government where not all people have the right to vote or where voting will be made more difficult, like the mailbox at Amazon, you should think hard about whose interests these people represent. ■

With \$100 Million in Assets, OPEIU's 401(k) Plan Provides a Stable Path Toward Retirement Security

The OPEIU National Retirement Savings Plan (NRSP), now with more than \$100 million in assets, is carving a path toward financial security in retirement for members thanks to a growing number of local unions who have negotiated the 401(k) plan into their contracts.

"In creating this plan for our members, our goal was to establish a more secure and prosperous pathway toward retirement security than employer-run 401(k)s," said OPEIU President Richard Lanigan. "By negotiating the plan into collective bargaining agreements, local leaders have been able to focus on securing better wages, benefits and working conditions at the bargaining table."

Nearly 2,000 members across the country — from Warner Bros. Studios (Local 174 in Burbank, California) to EmblemHealth (Local 153 in New York City) — are saving for retirement using the NRSP, which was established in late 2017. With many contracts expiring within the next two years, now is a good time for local unions to start thinking about incorporating the NRSP into upcoming contracts.

"The more OPEIU members we have participating in the plan, the stronger it gets," Lanigan concluded. "When we stick together — whether it be on the picket line, at the bargaining table or while a contract is in effect — we all do better. The NRSP is no different, and it's already proving to be a huge success."



Learn More About the OPEIU 401(k)

Several times per month, Prudential Financial, who administers the plan for OPEIU, hosts interactive webinars explaining how 401(k) plans work and offering guidance to individuals on retirement savings best practices.

You can learn more about the plan and upcoming educational webinars by visiting opeiu.org, searching under the Member Resources tab and clicking the link "OPEIU National Retirement Savings Plan (401k) Educational Webinars."

Employers are Boosting 401(k) Benefits in a Tight Labor Market

With workers leaving their jobs at record levels, large employers, such as Google and Meta (formerly Facebook), are reportedly struggling to retain workers. In response to the tight labor market, they're now offering better 401(k) benefits. Will it be enough?

"Employers are very nervous about this 'Great Resignation,'" one executive of Vanguard Group, which administers 1,700 401(k)-type plans for employers, told The Wall Street Journal. To retain talent, employers are boosting matches, allowing immediate participation in the plan or reducing the amount of time an employee must work before truly "owning" the employer's contributions on their behalf.

When the pandemic began, many employers delayed or outright halted the contributions they made to their employees' 401(k) plans. Now that they need to retain workers, it's no surprise many employers are reversing that decision. Without a union contract, nearly everything management gives can be taken away.

That's one of the reasons OPEIU developed the OPEIU National Retirement Savings Plan. The plan features immediate 100 percent vesting in your balance, and it's funded through your pre-tax contributions and any matching employer contributions in your collective bargaining agreement.

Visit opeiu.retirepru.com to learn more about how the OPEIU National Retirement Savings Plan can offer you a simple, convenient and consistent way to save for retirement in uncertain times.

“Honor to Receive a Union Plus Scholarship”

It was such an honor to receive a Union Plus scholarship and I'm so pleased to share the joy and excitement with my fellow OPEIU union members. I'm also excited to be finishing the first semester of my MBA program, which was possible through this scholarship!

Thank you,
Edwin Soto Saucedo
Local 537
Panorama City, California

Free College Staff is “Friendly, Helpful”

I am the secretary-treasurer of the ITPEU/OPEIU Local 4873. We have approximately 10,000 members nationwide. I started taking courses through the OPEIU Free College benefit so I could better understand the benefit when explaining it to the membership.

Like me, many of our members have never gone beyond high school and don't come from families with higher education in their backgrounds. One of the things I stress the most to the membership when presenting the benefit is how friendly, courteous and helpful the program staff is. I am glad I can confidently encourage them to contact the staff and not worry if they don't know the lingo or how the process works.

Thanks to everyone involved in the OPEIU Free College benefit. I really appreciate all that you do.

In solidarity,
John Brenton IV
Secretary-Treasurer
ITPEU/OPEIU Local 4873
Savannah, Georgia

Editor's note: Thanks so much, John, for sharing your experiences with the OPEIU Free College benefit. And thanks for the shout out to the hard-working folks at the Student Resource Center who help our members access the program and answer all their questions. They are also OPEIU members, having joined Local 792 (formerly Local 17) in March 2020.

Welcome to the New OPEIU Connect!

OPEIU is pleased to announce White Collar will now be known as OPEIU Connect!

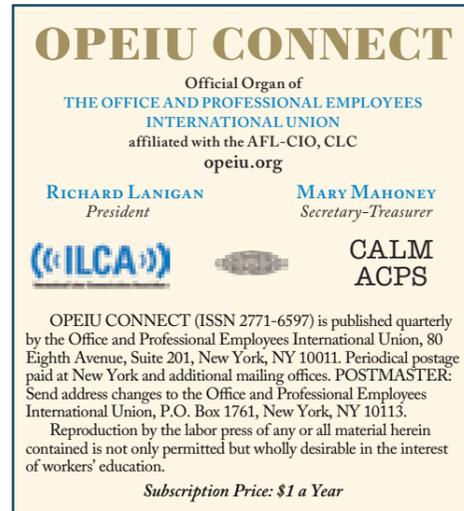
When OPEIU was chartered in 1945 its official membership publication was known as Office Worker. In 1954 the name was changed to White Collar.

It's 68 years later and we asked OPEIU members to help us find a name that better reflects today's union. It's been a long time coming, and we couldn't be more excited to share our new name and look.

We want to know what you think! Feedback can be sent to frontdesk@opeiu.org. Please use the subject line: *Letters to the Editor*.

On the Cover:

Working professionals from tech, nonprofit organizations, higher education and more are turning to OPEIU to help secure the dignity and respect they deserve on the job. See page 8 for more about some of the groups who have recently joined OPEIU.



Fighting For the Right to Organize!

How Recent Union Drives in Media Could Mean Better Labor Journalism

Driving a wedge between working people and their union is a fundamental tactic used by employers in nearly every workplace organizing campaign. Against a backdrop of economic turmoil in the media industry, the decline of labor reporting as a dedicated beat and the rise of billionaire-funded — and often anti-union — media empires, employers have increasingly taken this fight to the public arena in overt and covert ways.

But a recent wave of organizing in the media industry, particularly the aggressive campaigns being won by the NewsGuild-CWA, could help combat this cultural phenomenon and amplify union struggles in a frame recognizable to working people. In 2021 alone, they had 42 organizing victories, adding 2,128 media industry professionals to their ranks. Members of the Writers Guild of America-East, which also represents journalists, also voted to affirm the union's commitment to organizing media professionals.

Edward Ongweso Jr. is an award-winning labor reporter covering labor and the gig economy for Vice's Motherboard, and a member of Writers Guild of America-East. When he started at Vice in 2018, he entered

a newsroom that had unionized three years earlier after a difficult fight for recognition. The union card he inherited has given him “stability and confidence that, even if things go bad, my co-workers and I will have each others' backs,” he said.

Being a union member has, he said, enlightened his perspectives and framing while reporting. “I do think having a union keeps at the front of my mind things that relate to struggles other workers are going through in their own attempts to unionize or in their own workplaces where they're struggling without a union,” he said in an interview with OPEIU Connect.

The 2015 union drive shifted the internal politics of the outlet, he said, and “definitely played a role” in expanding the scope of

the outlet's coverage of labor issues. For other journalists and media workers who want to unionize, he suggested “talk to your co-workers, figure out what they want and need, and how you can show up for each other.”

It's still incumbent upon working people and their unions to publicize our struggles and our message — we can never expect the media to instinctively be friendly to our cause. As more and more media professionals organize, and begin to understand firsthand what it means to be in a union and the gravity of union struggles, however, we are on the cusp of a resurgence in labor reporting working people desperately need in order to amplify their voice in the workplace.

INSIDE

-  Seven Steps to Help Avoid Tax-Related Identity Theft 6
-  Cover Story: Union Yes! Working Professionals Choose OPEIU 8
-  Local 6 Nurses at Rutland Secure 20 Percent Wage Increase 12
-  MOVE Texas United Ratifies First Contract, Secures 32-Hour Workweek 14

Union-Busting Segment on “Last Week Tonight” Could Help in Labor Organizing Fights

In the wake of “Striketober” — October 2021's strike surge with workers walking off the job at John Deere, Kellogg's, Kaiser Permanente and more — national print and television media began to reverse the decades-long decline of labor reporting with renewed interest in the struggles of working people.

Perhaps the most useful tool to emerge came during primetime, however; not on CNN but on HBO's “Last Week Tonight with John Oliver.” The show, a comedy-news program in the mold of Weekend Update on “Saturday Night Live,” recently ran a full segment on union busting — one so comprehensive it has potential to be used as an inoculation tool for union organizers.

The 23-minute-long show touches upon captive audience meetings, why employers union bust, how penalties for doing so are minimal (if any penalties are levied at all) and recent efforts to pass the Protecting the Right to Organize Act.

Scan the QR code to watch the show.



Seven Steps to Help Avoid Tax-Related Identity Theft

Tax season is the perfect time to review steps to ensure you aren't a victim of tax-related identity theft. It's also a good time to make sure you've enrolled in OPEIU's Identity Protection benefit, which is provided to all members at no cost! Enroll today by visiting [OPEUIDProtect.com](https://opeiuidprotect.com).

Tax-related identity theft is when someone uses your personally identifiable information, including your Social Security Number, to file a fraudulent tax return to claim a refund or steal stimulus checks. Follow these seven steps to help minimize your risk:

- 1. Get an Identity Protection PIN:** An Identity Protection PIN (IP PIN) prevents an attacker from filing a tax return using your Social Security Number.
- 2. File Your Return Early:** Once you've filed your return, a crook will not be able to file another return in your name.
- 3. Check for Fraudulent Submissions:** Log in to the IRS website to confirm your taxes have not yet been filed on your behalf.
- 4. Protect Your Personal Data:** Password protect/encrypt information, create strong passwords (9 or more characters), use security software, use two-factor authentication and use separate email addresses for financial/legal and social engagement.
- 5. Know How the IRS Contacts Taxpayers:** The IRS does not reach out to taxpayers by sending text messages, email or social media. If you receive an email, do not click the link, do not download anything. If you're concerned you may be missing important information, contact the IRS directly at 1-800-829-1040 to confirm the validity of any message you've received. When the IRS needs to contact a taxpayer, the first contact is normally a letter delivered by the U.S. Postal Service.
- 6. Know Your Tax Preparer's Qualifications:** Your tax preparer should have a Preparer Tax Identification Number and professional credentials, such as a certified public accountant (CPA) license.
- 7. Enroll in OPEIU's Identity Protection Benefit:** As an OPEIU member, you and your family members receive complimentary identity protection through Identity IQ.

To enroll, go to [OPEUIDProtect.com](https://opeiuidprotect.com).

If you are a victim of tax-related identity theft, contact Identity IQ today at 1-800-637-5680.

A flier with all this information and helpful links can be found at opeiu.org under the OPEIU Membership Benefits tab, and by clicking the Identity Protection link.

More than 2,300 students have saved \$10.8 million in tuition, e-books and other fees through the OPEIU Free College benefit.

Graduating Cum Laude Through Free College Benefit

Alphonso Johnson, a waste supervisor for Miami Dade County and a member of the Government Supervisors Association of Florida (GSAF)/OPEIU Local 100, is making the most of the educational opportunities provided by the OPEIU Free College benefit — and making his union proud in the process.

"I'm happy to share with my union family that I was fortunate enough to make the dean's and president's list," Johnson said of his experience earning an associate degree in teaching from Eastern Gateway Community College, which he attended through the Free College program.

Johnson graduated cum laude with honors in December. "I was also invited to become a member of the Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society, which I accepted," he said. He is now looking forward to completing his bachelor's degree from Central State University through OPEIU's Bachelor's Degree Completion benefit and obtaining his master's degree in the future.

"I want the union and members to know how grateful I am for the Free College benefit we members are afforded," Johnson continued. "I sincerely want to thank OPEIU and Local 100 for making this possible. I could not have done it without the financial support of the Free College benefit program."

"These are extraordinary academic accomplishments, and we are delighted to hear the union's Free College benefit was the instrument that facilitated Alphonso obtaining his degree," said Luiz Morizot-Leite, Local 100 first vice president.

To learn more about the OPEIU Free College benefit, visit freecollege.opeiu.org or opeiu.org and search under the Member Resources tab.

Union Yes! Working Professionals Choose OPEIU

INCLUDEnyc Employees Join Local 153

Employees at INCLUDEnyc voted unanimously to unionize with Local 153 in New York. Their union, Union INCLUDEd, is composed of 27 family educators, youth and family coordinators and administrative and operational staff at the New York City-based nonprofit, which works with disabled young people and their families, connecting them with educational, employment and living opportunities and resources. Grounded in this mission, Union INCLUDEd prioritized the needs and concerns of disabled people through every step of the unionization process.

Staff decided to unionize in response to a number of issues, including salary discrepancies, unfair promotion processes and a lack of transparency, according to Dana Kopel, a Local 153 organizer. Neil Purohit, an organizing committee member and youth coordinator who started at INCLUDEnyc during the pandemic, pointed to “the lack of understanding of processes and decision-making voiced by co-workers,” particularly those who have worked at the organization for several years. Issues of sustainability and capacity pushed staff to ask “leadership to really think about how being overworked and not having strong organizational systems can result in people struggling,” said Colin Montgomery, a senior family educator and fellow organizing committee member. The entire process was conducted through a framework of disability justice.

With this election win, Union INCLUDEd members can collectively bargain to create a workplace designed for all people and to make sure every voice is heard. In addition to negotiating for greater transparency, clearer protocols and a voice in organization-wide decision-making, union members hope to secure better pay and benefits — particularly to address health expenses disproportionately affecting disabled staff — as well as flexible scheduling and improved leave policy to make INCLUDEnyc a more accessible and sustainable place to work.

Asked if they had any advice for other nonprofit workers forming their own unions, Union INCLUDEd organizers emphasized the importance of accessibility and inclusiveness, concerns they’re familiar with from their work, their union campaign and their own lived experiences.

Purohit encouraged “folks to go the extra mile to create spaces that are not just available but inviting — to make folks sharing their voices not just an option but a necessity to move things forward at each stage.”

“Make sure you know your people,” said Maggie Downham, an organizing committee member and family educator at INCLUDEnyc. “Everyone’s voice is so critical, and you’re representing the whole when you’re unionizing.” Montgomery said while “every union should center intersectional justice, it’s easy for disability to fall out” of the framework. As a union, he said, “we want to make sure there’s a commitment to equity, really centering accessibility and the experiences of people with disabilities as a team. You’re building power for the future, not just now.”



New Local 153 members at INCLUDEnyc.

Impact Justice Employees’ Union with Local 29 Recognized

The 56 employees of Impact Justice, a criminal justice reform nonprofit, received from management voluntary recognition of their union with Local 29.

“We are pleased, yet unsurprised, by our president’s decision to do the right thing and recognize our union,” said Bry Law, an Impact Justice United (IJU) spokesperson and a program coordinator at the criminal justice reform nonprofit since November 2020. “IJU is excited to work collaboratively to build a stronger organization and a more prosperous staff.

“That work begins at the bargaining table,” Law added.



The members of the Impact Justice United organizing committee.

A supermajority of Impact Justice employees asked their president, Alex Busansky, to bypass the lengthy and arduous National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) election process in favor of a collaborative approach. In recognizing IJU, both management and employees can now focus on negotiating a first contract that benefits both the organization and the people who make it run.

In their letter requesting voluntary recognition, IJU identified some of the issues they hope to solve at the bargaining table. Through the collective bargaining process, employees are hoping to enshrine more equitable decision-making processes and improve organizational transparency and accountability.

“Impact Justice staff are proud to be engaged in the fight for justice at work,” continued Law. “Forming a union is a natural extension of that mission — a mission every staff member at Impact Justice shares. “We look forward to meeting management at the bargaining table soon to not only negotiate pay, benefits and working conditions, but to agree upon real solutions that will make Impact Justice a place that lives up to its mission — one that brought every one of us here in the first place and one that continues to drive our work here each and every day.”

Tech Workers at Big Cartel Join Local 1010

Staff at Big Cartel, a Salt Lake City, Utah-based e-commerce business platform, are among the latest tech workers to organize with OPEIU.

The Big Cartel Workers Union sought and secured recognition of their union with OPEIU Tech Workers Union Local 1010 through a card-check process. They become the first unit of tech workers in a so-called “right-to-work” state, which typically see less union organizing and fewer union wins. But Local 1010’s focus on organizing across the tech sector instead of a specific geographic area allows them to build worker power across state lines.



Employees at Big Cartel in Utah won recognition of their union, the first-ever unit of tech workers in a state with restrictive “right-to-work” laws.

Contract negotiations between the union and the employer are now underway.

The unit, composed of product developers, engineers, designers, support staffers, marketers and operations personnel, sought unionization to improve not just their own working environment but the company itself. A union, said the staff in its letter to management seeking recognition, will help increase transparency, equity, collaboration, staff well-being and retention as well as promote the company’s similar values. They also seek equitable pay and benefits regardless of race or gender.

“With our contract we’re hoping to improve transparency inside the company’s decision-making processes, guarantee equitable pay and benefits across all departments and ensure workplace policies are fairly enforced and clearly documented,” said Andrew Shaw, a Big Cartel employee for two years.

“Our company is in a moment of transition. As workers, we deserve a voice in how we move forward together,” added Lauren Fazah, who has been with the company for four years. By unionizing, the workers “want to benefit each other and the company as a whole.”

Employees at Center for Responsible Lending Form Union with Local 39 and Bargain for First Contract

Employees at the Center for Responsible Lending (CRL) have had their union with Local 39 voluntarily recognized by their employer and are now bargaining their first contract.

The employee union, known as the Center for Responsible Lending United (CRLU), organized in July. The group of 30 workers were committed to receiving fair treatment in their workplace that reflected the values of the organization and the type of work they do on a daily basis. CRL is a nonprofit research and policy group focusing on communities marginalized or underserved by the existing financial marketplace. "In many cases, the work focuses on groups of people



New Local 39 members at the Center for Responsible Lending.

who are targeted for unfair and abusive financial products that leave them in worse financial condition," said Zoraida Seguinot, an OPEIU lead organizer. This includes people of color, women, rural residents and low-wealth families and communities.

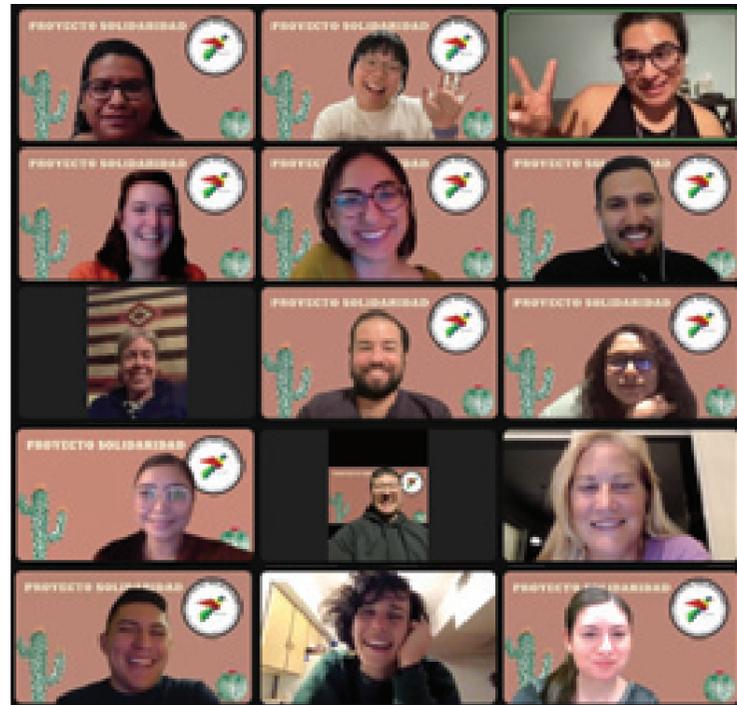
"CRLU is a great example of how quickly and seamlessly a campaign can be successful when strong leaders are at the forefront," Seguinot said. "The leaders of the CRLU organizing committee were deeply committed to the campaign from the start. They were actively preparing every step of the way to generate strong support among the unit and in the community, maintaining an active and engaged social media campaign that resulted in 94 percent of the employees standing together and asking for voluntary recognition of their union."

Local 251 Organizes at Nonprofit Florence Project

Local 251 has secured voluntary recognition for a group of employees at the Florence Immigrant & Refugee Rights Project (FIRRP), a nonprofit organization providing free legal and social services to adults and children in immigration detention in Arizona.

"The government doesn't provide attorneys for people in immigration proceedings," said Local 251 President Kelley Allen. "As a result, an estimated 86 percent of those detained go unrepresented due to poverty. FIRRP strives to address this inequity both locally and nationally through direct service, partnerships with the community and advocacy and outreach efforts."

Local 251 successfully organized 128 new members with 23 job classifications. The union represents attorneys, paralegals, social workers, project coordinators, legal assistants and many others who sought to address various workplace issues, including a lack of transparency and accountability and high turnover rates among overworked employees. They have begun the process of bargaining their first contract.



New Local 251 members at the Florence Project.

Local 8 Has Election Wins at Cornish College and Forterra NW

Staff at Cornish College of the Arts and nonprofit Forterra NW have both voted overwhelmingly for representation by Local 8 in Seattle.

At Cornish, the group of 42 student support, administrative, IT and facilities staff are dedicated to supporting Cornish's mission of providing a quality arts-based undergraduate education. They sought to unionize to improve working conditions, increase transparency and have a chance to participate in decision-making directly impacting the lives of staff and students. The election result was hard fought since they filed for their vote in May. The college's decision to go to the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) resulted in multiple delays due to the hearing and appeals process.

Cornish, established in 1914, offers Bachelor of Fine Arts degrees in the performing and visual arts and a Bachelor of Music degree. Cornish will be the first staff at an institution of higher education to be a part of Local 8 in Washington.

"Unionizing staff at Cornish has been a long process, but hugely rewarding and empowering," said Kaitlyn Vallance, assistant dean of student affairs. "Knowing my co-workers and I will be able to work together to advocate for a fair, transparent and sustainable work environment brings me so much joy. I hope this encourages additional college and university staff in the area to consider unionizing."

Anthony Rodgers, access services librarian, is celebrating the victory because "unions increase representation and allow more opportunities for different voices to be heard."

A group of 29 project managers, philanthropy staff, lands managers and staff accountants at Forterra NW also voted through an NLRB election to affiliate with Local 8. The group is dedicated to supporting the nonprofit's mission of driving "land-based solutions in Washington to support a

healthy environment and resilient communities for all." They sought to unionize to improve working conditions to reduce turnover, increase transparency and accountability and have a chance to participate in decision-making directly impacting their lives at work. They organized entirely remotely during the pandemic.

Local 8 represents employees at many nonprofit organizations, but Forterra is the first nonprofit with an environmental focus to join.

"I'm excited for all we will be able to do for Forterra staff members and our community now that our union is in place," said Maya Klem, Green Cities project manager and organizing committee member.



Forterra NW staff organized over Zoom during the pandemic.



New Local 8 members at Cornish College of the Arts.

Local 6 Nurses at Rutland Secure 20 Percent Wage Increase

Local 6 registered nurses at Rutland Regional Medical Center in Rutland, Vermont have ratified a three-year agreement securing the largest wage increase and overall best package of benefit improvements in the unit's history.

"I wanted to go out with a good contract for all of my friends, brothers and sisters, and this is the best one I've seen in 25 years," said Robert Bassalin, a retiring registered nurse (RN), negotiating committee member and a charter member of the Local 6 nurses' union at Rutland.

The contract provided a 10 percent wage increase in base pay for most unit nurses in November 2021, which will be followed by 5 percent increases in November 2022 and 2023 for a whopping 20 percent total increase. A retention bonus of 8 percent based upon hours worked will also be paid quarterly during the first year of the contract to all members except those who received a sign-on bonus.

The negotiating committee also secured a move to higher step rates of pay for many of the nurses. Additional contract highlights include increases in shift differentials, salary increases for charge nurses and preceptor clinicians, stronger language defining a preceptor's role and doubling of degree differentials for BSN and MSN. The contract includes increases in transport pay, extra shifts, scheduled and unscheduled call-ins, extra shifts and combined time off. Stronger language was also put in place regarding seniority, probationary periods and nurse and patient safety.

"We achieved fairness for all RNs by finally getting rid of the salary-range system in the clinics and other places that allowed management to place junior RNs higher in the salary range than their senior colleagues," said George Noel, Local 6 business manager and Rutland chief negotiator. "All Local 6 RNs are now in a step system that compensates them based on their seniority."

"We had a great negotiating team and tremendous support from the members," Noel continued. "Their involvement was integral to our success."



Members of the Rutland Regional Medical Center negotiating committee are, from left, registered nurses Robert Bassalin, Danielle Gray, Janice Austin, Kristy Putorti, Karen St. Marie, Nancy Blair and John Dyer. Not pictured are Local 6 Business Manager and Rutland Chief Negotiator George Noel and registered nurses Leslie Allen, Fritz Asuncion, Colleen Beayon, Connie Flanders, Ziggy Guban, Julianna Kimball and Ann Southworth.

Local 6's Danielle Gray Elected Vermont AFL-CIO Vice President

Danielle Gray, RN, a member of Local 6 employed at Rutland Regional Medical Center, has been elected vice president of the Vermont AFL-CIO representing Rutland and Addison Counties.



Members at Massachusetts Trial Court Offer Food Assistance During Pandemic

Local 6 members at the Massachusetts Trial Court's Office of Community Corrections Programs have done their part to help others, delivering food assistance to those with the greatest need in their communities.

Jon Palermo is an assistant court service coordinator with the Community Corrections Programs. He and the approximately 50 people in his unit closely monitor offenders who perform community service work as an alternative to prosecution, sentencing and incarceration. The Trial Court Community Service Program, a part of the Massachusetts Probation Service, typically provides opportunities for individuals who are awaiting trial or on probation to contribute to their communities through clean up, beautification efforts and helping to stock or distribute food at local food pantries.

In the initial days of the pandemic, the work the Community Service Program normally does was suspended. So, the dedicated Local 6 members mobilized to provide needed services to the Commonwealth. Their efforts have included playing a major role in the statewide distribution of personal protective equipment (PPE) throughout the state, delivering 15 truckloads to courts and court offices.

In coordination with the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency, the Local 6 members also worked with local food banks, including Open Pantry of Greater Lowell, the Merrimack Valley Food Bank and others, to collect and deliver food to needy families and elderly homebound people. Staff in Middlesex County delivered food to 720 households and provided more than 360 hours of service. "These food banks lost most of their volunteers during the pandemic, so our members were so happy to be able to fill the gap and deliver food to people who needed it most," Palermo said.

Other endeavors have included delivering supplies and volunteering their time to animal rescue groups, such as the Baystate Equine Rescue of Oakham and the Second Chance Animal Services of East Brookfield.

"Words can't describe how grateful we are to have had your help getting this lifesaving food to people who can't get to a food pantry," said Amy Pessia, executive director of the Merrimack Valley Food Bank, in an email where she called the Local 6 members "heroes."

"Our volunteer activities were suspended during the pandemic and you all stepped up when we and our vulnerable neighbors needed us all the most," Pessia continued.



From left, Local 6 members Kevin Spitz and John Gibbons, both court service coordinators, and assistant court service coordinators Daniel Lynch and Sean Duggan deliver food assistance during the pandemic.

Local 6's Pat Daly Receives Labor Award

Local 6 Business Agent Pat Daly received the Robert Fuchs Labor Law Award at the 47th Annual Robert Fuchs Labor Law Conference in Boston. The award is presented annually to select law students who achieve the highest grades in their labor law class and recognizes their excellence in the labor law field.

"Local 6 couldn't be more proud of Pat for this terrific achievement," said Phil Basile, chief field services/legal officer, who attended the conference on behalf of Local 6. "He is well deserving of the award and a valuable member of our team. Pat has an extremely bright future in the labor law field. Business Manager George Noel and I are happy to work with him on a daily basis to fight for our members' labor rights."



MOVE Texas United Ratifies First Contract, Secures 32-Hour Workweek

Move Texas United (MTXU), members of Local 277, unanimously ratified their first contract, which secures full benefits for all employees paid by the employer and 50 percent for dependents, 40 percent representation on the organization's board, a \$50,000 wage floor for full-time employees and a 32-hour workweek.

"The contract will set an unprecedented example of the labor movement in the nonprofit sector," MTXU said in a statement. "We are so proud of our talented team of young people who made this possible."

"When nonprofit leadership comes to the negotiating table willing to listen and collaborate with their frontline staff, we can start seeing progressive change that lifts industry standards," said Jennifer Levine, a Local 277 business representative. "By collaborating on such issues as employee board representation and transparency around funding, MTXU and MOVE Texas leadership did just that on their first collective bargaining agreement."

MOVE Texas is a statewide nonprofit organization dedicated to empowering underrepresented youth communities.



Sitting, from left, are Local 277 Business Representative Jennifer Levine, Advocacy Director and organizing committee member Alex Birnel, Communications Associate and bargaining team member Tori Falcon and Managing Director Zenen Jaimes Perez; standing, from left, are Harris Advocacy Organizer and bargaining team member Alan de Leon, South/Central Field Manager and organizing committee member Jonathan Gutierrez, Education Associate and bargaining team member Jacklyn Reyna, Executive Director Claudia Yoli Ferla, Dallas Regional Coordinator and bargaining team member Jason Ingram, Finance Associate and bargaining team member Baron Mora Alcazar, Travis Regional Coordinator and bargaining team member Tessa Mitterhoff and Tarrant Regional Coordinator and bargaining team member Mateo Granados.

Local 40 Service Workers Ratify First Contract with McLaren Macomb

Service workers represented by Local 40 at McLaren Macomb hospital in Mt. Clemens, Michigan have ratified their first collective bargaining agreement and now have the rights and protections provided by a union contract that includes fair wages for all employees.

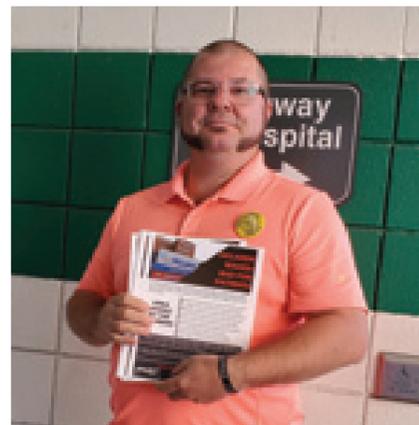
At a time when other medical facilities were paying employees far more to maintain adequate staffing and quality patient care during the pandemic, McLaren was paying some employees the minimum wage of \$9.65 per hour. More than half of the service group's clerical, technical and administrative support staff were earning less than \$15 per hour.

The employees took their fight for fair wages to the community, using social media and a leafleting campaign to highlight the need for fair compensation for their critical, lifesaving work. "The road to organizing and ratifying a contract was difficult for these workers, but they stuck together and dedicated their time and energy into this successful battle, proving there is strength in unity," said Dina Carlisle, RN and Local 40 president.

The two-year agreement provides a \$600 signing bonus and an across-the-board wage increase of 8 percent. There are also substantial starting salary increases for many of the job classifications, which will provide employees upward of 20 percent in total increases.

Important contract language was also established regarding hours, overtime, holidays, paid time off and grievance and discipline

procedures eliminating the hospital's ability to fire employees at will. Stewards were also appointed to represent co-workers in grievance, discipline or investigatory meetings.



Brad Schunemann, Local 40 vice president and bargaining committee member, distributes leaflets to raise community awareness of the low wages paid to McLaren Macomb's dedicated service workers.



Anastasia Ellwood, bargaining team member and newly elected chief steward.

Minor League Umpires Ratify Contract with Big Salary Gains

The Association of Minor League Umpires (AMLU)/OPEIU Guild 322 has ratified a four-year agreement with Major League Baseball that includes significant salary increases, employer-provided insurance for any previously excluded umpires, a \$400 uniform stipend and full reimbursement of extra uniform expenses for women to match their male counterparts and more. Importantly, the contract secures neutral arbitration for any contract issues and a ban on suspension based on an errant judgment call on the field.

The AMLU Executive Board of Emma Charlesworth-Seiler, Nick Susie, Ben Engstrand, Jude Koury and Jordan Ferrell negotiated an unprecedented wage increase of up to 87 percent, a raise the union has fought years to achieve. An overwhelming majority of the 200 members voted for ratification.

"The membership is pleased to obtain a sizable pay raise in tandem with a number of non-economic gains," said Ferrell, AMLU president. "Make no mistake, however, a great deal of work remains to be done in the coming years to obtain an economic package that reflects the innate value and superior services provided by the membership to Major League Baseball and its fans." With starting salaries of just \$27,000 per season, the union is committed to negotiating future increases.

Formed in 2000, AMLU affiliated with OPEIU in 2010 and was named Guild 322 after the baseball call of three balls, two strikes and two outs. The first contract saw immediate gains in salary, benefits and working conditions for the umpires.

Prior to AMLU's formation, minor league umpires had been working without representation. The goal of the organizers was to secure health insurance, a benefit they were able to acquire for their members after several years of employment, as well as a ranking and promotion system to standardize movement up through the various leagues. Minor league umpires also work regularly in Major League Baseball, filling in for sick, injured or vacationing full-time umpires.

Despite these gains and a strike honored by 100 percent of the minor league umpires in 2006, some key goals were not obtained. So, in 2009 the umpires began the process of affiliation with OPEIU and over the years have made huge strides on behalf of the members.



AMLU members, from left, Hardlen Acosta, Jhonatan Biarreta, Dillon Wilson, Louie Krupa, Tanner Dobson and Kelvis Velez.



Guild 322's first president Shaun Francis calls a game at Cashman Field, Las Vegas' minor league ballpark, in April 2010.



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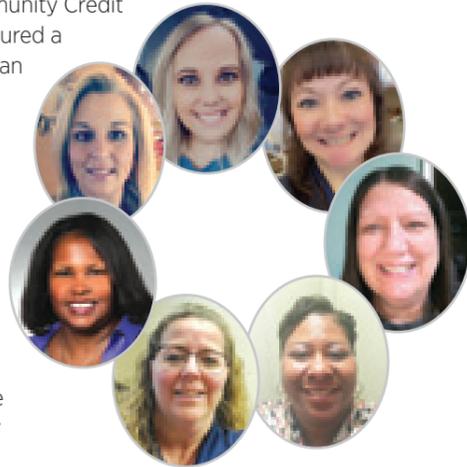
New Contract at OMNI Community Credit

After a long and difficult fight, the OMNI Community Credit Union bargaining committee held strong and secured a contract that includes wage increases of more than 13 percent. The group, members of Local 42 in Farmington Hills, Michigan, a so-called “right-to-work” state that greatly restricts working people’s access to unions, unanimously ratified the contract.

In addition to the wage increases, the unit was able to negotiate a significant improvement in holiday pay, an increase in personal time off and vacation time, while fending off management’s proposed increases in healthcare costs. They also obtained language allowing the union to hold orientations with new employees to share the many benefits they are entitled to as members of Local 42. “This will go a long way to maintaining and fostering solidarity within the bargaining unit now and in the future,” said Lisa Blake, Local 42 president and an OPEIU vice president.

Membership involvement was key to securing the contract. “We established a contract action team,” Blake said. “They held lots of meetings, and they reached out one-on-one to the members, getting them involved in the contract campaign, asking them to complete surveys and share their thoughts.

“Then they established a bargaining committee who, with some help from the International’s staff, met and bargained with management for long hours, including over the holidays, to reach a fair contract,” Blake said. Much thanks goes to the committee, composed of Blake, Sharon Graham, Laurie Lowery, Amanda Feltner, Jodie Hageman, Angela Brown, Kari Spicer and Angela Vanderstraaten.



Members of the OMNI Community Credit Union bargaining committee are, clockwise, from top far left, Angela Brown, Angela Vanderstraaten, Kari Spicer, Laurie Lowery, Sharon Graham, Jodie Hageman and Local 42 President Lisa Blake, who also serves as an OPEIU vice president. Not pictured is Amanda Feltner.

Local 12 Members at HealthPartners Have a New Contract

Local 12 members employed at HealthPartners in Minnesota have a new contract providing 10 percent wage increases over the three-year agreement.

The contract also brings improvements to vacation accrual, sick and parenting leave and raises the starting salaries of several job classifications. The union was also able to hold the line on health insurance, guaranteeing no increase in 2022 premiums and only a \$10 increase in 2023, according to Local 12 Representative Molly Thul.



Local 12 members at HealthPartners in Minnesota.

Lupe Valles Drives Local 174 Forward

Lupe Valles was elected president and business manager of Local 174 in Los Angeles, California in mid-2021 and has hit the ground running, ensuring the local is organizing, training stewards and negotiating the best contracts possible for its members.

“Under my direction, the local is continuing to internally organize members and repositioning to become an organizing local,” Valles said. “Within the first few months of my installation as president, Local 174 held its first shop steward training. We had more than 20 members participating and because of this success, we’ll be holding another session in the spring.”

Local 174 has also recently negotiated and ratified contracts for Universal City Studios LLP, Universal Television Network, the Motion Picture Industry Pension and Health Plans and Fox Films. “These contracts provide our members with increases in wages and benefits, an additional holiday for Martin Luther King Jr. Day and a flexible work schedule that includes a hybrid schedule,” Valles said.

Valles has also been appointed to serve as OPEIU’s representative to the Labor Council for Latin American Advancement (LCLAA) Executive Board, where she looks forward to continuing to “stress the importance, not only with our Latin members but within all our communities, of raising up our voices by voting in all elections.”

Local 174 is also making community involvement a top priority, recently participating in its first community toy drive in more than 25 years. Members from the Motion Picture Industry Pension and Health Plans participated in the Los Angeles County Federation of Labor Toy Drive, collecting 115 toys for needy children.

In reflecting upon the local’s recent success, Valles recognized the work of her predecessors who paved the way and positioned Local 174 to accomplish such great work.

“I want to say a huge thank you to Christine Page for all her years of dedicated service as president and business manager of Local 174,” Valles said. “We wish her all the best in her retirement.”



Lupe Valles, left, is sworn in as president and business manager of Local 174 by Christine Page, former president and an OPEIU vice president.



Collecting toys for local children are, from left, Local 174 members Wendy Meister, Sandra Gallegos, Joy Figueras, Gigi Queyquep, Dana Meadows, Norma Corsbie, Alejandro Santander, Jack McCrone, Monique Parks, Veronica Ramos, Paula Kidby, Maria Mendez Cortes, Andrea Byrd, Letty James and Javier Cordon.

Local 251 Elects New Officers

Local 251 in Albuquerque, New Mexico has elected by acclamation new officers for a three-year term, including President Kelley Allen.

Also elected were Vice President Phyllis Rutka, Secretary-Treasurer Angeleen Saiz, Recording Secretary Kristen Lujan, Trustees Brenda Jaramillo, Katrina Finnegan and Christie Chambers, and Members-at-Large Judy Otero (ABF Freight) and Judi Burkhalter (IBEW 611).

Local 375 Re-Elects Trustee Bob Lemmink

The Cincinnati Professional Ushers of OPEIU Local 375 have re-elected Bob Lemmink to a three-year term through 2024 as a trustee, reports Local 375 President Andy Curran. Roger Byrd was appointed to serve the remainder of the current term as junior steward at Heritage Bank Center through 2022.

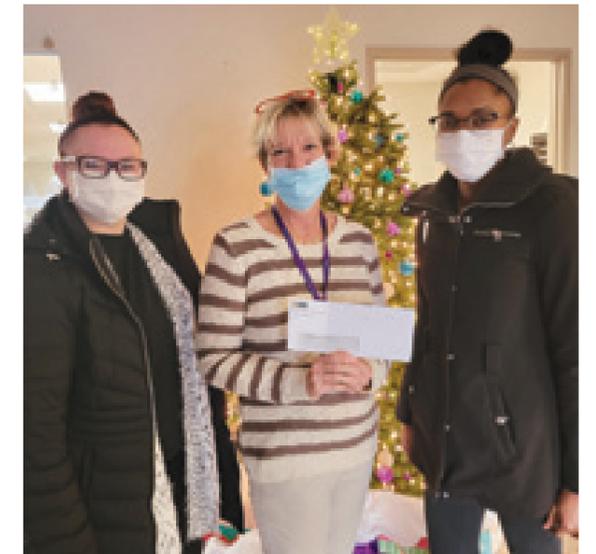
Local 375 represents ushers who work at Cincinnati’s three major sports and entertainment venues, Great American Ballpark, Paul Brown Stadium and Heritage Bank Center.

Local 494 Serves Its Community

Local 494 in Detroit has an active and engaged Community Service Committee, dedicated to helping those in need in its community. Co-Chairs Dana Ulinski and Carmara Brandon are leading the effort, having spearheaded donations to several organizations during the holiday season.

“I am so proud of these new members,” said Local 494 President Janice Caruso, who reported the local held its annual Sharing and Caring Drive to raise money to help families in need with a Christmas basket of food, “and Dana and Carmara stepped right in and took on the challenge! With the help of members Jackee Lacey, Kim Miller-Moss, Laurinda Phillips and Susan Wong, the committee was able to accomplish so much. I can’t wait to see what’s in store in the coming year for this committee,” Caruso said.

The local collected canned donations to help reopen a local food bank and donated 453 pairs of new socks to Heart2Hart Detroit for the homeless. Local 494 also made donations to the Oakland County Children’s Village, which provides services to children and youth who come under the jurisdiction of the court and are in need of temporary out-of-home care, custody and treatment, and to Macomb County’s Turning Point, an organization helping survivors of domestic and sexual violence.



Local 494 Community Service Committee Co-Chairs Dana Ulinski, left, and Carmara Brandon, right, present the local’s donation to Karan Bates-Gasior, the chief development officer at Macomb County’s Turning Point.

Notice to Employees Subject to Union Security Clauses

This notice is for all private sector workers in the United States working under an OPEIU contract containing a valid union security clause. Union security clauses require an employee to pay dues or other fees to a union as a condition of employment. The dues or fees amount you pay to OPEIU supports the costs of negotiating your contract and the broad range of activities we engage in to support you, your family and your co-workers.

Nonmembers may file objections to funding union expenditures that are not germane to collective bargaining, contract administration, or grievance adjustment (“chargeable expenditures”) and instead pay what’s known as an agency fee. Examples of chargeable expenditures include: the costs of negotiations with employers; contract administration expenses; communication with employers regarding work-related issues; handling employees’ work-related problems through the grievance and arbitration procedure; and union administration. Examples of non-chargeable expenditures include: expenses made for community services; expenses for political purposes; the costs of certain affiliation fees; and expenses for benefits available only to members and their families.

Note: The International Union’s J.B. Moss Voice of the Electorate (VOTE) fund is an independent, segregated fund that receives voluntary donations and contributes to political candidates who support the needs of working people. No money received from dues or fees goes to the VOTE fund. Accordingly, the VOTE fund is not considered in the calculation of the percentage of expenditures that is spent on non-chargeable expenses.

But if you choose not to join the union or if you resign your membership, and in either case file objections, the many rights and opportunities available to OPEIU members will not be available to you. For example, you will give up your ability to:

- Vote on terms of your contract;
- Participate in strike votes;
- Participate in the development of contract proposals;
- Nominate, vote for, or serve as an officer of your local union or the International Union;
- Nominate, vote for, or serve as a delegate to the International Convention; and

- Enjoy discounts and other benefits available only to members, including eligibility for OPEIU scholarships for you and your family.

Should you decide to give up all these rights and benefits and submit objections in accordance with the below procedure, you will receive a rebate of a portion of your dues or equivalent payments based on non-chargeable expenditures. In the past, approximately 32-36% of the International Union’s expenditures have gone toward non-chargeable activities. The percentages of local union expenditures on non-chargeable activities have generally been lower.

As you consider whether to object, you should remember the most important right you have at work is the right to be represented by a union. When workers negotiate together through the union and speak with one voice, they win higher wages and better benefits and achieve greater respect and dignity on the job than workers who do not have workplace representation. There is strength in numbers. The stronger your union is, the better your contract will be.

Objections Procedure

Individuals who choose to file objections must submit them in writing to the Office and Professional Employees International Union, P.O. Box 1761, New York, N.Y. 10113, Attention: Mary Mahoney, Secretary-Treasurer. Objections should include the objector’s name, home address, employer, and local union number.

Objections must be postmarked during the month of June. New hires who choose not to join the union may also submit their objections postmarked within thirty (30) days of being compelled to pay dues or fees to the union or within thirty (30) days of the new hire’s receipt of a new employee letter from a local union. Newly resigned members may also submit their objections postmarked within thirty (30) days from receipt by the union of the resigning member’s letter of resignation. All objections will be deemed continuing in nature unless or until the employee requests a change in status. Timely submitted objections will be effective on the first day of the month following the month in which the objections were received by the union.

Challenge Procedure

An objector may challenge the International Union’s and/or the local union’s classification or calculation of expenditures before a neutral

arbitrator appointed by the American Arbitration Association pursuant to its Rules for Impartial Determination of Union Fees. Challenges may be coordinated or consolidated before a single arbitrator.

Objectors must submit written notification of any intended challenge to Mary Mahoney, Secretary-Treasurer, Office and Professional Employees International Union, P.O. Box 1761, New York, N.Y. 10113. Notifications must be received by the Secretary-Treasurer within thirty (30) days of the challenger’s receipt of a letter from the local union informing the challenger of the amount of the rebate, the basis for the calculation, and the internal procedure for filing a challenge. That challenge should specify which classification and/or calculations of the International Union and/or local union are being challenged.

The union(s) shall bear the burden of justifying their classifications and calculations. If a hearing at which the parties or witnesses may be present is held by the arbitrator, it will be held at a location most convenient to the largest number of involved challengers. The cost of any arbitration proceeding will be paid for by the union(s). Challengers, however, will not be reimbursed for lost time and will have to pay for their own travel expenses and the fees, costs, and expenses of any persons they involve in the proceedings.

When a written challenge is received from an objector, the local union will place an amount equal to the challenged portion of the fee into an interest-bearing escrow account. It shall remain in that account until the appointed arbitrator issues a decision. Should the decision lower the percentage of chargeable expenditures to the challenger(s), the appropriate portion of the escrowed fees, plus the interest earned by that portion while in the escrow account, will be refunded. All objectors in each local union affected by the decision of the arbitrator will be responsible for the adjusted fee amount determined by the arbitrator. If the arbitrator approves all or part of the unions’ classifications and/or calculations, the escrowed money and interest allocable to that part of the fee will revert to the union(s).

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