

The Organizer

FEBRUARY 2025



Our new Mission Statement was unveiled earlier this month at the 2025 IUPAT Eastern Regional Conference. The Mission Statement captures the essence of solidarity:

OUR MISSION

To better the lives of each and every member by being the strongest, most powerful voice in the industries we represent.

ONE UNION

Our strength is forged through unity by every member within our union working together, regardless of our individual trades, throughout North America. We stand united as one, transcending individual differences and creating collective power.


ONE FAMILY

We stand together as one. We support, care for, and respect each other in our union halls, on and off the job, each and every day. We leave no members behind.

ONE FIGHT

We fight together for stronger contracts - that means safer job sites, industry leading pay, and democracy at work. When we win stronger collective bargaining agreements for IUPAT members we win higher standards of living for every worker in our crafts.

HIT THE BRICKS! (OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACTION)

- **Town of Union – Public Hearing on Responsible Bidder Legislation**
 - **Date/Time**: Wednesday, February 5, 2025 @ 7pm.
 - **Location**: Union Town Hall, 3111 East Main St, Endwell 13760.
 - Contact Frank Stento with any questions; (607) 727-5208 or fstento@dc4.org.
- We have a few tickets left for the **2025 Buffalo/Niagara Union Sportsmen’s Alliance Conservation Dinner**.
 - **Date**: Friday, February 7, 2025.
 - **Location**: Ironworkers Local 6 Banquet Hall, 196 Orchard Park Rd, West Seneca 14224. Doors open at 5pm.
 - **Summary**: “Join the Union Sportsmen’s Alliance for a delicious meal, raffles, and a live auction to benefit conservation efforts in your area, and you could walk away with great new outdoor gear or thousands of dollars’ worth of guns. By attending the dinner, you contribute to the USA’s efforts to enhance public access to the outdoors, conserve wildlife habitats, restore our nation’s parks, and pass on our incredible outdoor heritage to the next generation. A portion of the evening’s proceeds will stay right in your community to fund a Work Boots on the Ground conservation project.”
 - If you’re in the Buffalo area and are interested in trying to get a ticket, please reach out to Brian Lypczynski, (716) 429-7489 or blipczynski@dc4.org.
 - **Note**: A Rochester area dinner event will be held in May, more details to come.
- Check out the **FREE** original edition of “**A Troublemaker’s Handbook: How to Fight Back Where You Work – and Win!**” [here](#).

- If you're interested in becoming a central labor council delegate, call, text or email Joe Guza at (716) 458-5844 or jguza@dc4.org.
- **Labor Notes Zoom Events:**
 - February 3 - **Steering Green Transitions** (Zoom, 8pm): Real solutions to the climate crisis depend on workers' know-how. In this new online workshop from Labor Notes, you'll hear from rank-and-file workers who organized collective action for better jobs and a livable climate. Learn more and register [here](#).
 - February 4 - **Workshop: What To Do When Your Union Breaks Your Heart** (Zoom 7:30pm). Learn more and register [here](#).

VOC MEETING

After much discussion we have decided to return to Zoom-only VOC Meetings. While many of our Pre-Game Meetings were successful, attendance is too low to continue them going forward. Our next VOC Meeting will be held **Thursday, February 20, 2025 @ 5:30pm**. Look out for the link!

PHOTO CONTEST

Submit your photos [here](#)! Photos from the field help promote our union trades and display our impact in our local communities. Plus, you could win a gas card!

EDUCATE, AGITATE, ORGANIZE!

Labor Podcasts

While labor news has returned to mainstream media over the last decade, it's not often reported by labor-friendly sources. Fortunately, the [Labor Radio Podcast Network](#) has done a fantastic job of hosting and promoting podcasts produced for labor and by labor. Boasting a network of more than 200 labor podcasts from across the United States (and the world, the Labor Radio Podcast Network is worth exploring.

There are many fantastic shows that we will highlight throughout the year. This month, we want to recommend the following:



- [The Rick Smith Show](#): By working people. For working people. Welcome to The Rick Smith Show. Working Americans are tired of listening to think tank approved corporate news and commentary. They want a direct, honest approach to the issues that matter, so this is what The Rick Smith Show provides. No puppets. No focus groups. No talking points.

- [The Valley Labor Report](#): Based in Huntsville, Alabama, The Valley Labor Report is a weekly talk radio show taking place from 9:30AM - 11AM, Saturdays on WVNN 92.5 FM that covers local, state, and national news for workers, by workers. The hosts specifically work to educate the audience about the power they have through organizing and solidarity.



To be up front, if your politics is right of center, you're likely going to hear coverage on these shows that are at odds with the right's mainstream coverage (and, frankly, the left's as well). However, if you're willing to give them a try, we urge all members to keep an open mind and listen to the coverage from the point of view of working people and union members. There's a lot of great coverage of what's going on in the labor movement and the struggles working people face.

WHAT MAKES A UNION? (SNIPPETS FROM LABOR HISTORY)

- **February 1:**
 - 1867 - Bricklayers begin working 8-hour days.
 - 1968 - The federal minimum wage increases to \$1.60 per hour.
- **February 2:**
 - 1917 - 300 newsboys organize to protest a cut in pay by the *Minneapolis Tribune*.
 - 1977 - Legal secretary Iris River fired for refusing to make coffee, secretaries across Chicago protest.
 - 1987 - The 170-day lockout of 22,000 steelworkers by USX Corp. ends with a pay cut, but greater job security.



- **February 3:**
 - 1908 - The U.S. Supreme Court rules the United Hatters Union violated the Sherman Antitrust Act by organizing a nationwide boycott of Danbury Hatters of CT.
 - 1941 - U.S. Supreme Court upholds the Wages and Hours Act banning child labor and establishing the 40-hour work week.
- **February 4:**
 - 1869 - William "Big Bill" Haywood, leader of the Western Federation of Miners and founder of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), born on this day in Salt Lake City, UT.

- 1913 - Rosa Parks, whose refusal to give up her bus seat to a white man launches the 1955 Montgomery, AL bus boycott and the birth of the Civil Rights Movement, is born in Tuskegee, AL.
- 2009 - President Barack Obama imposes \$500,000 caps on senior executive pay for the most distressed financial institutions receiving federal bailout money, saying Americans are upset with "executives being rewarded for failure."

- **February 5:**

- 1830 - First daily Labor newspaper, N.Y. Daily Sentinel, begins publication.
- 1993 - President Bill Clinton signs the Family and Medical Leave Act.

- **February 6:**

- 1896 - Ironworkers from 6 cities meet in Pittsburgh to form the International Association of Bridge and Structural Ironworkers of America.
- 1919 - Seattle General Strike begins. The city was run by a General Strike Committee for six days as tens of thousands of union members stopped work in support of 32,000 striking longshoremen.

- **February 7:**

- 1894 - Union miners in Cripple Creek, OH begin what is to become a 5-month strike that started when mine owners cut wages to \$2.50/ day, from \$3.00/day. The state militia was called out in support of the strikers - the only time in U.S. history that a militia was directed to side with the workers.
The strike ended in victory for the union.



- **February 8:**

- 1912 - Vigilantes beat IWW organizers for exercising free speech rights in San Diego, CA.

- **February 9:**

- 1917 - IWW activist Tom Mooney framed and convicted by the Pinkerton Detective Agency for a bombing. He was pardoned and released 22 years later.

- 1937 - Congress approves legislation allowing for a total of \$940 million to be used for Depression-era relief projects, with \$790 million intended to be used to fund work relief and flood recovery programs.
- 1961 - President Kennedy asks Congress to approve creation of the Medicare program, financed by an increase in Social Security taxes, to aid 14.2 million Americans aged 65 or older.

- **February 10:**

- 1908 - The American Federation of Labor (AFL) founds the Building and Construction Trades Department as a way to overcome the jurisdictional conflicts occurring in the building and construction unions.
- 1973 - 40 workers are killed on Staten Island, NY, when a huge storage tank filled with liquefied gas explodes.

- **February 11:**

- 1968 - 1,300 sanitation workers begin what is to become a 64-day strike in Memphis, ultimately winning union recognition and wage increases.
- 2011 - Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker announces he will call out the National Guard, if necessary, to deal with any "unrest" among state employees in the wake of his decision to unilaterally end nearly all collective bargaining rights for the workers.

- **February 12:**

- 1818 - Abolitionist Frederick Douglass born into slavery near Easton, MD.
- 1880 - John L. Lewis, President of the United Mine Workers of America and founding president of the CIO, born near Lucas, IA.

- **February 13:**

- 1865 - A national 8-month strike by the Sons of Vulcan, a union of iron forgers, ends in victory when employers agreed to a wage scale based on the price of iron bars - the first time employers recognized the union, the first union contract in the iron and steel industry, and what may be the first union contract of any kind in the United States.

- **February 14:**

- 1903 - Western Federation of Miners strike for the 8-hour day.
- 1903 - President Theodore Roosevelt creates the Department of Commerce and Labor. It was divided into 2 separate government departments 10 years later.



- o 1913 - Legendary Teamsters leader Jimmy Hoffa born in Brazil, IN, the son of a coal miner. He disappeared on July 30, 1975 and was declared dead seven years later.



- **February 15:**

- o 1820 - Susan B. Anthony, suffragist, abolitionist, Labor activist, born in Adams, MA. "Join the union, girls, and together say: Equal Pay for Equal Work!"

- **February 16:**

- o 1926 - Beginning of a 17-week general strike of 12,000 New York furriers, in which Jewish workers formed a coalition with Greek and African American workers and became the first union to win a 5-day, 40-hour work week.

- **February 17:**

- o 1937 - 63 sit-down strikers, demanding recognition of their union, are tear-gassed and driven from 2 Fansteel Metallurgical Corp. Plants in Chicago. 2 years later, the U.S. Supreme Court declared sit-down strikes illegal. The tactic had been a major industrial union organizing tool.



- **February 18:**

- o 1918 - Faced with 84-hour workweeks, 24-hour shifts and pay of 29 cents an hour, firefighters form the International Association of Fire Fighters.

- **February 19:**

- o 1975 - The U.S. Supreme Court decides in favor of salesclerk Leura Collins and her union, the Retail Clerks, in *NLRB v. J. Weingarten Inc.*, the case establishing that workers have a right to request the presence of their union steward if they believe they are to be disciplined for a workplace infraction.

- **February 21:**

- o 1972 - United Farm Workers of America granted a charter by the AFL-CIO.

- **February 23:**

- Woody Guthrie wrote "This Land Is Your Land" following a frigid trip - partially by hitchhiking, partially by rail - from California to Manhattan. The Great Depression was still raging. Guthrie had heard Kate Smith's recording of "God Bless America" and resolved to himself: "We can't just bless America; we've got to change it."



- **February 26:**

- 2004 - A 20-week strike by 70,000 Southern California supermarket workers ends, with both sides claiming victory.

- **February 27:**

- 1875 - Legendary Labor leader and socialist presidential candidate Eugene V. Debs becomes charter member and secretary of the Vigo Lodge, Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen. 5 years later he is leading the national union and in 1893 helps found the nation's first industrial union, the American Railway Union.

YOU GOTTA FIGHT!...FOR YOUR RIGHTS!
(MILITANT LABOR IN AN ANTI-LABOR AGE)

To keep members informed of labor developments and working-class issues, we introduce this new section of The Organizer.

National Costco Strike!

As this is being written, the Teamsters are poised to strike nationwide at union-represented Costco stores around the nation. The parties' national Master Agreement expires the night of January 31, 2025. Costco walked away from the negotiating table earlier in the month. While they have since returned, local Teamsters representatives say that they have not been seriously negotiating.



National Labor Relations Board Paralyzed.

This week President Trump fired NLRB General Counsel Jennifer Abruzzo. While Abruzzo was the most pro-worker General Counsel at the NLRB in at least 50 years, her termination was expected.

However, President Trump has paralyzed the NLRB by illegally firing Board Member Gwen Wilcox. Member Wilcox, one of the most pro-worker members of the Board, was serving a term that was to last through August 2028. Unlike the General Counsel, who can legally be terminated by the President, Board Members for neglect of duty or malfeasance in office, and only after providing notice and holding a hearing.



The near-term consequence? The NLRB is not staffed with enough Board Members to act. While (at least for now) NLRB Regional Offices will continue to process unfair labor practice charges and elections, any appeals to the NLRB in Washington are essentially frozen until enough members are appointed to form a quorum.

The long-term consequences? Member Wilcox's termination is likely to accelerate litigation by businesses arguing that the NLRB is unconstitutional. If those lawsuits are successful, that could mean anything from allowing the President to control the NLRB at will to eliminating labor union rights altogether. Only time will tell.

Federal Workforce Targeted.

The new administration is seeking to purge the federal workforce, many represented by unions (including AFGE and AFSCME). There has been a whirlwind of conflicting and inaccurate reporting on this issue. Decent and objective overviews can be found [here](#) and [here](#).

FOR THE GOOD OF THE UNION



- So far, we have not received any responses from VOC members interested in stepping up to lead the committee. If you might be interested, please know that the Organizers are committed to helping you step into these roles and supporting you. So don't hesitate to reach out!
- We have started reaching out to potential member-leaders about establishing our Women's, Black and Latino CORE Committees. If you are interested and haven't received an email or phone call yet, please reach out to Joe Guza, (716) 458-5844.

If you have questions or suggestions for The Organizer, please email jguza@dc4.org.

