

News

TRADE TECH'S EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES A VALUABLE ASSET FOR LOCAL 1277 MEMBERS

By Art Aguilar, Vice President, Local 1277

This coming Fall, Los Angeles Trade Technical College (Trade Tech) will offer more training and education for interested Local 1277 Shop Stewards and members. These classes are valuable educational tools for every brother and sister—not just union officers and Shop Stewards. They are an important part of our continuing effort to organize and make Los Angeles and Southern California a strong and vibrant union region.

If you are interested in running for Shop Steward, earning an A.A. Degree or certificate in labor studies, or simply want to learn more about a particular topic of interest to you, then I urge you to seriously consider taking advantage of the educational programs Trade Tech provides. Further, I think all new Shop Stewards should be interested in these classes and what they offer.

Here is the **Fall 2015 (August 31 – December 20)** schedule. Enrollment is \$46.00 per unit. If you attend a weekend class, there is a health fee of \$11.00 per semester, only for on-site classes. ASO fee: \$1.00 per semester. Max Mont Scholarships are available for Labor Studies classes only. Enrollment by mail, on site, or on-line at www.lattc.edu

3-Unit On-Line classes (16 weeks, 3 hours, 25 minutes per week)

- LS 1 – U.S. Labor History – Instructor: Ghosa Maffei
- LS 5 – Grievance & Arbitration – Instructor: James Walker
- LS 20 – Workers' Rights – Instructor: James Varga

3-Unit Off-Campus Evening Classes (16 weeks, 6:00 – 9:10 p.m.)

Off-Campus classes in union halls, with accessible locations and free parking

Monday

- LS 11 – Labor in the Public Sector – Instructor: Gregorio Daniel
- Teamsters Local 911, 9900 Flower Street, Bellflower 90706

Tuesday

- LS 5 – Grievance & Arbitration – Instructors: Chuck Adinolfi, Matt Hart
- UFCW Local 324, 8530 Stanton Avenue, Buena Park 90622

LS 13 – Union Leadership –

- Instructors: Marcus Hatcher, Peter Olney
- ILWU Local 56, 316 West 7th Street, San Pedro 90731

Thursday

- LS 3 – Labor Relations Law – Instructor: Lewis Levy
- L.A. County Federation of Labor,
- 2130 West James Wood Blvd., L.A. 90006

3-Unit Classes at Trade Tech

- LS 4 – Labor in America – Instructor: Lou Siegel – Tuesday/Thursday 10:10 – 11:35 a.m., Aspen Hall, Room 107

- LS 21 – Working Class in Cinema – Instructor: Ericka Wills – Wednesday 6:00 – 9:10 p.m., Aspen Hall, Room 107

- LS 2 – Collective Bargaining – Instructor: Marcus Hatcher – Saturday/Sunday 8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m., October 31 and November 1; November 7 and 8; November 14 and 15, Aspen Hall, Room 221

Weekend Classes – 1 Unit Each

- 8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m., LATTTC South Campus, Aspen Hall, Room 221

- LS 125 – Labor Arbitration – Instructor: Lou Zigman – September 12 and 19

- LS 123 – Steward Training – Instructor: Marcus Hatcher – September 26 and 27

- LS 121 – New Media for Unions – Instructors: Mary Hodge and Caroline O'Connor – October 3 and 10

- LS 106 – Labor & Disaster Relief – Instructor: Armando Olivas – October 17 and 24

- LS 134 – CA Workers' Rights – Instructor: Robert Cantore – November 21 and December 5

- LS 104 – Health Care Issues for Unions – Instructor: Kathy Rallings – December 12 and 19

Please visit John McDowell, Director of the Labor Center, at 400 West Washington Blvd., Los Angeles 90015. His office is located LA-117. His telephone is 213/763-7129, e-mail is laborcenter@lattc.edu.

I urge all local 1277 members to take advantage of this excellent educational opportunity! I did, and I am glad I put in the time.



PRESIDENT'S REPORT

EXPANDED DENTAL-COVERAGE BENEFIT

SMILE! OVER-65 MTA RETIREES' DENTAL PLAN SIGNIFICANTLY IMPROVED

By James Lindsay, President, Local 1277

I am pleased to report that all Local 1277 MTA-Unit retirees and their spouses—age 65 and over—who are covered in our Union's Self-Insured Dental Program will see an important improvement in the Plan's financial coverage. This expanded benefit has come about through the hard work and diligence of your Union's Medical Plan trustees who oversee Local 1277's Healthcare coverage.

Effective October 1, 2015, MTA retirees over age 65 will be enrolled in Delta Dental. When you use their skilled and experienced dentists, the amount of insurance coverage will increase significantly, so that even with rising dental costs, you will have more money in your pocket without sacrificing adequate and needed dental care.

Here's just one instance of how you will save money and have your dental coverage increased.

Back in 2008, for example, if you needed a crown, and your dentist charged \$800.00 for the procedure, your dental schedule covered \$500.00. You therefore had an out-of-pocket expense of \$300.00.

After October 1, 2015, with dental costs rising, along with all other medical costs, that same crown procedure could easily cost \$1,000.00. This would mean that you would be paying \$700.00—a very significant out-of-pocket increase.

Since 2008, our dental-coverage plan has not accounted for increased schedules of payments to dentists, to cover your claims for various procedures.

But now, under the new plan worked out by your plan's trustees, the amount of dental coverage, when you use a Delta dentist, increases significantly. You will pay

less in out-of-pocket expenses and get an increase in coverage for all your dental needs, even as costs continue to rise.

Using the above example of the crown, after October 1, 2015, the same procedure that cost \$1,000.00 may only cost \$750.00 when you see one of Delta Dental's network of dentists. The new schedule coverage for this procedure is \$600.00, so your out-of-pocket expense would be only \$150.00 (These figures are only used as examples; for exact costs, call the ATU Medical Desk at 213/922-1266).

Working for You

We have been working hard to increase healthcare benefits for our retirees. Over the past few years, we have boosted the amount of annual dental coverage from \$1,500.00 to \$2,500.00. We have also increased the amount of coverage in a number of other medical areas (hearing aids, for example). This is all part of our effort to ensure that our members keep more of their money while enjoying the best-available healthcare coverage after a lifetime of dedicated, hard work.

We will continue to provide timely and full information on all your medical- and dental-coverage options. Please be advised that Open Enrollment for our plans begins in the second week of September (right after Labor Day), and will close about three weeks later. Your new plans and coverage will go into effect on October 1, 2015.

Keep smiling, all you over-65 retiree brothers and sisters—and spouses—from ATU Local 1277's MTA Unit. You deserve nothing less than the very best medical and dental coverage we can get for you!

Here are the upcoming Local 1277 membership meetings for August and September Please make every attempt to attend the meeting for your unit. It's your Union, and we need your participation at our meetings!

Tuesday, August 4:	Los Angeles area members:
Tuesday, September 1	L.A. Building Trades Council, 1626 Beverly Blvd., Los Angeles. Morning Session: 10:00 a.m. Evening Session: 5:00 p.m.:
Wednesday, August 5:	Riverside area members:
Wednesday, September 2:	1074 E. La Cadena Dr., Riverside. Morning Session: 10:00 a.m. Afternoon Session: 1:00 p.m. Evening Session: 6:00 p.m.
Thursday, August 6:	Palm Springs/SunLine members:
Thursday, September 3:	Cathedral City Branch Library, 33520 Date Palm Drive, Cathedral City Morning Session: 10:00 a.m. Afternoon Session: 4:00 p.m.
Thursday, August 6	Long Beach:
Thursday, September 3:	Machinists Hall, 319 W. Broadway, Long Beach. Morning Session: 10:00 a.m. Afternoon Session: 3:00 p.m.

Please Let Us Know if and when you Move

Your Union, ATU Local 1277, always needs to know if you have moved or in any way changed your address. We need this information for mailing your newspaper, union-election ballots, and other material. We also need updated contact information whenever we file claims or actions on your behalf. It is not enough just to notify management and your friends if you move; your Union has to be kept up-to-date, too! Thank you.

HEALTH CARE IS A BASIC RIGHT!

SUPREME COURT UPHOLDS “OBAMACARE”; MILLIONS OF PEOPLE KEEP THEIR COVERAGE

By Errol Frazier, Treasurer, Local 277

On June 25, the United States Supreme Court, by a 6-3 vote, essentially reaffirmed the legality of President Obama’s Affordable Care Act (“Obamacare”). In a far-reaching, sweeping decision that will positively affect the lives of tens of millions of Americans, the court, in the words of Chief Justice John Roberts, noted that **“Congress passed the Affordable Care Act to improve health insurance markets, not to destroy them.”**

The court, correctly and emphatically, relied on the *intent* of the Act—to provide basic healthcare insurance to tens of millions of uninsured Americans—and rejected the literal wording, based on four or five words, of a challenge to “Obamacare”.

This ruling is nothing less than a triumph of common sense, compassion and a practical understanding of the economic, social and health-related chaos that would have resulted had “Obamacare” been thrown out.

Healthcare is a Fundamental Right!

That’s it, in a nutshell: Adequate and affordable healthcare coverage is an essential personal right. Think about it in relation to your careers: Often, in discussing one’s job—or someone else’s—a person starts with wages: “I’m making this amount of money. I may be making more than that in a few years. So, I must be doing pretty well.”

Of course, your wages are vital. How else are you going to pay your bills, keep a roof over your head, provide for your family and retirement, and send your kids to college? ***But—and this is some kind of an important but, brothers and sisters—your health coverage is at the very least equally important. Maybe even more.***

Over the years, organized labor—and, of course, ATU Local 1277—has fought long and hard for the best-possible healthcare coverage we could get. Starting with bare-minimum coverage wrested from reluctant management, down to the excellent plans available to us all today, adequate and affordable healthcare has been the “holy grail” for both the union movement, and progressive politicians and organizations.

And we have it! *You* have it: Affordable and generally comprehensive health coverage for you and your loved ones. *This coverage, however, comes at a price. Not simply the money you contribute monthly, **but with the understanding that you fully grasp all the provisions of your coverage plans—as well as your own responsibilities towards maintaining that coverage.***

The Larger Picture

Generally, healthcare is good in this country. That *doesn’t* mean that everyone gets the services, tests, meds and coverage they need or deserve (think of the long-running VA scandal). Further, generally adequate healthcare here doesn’t mean that it is *affordable*. Healthcare costs spiral out of control like Fourth of July fireworks. Tests, consultations, meds, procedures, major and minor, have become almost laughably costly (they would truly be laughable if our health and lives didn’t so much literally depend on them).

The deadly combination of insurance companies fattening their already-bloated bottom line by curbing services as much as possible, and simply outrageous hospital costs (from tongue depressors and cotton

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balls to prescription meds and surgery) has combined to leave tens of millions of Americans and their families without decent coverage. And we are not talking about slackers or society’s “drop outs”. We are talking about millions of dedicated, hard-working people who simply cannot afford coverage—bare bones or any other kind.

The Affordable Care Act has helped. It is major, even historic, legislation, and is starting to take hold across the country. The number of uninsured Americans has dropped by nearly 20%, down from a depressing high of almost 50 million people. The number of uninsured people has dropped across all racial lines. This is a good and much-needed start. Further, the government actually *saves* money with better healthcare coverage for more people: ***The non-partisan Congressional Budget Office noted that repealing “Obamacare” would “significantly increase federal budget deficits and the number of people who are uninsured.”***

As long as the insurance and drug cartels, and their anti-family political allies (mostly Republicans), can’t gut “Obamacare”, things may well improve in healthcare.

The Politics of Healthcare

The good news is, that “Obamacare” is becoming part of the national landscape, an increasingly accepted way to offer healthcare coverage to people who need it. In fact, as a guess, by the time of the 2016 Presidential election, I think it is possible

that “Obamacare” may not even be a major campaign issue. It will be as integral part of our lives as are Social Security and Medicare, both of which had to survive huge political and social storms before settling into being the pillars of society that they are.

If the Republicans *do* choose to make the Affordable Care Act an issue next year, if some of their Presidential contenders continue to call for its repeal and a return to no coverage for tens of millions of people who now have it, ***good for them!*** The Democrats will turn that opposition and heartlessness into millions of votes on Election Day!

Consider this: The six-vote majority upholding “Obamacare” included two Republican-appointed justices, along with the four reliable Democratic appointees. Healthcare coverage, along with common sense, crossed political lines. Supreme Court justices read the newspapers, too; they realized the chaos a rejection of “Obamacare” would have caused.

Good health care and adequate coverage for it is a basic human right. It is as much an “inalienable right”, I believe, as freedom of speech, thought, religion, and assembly. After all, what are we without our health? And what is more fundamental than the right to live? That’s the key, brothers and sisters, and that is why the June 25 ruling was so important. It is equally important that you know the provisions of your health coverage and your responsibilities when it comes to exercising them, and how those two things are connected.

Los Angeles County Raises Minimum Wage to \$15.00/hour

On Tuesday, July 21, the powerful Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors voted 3-2 to raise the county-wide minimum wage to \$15.00/hour by 2020. Following the lead of the City of Los Angeles, the supervisors’ vote means that workers at businesses with 25 or more employees will see their wages rise step by step until they reach \$15.00/hour in 2020. Employees in businesses with fewer than 25 people will reach the \$15.00/hour minimum wage by 2021.

Our union-supported friends on the board (Supervisors Mark Ridley-Thomas, Sheila Kuehl and Hilda Solis) cast the three votes to boost the minimum wage, once again showing the value of our Union’s involvement in the political system.