

News

ORGANIZED LABOR AGAIN RAISES ITS VOICE

LOCAL 1277 JOINS OTHER UNIONS TO DEMONSTRATE AGAINST ALEC AND ITS ANTI-WORKING PEOPLE AGENDA

By Adolfo Soto, Financial-Recording Secretary

On July 22, ATU Local 1277 Executive Board members and Shop Stewards, along with members and representatives of many other Southern California-area unions staged a large and vocal demonstration at the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) convention in San Diego.

Funded in part by the obscenely rich, very conservative, and notoriously anti-union and anti-working people Koch brothers, ALEC is the most powerful and rich big-business special-interest front in America. It is one of corporate-America's most anti-labor and influential groups, both here in California, in other states, and in Washington, D.C. ALEC marches in lock-step with some of the most reactionary members and legislators in the *Republican Party*.

ALEC's legislative agenda reads like a throwback to days of cheap, exploited labor, dangerous worksites, no appreciation of the worth and dignity of working people, and the "right" of the rich bosses to keep becoming richer at the expense of the people who make their businesses flourish in the first place.

ALEC stands for—and vigorously promotes—slashed wages, cutting back benefits, lower retirement packages, and much weaker worker health and safety provisions. ALEC wants unions crippled, and working people and families "in their place" (*at the bottom of society!*). It wants big business running rampant, workers, equality and the environment be damned!

Union members and officers—from transit to teachers, from building trades to other professions—rallied

to protest ALEC's California convention and its anti-worker agenda. Marching from Embarcadero Park to the convention site, the Manchester Hyatt Hotel, hundreds of union members and supporters made our opposition to ALEC loud and clear.

Local 1277 was ably represented by Executive Board member, President James Lindsay, Vice-President Art Aguilar, Treasurer Errol Frazier and me. Further, a half dozen Shop Stewards joined the big protest: Michael Ashford, Division 5; Mauro Varela, Division 7; Jeff Shaffer, Division 15; Bruno Angel, Property Maintenance; Ruben Ramirez, RECI, and Asterio Gonzalez, SunLine Transit (Operations). Thank you, brothers, for your commitment to our fight.

We totally reject ALEC and its agenda. We want ALEC and its efforts to destroy the backbone of America, the middle class, unions and the hard-working men, women and families we represent, out of California, and out of our jobs and lives!



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.

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

Tuesday, September 1:	Los Angeles area members:
Tuesday, October 6	L.A. Building Trades Council, 1626 Beverly Blvd., Los Angeles. Morning Session: 10:00 a.m. Evening Session: 5:00 p.m.:
Wednesday, September 2:	Riverside area members:
Wednesday, October 7:	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, September 3:	Palm Springs/SunLine members:
Thursday, October 8:	Cathedral City Branch Library, 33520 Date Palm Drive, Cathedral City Morning Session: 10:00 a.m. Afternoon Session: 4:00 p.m.
Thursday, September 3	Long Beach:
Thursday, October 8:	Machinists Hall, 319 W. Broadway, Long Beach. Morning Session: 10:00 a.m. Afternoon Session: 3:00 p.m.



Local 1277

News

September, 2015

1744 North Main Street • Los Angeles, CA 90031 • (323) 222•1277

Website: www.atu1277.com

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

INSURANCE PACKAGES AVAILABLE; VOLUNTARY ENROLLMENT SET FOR OCTOBER

By James Lindsay, President, Local 1277

Voluntary Benefits enrollment will be coming up again **this October**. Group Voluntary Term Life, Accident, Critical Illness, Short-Term Disability, Hospital Indemnity, and Whole Life are being offered. *Don't forget to see the Benefit Counsellor on-site if available, or contact the Call Center during the enrollment.*

Below, are highlights of three of the benefits you can select.

How Unum Hospital Indemnity Insurance can help

Health issue:	
Emergency gallbladder removal with complications	
Employee costs WITHOUT Hospital Indemnity Insurance	
For co-pays and deductible not covered by medical insurance	\$3,600
Less Hospital Indemnity Insurance benefit paid to employee	
> Hospital admission benefit	\$1,000
Total benefit payment	\$1,000
FINAL employee costs WITH Hospital Indemnity Insurance	\$2,600

How Unum Critical Illness Insurance can help

Health issue:	
Cancer diagnosis, followed by surgery and chemotherapy	
Employee costs WITHOUT Critical Illness Insurance	
> For co-pays, deductible and treatments not covered by medical insurance	\$7,545
> For household expenses not covered by disability insurance	\$9,455
Total employee costs	\$17,000
Less Critical Illness Insurance benefit paid to employee	
> Critical illness lump-sum payment (amount chosen by employee)	\$15,000
FINAL employee costs WITH Critical Illness Insurance	\$2,000

How Unum Accident Insurance can help

Health issue:	
A fall down the stairs, resulting in a torn knee ligament and broken toe	
Employee costs WITHOUT Accident Insurance	
For co-pays and deductible not covered by medical insurance	\$1,200
Less Accident Insurance benefit paid to employee	
> ER treatment	\$150
> Knee brace	\$100
> Fractured toe	\$75
> Ligament tear with surgical repair	\$800
Total benefit payment	\$1,125
FINAL employee costs WITH Accident Insurance	\$0

U.S. Department of Labor Upholds Public Employees Pension Reform Act

In an August 18, memorandum, ATU International President Larry Hanley commented on a recent Department of Labor (DOL) decision in a case involving Sacramento RTD and Monterey-Salinas Transit (under California Section 13 (c)).

President Hanley noted the DOL ruled that under Section 13 (c) (1) an employer **cannot** change rights already set out in a CBA *except* through collective bargaining *even if the employer was not a party to the agreement*, as was the case when public transit agencies acquired operations of private entities.

Further, Section 13 (c) (2) requires the continuation of all *rights without regard to whether or not there is an existing CBA*.

President Hanley expressed confidence that DOL's "well-reasoned decision" will survive any further judicial scrutiny. I am pleased to report this good news from the DOL.

THE ORGANIZED LABOR MOVEMENT

LABOR DAY MEANS MORE THAN A THREE-DAY WEEKEND; IT CELEBRATES UNION HISTORY AND ITS ROLE IN SOCIETY

By Errol Frazier, Treasurer, Local 1277

As we celebrate Labor Day—our nation’s annual salute to the working men and women who built, power and forge the future of our country—let’s all take a moment to remember that this Monday is *more* than just part of a long weekend of family, friends, fun and relaxation.

Let’s look back on some of the history of the American trade-union movement. Unions have been around in our country, in one form or another, since its beginning. The organized labor movement began and grew because of the demonstrated need to protect working men and (later) women. On behalf of its members, organized labor has fought long and hard—and often violently—for reasonable working hours, better wages, and safer working conditions.

The union movement has benefitted our communities, our society, and contributed to the overall “greater good” of this country. Unions bring better lives, and safety and security to countless millions of families.

At the Very Beginning

Several groups of craftsmen who arrived at Plymouth Rock in 1620 formed the foundation of the labor movement in a young country. Carpenters, cobblers, cabinet makers and metalsmiths, just to name a few professions, were some of the first people to arrive in “the new world”. Many of these workers played a large role in developing our infant economy and, when the time came, helped lead the fight for independence and the “pursuit of happiness” by pursuing shorter hours, higher pay and safer jobsites.

In fact, the first documented strike, (See History.com; Labor Movement-Action & Summary) occurred in New York in 1768. The job action was a protest by journeyman tailors against a wage reduction.

During the 1820s, the few organized labor groups that existed started a push to reduce the regular working day, which at that time was a grueling 12 hours, down to a more humane 10 hours. This effort came at around the time that the steam engine came into common use, along with the development of water power to operate heavy machinery. In effect, this was the birth of the American Industrial Revolution. With this historic moment came the beginning of the big factory system. This was the era that would produce great wealth for few and dehumanizing poverty for many.

It was during this period that organized labor started to make its greatest gains, especially with respect to the number of members. In many cities across the nation, trade unions joined together to form labor federations that represented *all* working people in a particular area. In 1866, an official federation, the Nation Labor Union was formed. Soon, it was able to persuade Congress to pass a law that made eight hours the standard work day for *federal* workers. That would eventually keep becom-

ing the standard work day for all Americans working men and women.

Forty-five years later, it took an unprecedented, historic disaster to further advance organized labor’s agenda. In 1911, on New York’s lower East Side, the Triangle Shirtwaist Company caught fire. Almost all of the 150 employees, mostly young women, died. Some burned, but many jumped to their death. *They perished because all of the fire escapes had been locked to—allegedly—“prevent theft”*. This and many other tragedies like it became the battle cry for jobsite safety and recognition of the value and dignity of working people. Organized labor led—and still leads—the never-ending fight to improve worker safety. The result has been significant reform and higher standards in industrial safety.

During the darkest days of the Great Depression, organized labor—spearheaded by the aggressive CIO (Congress of Industrial Organization)—literally fought for union representation, safer working conditions, higher pay, better benefits and recognition of the worth of skilled work.

Blood flowed freely in the legendary battles between auto workers and the car manufacturers, and between other industrial unions and their bosses.

The Legacy of the Fight to Unionize

You and I, brothers and sisters, are the inheritors of the long, grueling, sometimes violent fight to organize unions and better the worksite and home life of tens of millions of working people and families. The tradition of craft unions, of workers banding together to make things better for them all, originated at the first colonies in “the new world”. The willingness to *fight* for our rights, as workers, as *human beings*, is a central part of the movement which binds us all.

All of the gains that can, and should be attributed to the efforts of the labor movement have, over the years, been given to most working people. For instance, the previously mentioned standardized eight-hour work day, along with reforms in safety, wages, benefits (including health care, pensions, vacations and many more), and respect for the dignity of work, have all grown from organized labor’s ceaseless vigilance and efforts. Further, it is a fact that pay increases won by unions have brought about overall benefits to society and our economy—for both unionized and non-unionized workers.

Enjoy Labor Day with your friends and families, but we must never forget all those brave workers and union leaders who came before us and forged the movement of which we are proud members. Today, other working people and union leaders pick up that torch, and tomorrow, more will do so. Every year, Labor Day reminds us that it is *our* turn to stand tall and be active in the organized-labor movement!

MORE EDUCATION IS THE RIGHT MOVE!

NEW TUITION REIMBURSEMENT PROGRAM MAKES IT EASIER FOR MTA UNIT MEMBERS TO TAKE CLASSES

By Douglas Kurowski, Executive Board Member-at-Large

Hello Brothers and Sisters. I hope your summer was full of family, friends, and fun. As your children return to school to continue their educational experience, I remind you—as family members or individuals—that it is both wise and career-enhancing to also stay sharp and competitive as well.

One excellent way to do this is through furthering your education. So, if you have decided to advance your career or simply expand your knowledge in any field of interest to you, there is now no better time than the present to take advantage of some dynamic changes in the Tuition Reimbursement Program (TRP).

On August 5, 2015, with the stroke of his pen, MTA CEO Phillip Washington *made reimbursement for tuition equal for all employees*. For years, your Executive Board, during negotiations, had requested a TRP increase as a matter of simple equality. The problem, however, always seemed to be that such an increase would come at the cost of something else we asked for in negotiations. But now CEO Washington has greatly and positively changed this situation.

And our members have responded! According to Margarita Ortiz, MTA’s TRP administrator, our brothers and sisters have flooded her office with requests for support so that they can continue their education! Our members have rightly realized that there can be no more excuses to delay their learning process; their only challenge now is finding the time.

Financial Nuts and Bolts

The financial benefit to you under the expanded TRP can be significant. For example, last year, prior to the new change, your maximum benefit was maxed out at \$700.00 a year. But as of August 5, there is no ceiling, because of financial restraints, on the number of classes you can take.

For a Community College undergraduate course, the amount available is \$250.00 for each unit. So, if you take a three-unit class, you are entitled to \$750.00 in tuition reimbursement for that class. If you enroll at a California State University or in the University of Southern California system as a graduate, you are entitled to \$375.00 per unit. So, if you take a three-unit class there, you are entitled to \$1,125.00, for that one class alone!

For Years, ATU Local 1277 and MTA have provided career advancement avenues for their members/employees. In our current Collective Bargaining Agreement with the Authority, we have two in-house programs: Mechanic “C” and JAC. For those who want to update their knowledge, or take their education to a higher level, through an Accredited Educational System, the Tuition Reimbursement Program is for you.

TRP and Career Advancement

The Tuition Reimbursement Program provides Local 1277 members with a self-directed Professional Development Program that can help you advance at the Authority. There are some 52 classifications within the Local 1277 Collective Bargaining Agreement. The career fields range from fixing buses and trains to electrical and plumbing professionals; from communications and digital-systems techni-

cians to welding, painting and maintenance.

What it comes down to is that *any* work needed at any MTA property can be—and is—done by our members in their broad range of classifications. All of these careers will provide for you and your families for years to come. TRP allows you to succeed and learn at your own pace at an Accredited Adult Educational Facility close to your home or worksite.

Remember this brothers and sisters: Your educational institution of choice must be accredited, and you must complete your course with a passing grade. Any class taken must fall within the scope of the MTA organization.

Be sure to fill out the Approval and Reimbursement Request form completely, including project/class information, and have it signed.

If you have any questions about this truly excellent benefit program, please fill free to speak to your location clerk, or call the TRP office and leave a message with Margarita Ortiz (213/922-3003). You can also find *Metro Policy HR 1 (Tuition Reimbursement Program)* and the application online in the Metro Intranet.

I have taken advantage of this great program, and I can assure you that it has served me well. I encourage you to do the same. Keep yourself sharp and competitive in the work force, ***and never stop learning! It’s good for your future, and simply for your own growth.***

Thirteen More Local 1277 Members Retire from Careers at MTA

Thirteen Local 1277 members have retired from MTA after long and productive careers. They all were hard-working employees and loyal members of our Union.

Diane Valdez, Rail Electronic Communication Inspector, Rail Communications, 28 years, June 9, 2015; Honein Mouakkad, Mechanic A, Division 7, 25 years, June 12; Laurence Flowers, Electronic Communication Technician, CMF, 16 years, June 16; Claude Hall, Service Attendant, Division 1, 33 years, June 28; Robert Cloud, Digital Systems Technician, ITS Operations, 25 years, July 6; Ralph Therrio, Mechanic A, Division 18, 24 years, July 9; John Walsh, Jr., Mechanic A, Division 9, 32 years, July 9; Thomas Hummel, Jr., Mechanic A, Division 18, 17 years, July 13; Saul Audelo, Mechanic A, Division 1, 34 years, July 17; Arthur Cortez, Mechanic A, Division 1, 16 years, July 20; Robert Kang, Sheet Metal Worker, RRC, 41 years, July 22; Craig Rakistis, Mechanic A, Division 4, 25 years, July 25, and Carlos Martinez, Mechanic A, RRC, 34 years, July 29.

Local 1277’s Executive Board and members wish these brothers and sisters long, enjoyable and healthy retirements. They will be missed!