

Graphic Communicator

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TOP STORY

Biden's Early Labor Moves Encouraging But the Hard Work Is Just Beginning

By Fred Bruning
Graphic Communicator

Facing a wounded economy, massive public health crisis and nation staggered by four years of divisive, gut-punch politics, President Joe Biden has made an impressive start on his "Build Back Better" campaign to benefit workers and protect organized labor, union leaders say.

Now comes the hard part.

Over Biden's first 100 days, Republicans snubbed his attempts at bi-partisanship – even opposing the president's \$1.9 trillion economic relief plan – but a broad pro-labor Democratic coalition is demanding action now, whether the GOP likes it, or not.

With an agenda of their own, the Teamsters and GCC/IBT allies are making clear that Biden must do more than merely undo the damage left behind by Donald Trump and his deeply conservative Congressional allies.

In a policy statement called, "Build Back Stronger," the IBT and general president James Hoffa say the Biden administration – and elected officials at all levels – must work with organized labor to "win the real change our families need."

Specifically, the Teamsters are placing high priority on pension protection, job creation and worker safety. Hoffa noted the IBT had played an important role in the 2020 presidential election and would continue exerting influence on behalf of working people.

"And just like last year, the union will harness the power of its members to reach out to lawmakers and make sure our voice is heard," Hoffa said.

The president must "seize the moment," agreed GCC/IBT president Kurt Freeman, and press for essential reforms like passage of the Protect the Right to Organize (PRO) Act, far-reaching legislation approved last month by Democrats in the House of Representatives but facing Republican opposition in the Senate.

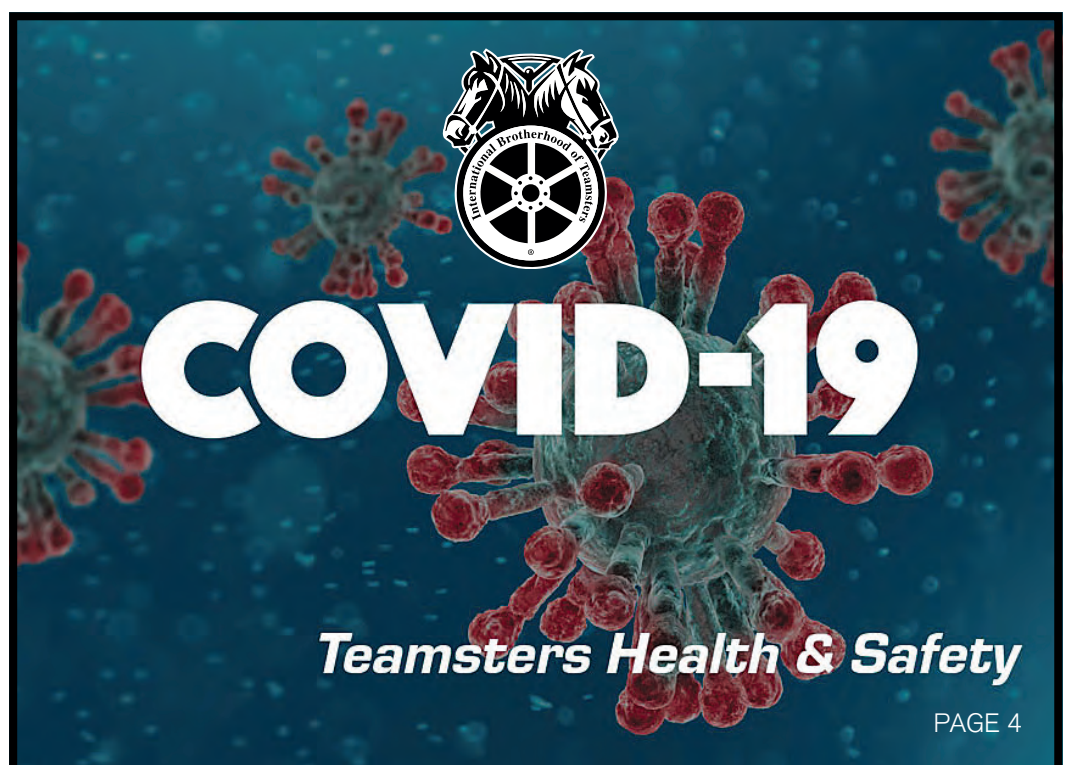
In his column on Page 2 of this edition, Freeman said the IBT "Build Back Stronger"

continues on PAGE 9

This issue of the Graphic Communicator contains the Summary Annual Report for the Benevolent Trust Fund including important information about your rights under the Plan and under ERISA which should be read and retained for future reference.

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Trump Said He Would 'Drain the Swamp' but Biden is Getting it Done

GOOD START.

Joe Biden earned our endorsement for president last year because of his working-class roots and vow to protect organized labor.

As soon as he walked into the White House, Biden proved his word was good.

He immediately issued executive orders improving OSHA oversight during the pandemic, fired the NLRB's outrageously anti-labor general counsel, restored bargaining rights for federal workers, and nominated for labor secretary Marty Walsh, the Boston mayor with a strong blue-collar background.



Next, Biden and Democrats passed a much-needed and far-reaching, \$1.9 trillion covid relief bill aimed squarely at the middle-class. His commitment to a worker-first agenda is evident.

Biden is a big proponent of robust infrastructure spending and clawing back the nearly 10 million jobs lost during the health crisis. He has a host of sustainable energy proposals that would translate into high quality employment – much of it in the union sector – and speaks passionately about American workers at every opportunity.

This is exactly what we expected – and a welcome change from the phony populism of Donald Trump.

The former president placed pro-business officials in cabinet positions and loaded the National Labor Relations Board with anti-union operatives – all the time claiming he was going to “drain the swamp.”

In fact, the bottom only got muddier.

Biden is busy on a reclamation project. But there are obstacles.

Throughout the Trump years, Republican leaders indulged the White House – and themselves – in crazy spending on tax breaks benefiting the rich and funding for vanity projects like the border wall. Mexico would pay for it, Trump said. We're still waiting for their check.



Now, faced with bold Biden initiatives aimed at easing the pain of struggling Americans and getting the economy back on track, the GOP predictably has retrieved its zeal for skinflint government spending and obstructionist politics.

Biden is hanging tough and union members have to make clear we demand nothing less. There can be no turning away from the fight to protect working-class values and the rights of all Americans.

That is the message of a far-reaching policy statement called “Build Back Stronger” issued by the Teamsters and General President James Hoffa.

“A new administration and a new Congress are in place in the nation's capital,” the IBT said. “The Teamsters and other pro-worker allies worked hard to get them there. So now it's time to ensure these elected officials follow through on their promises and deliver policy changes that put hardworking Americans first.

We join our IBT partners in this well-timed call for a smart, aggressive approach that will safeguard pensions, create good jobs and guarantee – and increase – union rights.

High on the list of priorities for Biden is passage of the Protect the Right to Organize (PRO) Act. Democrats in the House did their job and approved the bill last month. At press time, the Senate had not taken action though fierce opposition is likely from anti-labor Republicans.

Under Trump, union membership was down nationwide by a staggering 321,000 last year. The PRO Act can help turn around this worrisome trend. Biden and Democrats must keep trying.

After four regrettable years, the goal can't be only to do repair work. Joe Biden must seize the moment, defy the opposition and, with the help of American workers and organized labor, build back stronger. ■

OUTLOOK

JAMES P. HOFFA TEAMSTERS GENERAL PRESIDENT

Swift Progress for Workers with Biden in Offi

WORKING AMERICANS HAVE BEEN hit hard by the ongoing coronavirus pandemic – not just their health, but their wallets as well. Millions are jobless and struggling to keep food on the table. And because of policy changes made during the Trump administration, the social safety net is fraying beneath them.

It's what happens when unionization is undermined and workers don't have basic protections.

That's why the Teamsters are urging the Biden administration and Congress to take action as part of the union's new Build Back Stronger campaign.

Progress came swiftly after President Biden took office and immediately signed several positive worker-friendly executive orders.

For example, his Made in America order sets in motion a series of reforms to eliminate excessive use of trade-pact waivers that allow billions of tax dollars to be spent overseas rather than with American suppliers.



Another executive order rescinds Trump administration directives curtailing collective bargaining, due process and workplace representation rights for federal workers and advances a plan to raise the minimum wage for federal government workers and contractors to \$15 an hour.

But that is only a start for the pro-worker agenda needed in this country. The Teamsters support passage of the Protecting the Right to Organize Act and the Public Service Freedom to Negotiate Act which gives workers a fair, timely and direct path to form a union.

And Congress and relevant federal agencies must address the growing problem of worker misclassification by codifying the so-called “ABC” test determining whether a worker is an independent contractor or employee.

The Department of Labor also can take steps to help workers. With social distancing requirements essential during the pandemic, the labor department should provide guidance on holding union elections through remote electronic voting. And the agency should also expand transparency in the use of anti-union consultants by re-promulgating the so-called “Persuader Rule.”

The Teamsters know there is a lot more work to do to build strong unions. It won't stop until it's done. ■



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A President Who Knows Unions ‘Make Life Better’

ONE AFTERNOON I GOT A CALL FROM THE COMMUNICATOR'S TOP EDITOR, George Tedeschi.

Until last year, Tedeschi was president of the GCC/IBT. He led the GCIU for five years before that and has been a labor professional for six decades.

“Did you hear what Biden said?” Tedeschi asked. “Never been anything like it.”



Tedeschi was talking about a 2-minute, 20-second video address by President Joe Biden.

In his remarks, Biden praised the role of unions, demanded that workers face no intimidation when organizing, and said that organized labor had the power to make lives better not only for union members but all American wage earners. “Unions lift up workers...” Biden said.

It was the most pro-worker speech by an American president in memory – and, perhaps, the strongest White House endorsement of organized labor in U.S. history.

“Let’s make sure this gets into the paper,” Tedeschi said.

The story is on Page 9 along with other labor-related coverage of Biden’s first 100 days in the White House.

Zack Dowdy reports on reaction to Biden’s early moves at the GCC grass roots level and Dawn Hobbs takes a look at the vital role organized labor – including Atlanta local 527-S – played in helping Raphael Warnock and Jon Ossoff win a Georgia runoff election that gave Democrats a majority in the U.S. Senate. (Page 10)

Aside from his strong endorsement of unions, Biden has drawn praise from labor organizations for speeding the production and distribution of covid vaccines and passing the \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan – a far-seeing initiative that includes significant assistance for struggling pension plans, including union programs, and reflects the goals of the IBT’s ambitious Build Back Stronger agenda.

The new president also showed his commitment to working people by nominating Boston mayor Marty Walsh as secretary of labor. Walsh is a former union member and leader of the city’s Building and Construction Trades Council. In a personal recollection,



Steve Sullivan, president of Local-3-N, Boston, says Walsh is a reliable friend of labor who will never forget his roots. “Marty Walsh is us,” Sullivan said. (Page 4).

Under Biden, the National Labor Relations Board will be free of the anti-labor bias that prevailed during the administration of former president Donald Trump. Biden quickly removed the NLRB’s pro-business general counsel, Peter Robb, and nominated Jennifer Abruzzo, an NLRB veteran who most recently served as special counsel for the Communications Workers of America, as Robb’s replacement. (Page 10)

In an op-ed on Page 6, highly regarded columnist Harold Meyerson looked toward the future after four difficult years of erratic rule by Trump – a future marked by equality, economic opportunity and a “political system less dominated by big money.”

No one expects Biden to be a miracle worker.

The country has been hit hard by the pandemic and social discord fed by the previous administration. Biden is the right leader at the right time – a decent man from a working class background who is on the side of ordinary Americans.

In his “Where I Stand” column on Page 2, GCC/IBT president Kurt Freeman said Biden’s early moves have been encouraging. “He proved his word was good.” The message from Freeman and union leaders across the nation is clear: Good start, Joe. Be strong. Keep it coming. ■

COMMENTARY JIM HIGHTOWER

Cooperation is Key to Success, Not Crushing Your Opponents

In his 2007 book, “Think Big and Kick Ass: In Business and in Life,” the noted thinker Donald Trump expressed the soulless view that, “You crush the opponent and come away with something better for yourself.”

But even animals know better than Trump: A better route to winning than crush-your-opponent competition is through cooperation.

Some animals feed on one another but the most successful survivors are the ones that work together in a sharing society – not the strongest.

From ants to elephants, animals in the wild organize to hunt together, build family and group homes, nurture and teach their young, spread their available food throughout the community, mourn lost ones, etc.

Philosopher John Rawls, who died in 2002, conducted exercises to find out what people think a just society should look like. He asked participants to draw up the ethical underpinning for their ideal social structure, focusing on what principles would best serve their own interests.

Rawls put only one restriction on this otherwise free-wheeling exercise: None of the participants would know their status in the society they designed. Race, income, sexuality, education, immigrant, disability, age, religion, neighborhood – all would be luck of the draw.

Over and over, participants from every social status and ideology designed a world with the deepest and broadest structures to ensure that the least well-off, most marginalized person would be treated justly – since they could be that person.



From the earliest human times, then, there was no conceit of “producers v. moochers.” Families that were less fortunate in hunting and gathering or that were simply unable to do it nonetheless shared what the group produced. They contributed in other ways.

Some present-day social statistics:

- In a blind survey that presented a choice of living in two countries, one with high income inequality (United States and the other with modest income inequality (Sweden), 92 percent of Americans – including a similar majority of Republicans and the rich – preferred Sweden.



- Seventy-five percent of Americans told pollsters last year they’d support paying higher income taxes if the money went to health care, education, welfare and infrastructure. And 68 percent said the tax system must be overhauled to make the richest pay more.
- Contrary to right-wing claims, only 33 percent of people say the rich deserve their bonanzas because they work harder than the rest of us and 65 percent say the good fortunes of the rich are due to special advantages they get in life. Likewise, 71 percent say people are poor because they’ve faced more obstacles than others. Only 26 percent blamed the poor for not working hard enough.

Despite intervening centuries of indoctrination by tight-wads, property supremacists, and corporate plutocrats, a deep egalitarian impulse remains ingrained in people’s ethical DNA. ■

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

Marty Walsh Will Be ‘Great Partner’ As DOL Secretary

By Fred Bruning
Special to the Communicator

Martin J. Walsh, who began his union career as a 21-year-old construction worker and led a major Boston labor organization before serving seven years as the city’s Democratic mayor, will bring a real-world view to the post of U.S. labor secretary and prove a “great partner” in advancing the Biden administration’s pro-union agenda, GCC/IBT and Teamster officials say.

Teamster general president James Hoffa said the IBT was “elated” by the choice of Walsh and Steve Nobles, secretary-treasurer/vice president of the GCC said Walsh was the “perfect choice” to help “revitalize” the American labor movement.

In Boston, Steve Sullivan, president of GCC/IBT Local 3-N, said Walsh “will make huge strides in restoring the promise of protecting workers’ rights and unionization.” By nominating Walsh, said GCC/IBT general counsel Peter Leff, the Biden administration “sends a clear signal” it has made the interests of working people a top priority.

Walsh, 53, whose parents emigrated from Ireland, joined Laborer’s Union Local 223, and ultimately became union president, according to the Boston Globe. He was a state representative for 16 years and then led the Building and Construction Trades Council. Backed by the Boston labor community, Walsh – who overcame childhood cancer and struggles with alcoholism – entered politics and was elected mayor in 2013.

President Joe Biden and Walsh have been friends for years and Biden swore in Walsh for his second mayoral term three years ago. At the time, Biden said Walsh was a “mayor who will never forget where he came from,” the Globe reported.

After his labor department nomination, Walsh pledged via Twitter to be an ally of labor.

“Working people, labor unions, and those fighting every day for their shot at the middle class are the backbone of our economy and of this country,” Walsh said. “As secretary of labor, I’ll work just as hard for you as you do for your families and livelihoods. You have my word.”

Union leaders were optimistic about progress.

“With the GCC pushing to increase our density in print industries we will have a great partner with Secretary Walsh,” Nobles said.

The New York Times noted that Walsh face challenges.

He will have the task of “reinvigorating” the Occupational Safety and Health Administration whose enforcement practices under former President Donald Trump were widely criticized, the Times said, and assess various Trump administration regulations condemned by organized labor.

‘COULD NOT HAVE BEEN A BETTER CHOICE’

By Stephen Sullivan

In the spring of 2013, Marty Walsh announced his candidacy for mayor of the city of Boston.

He had a bold vision to reinvigorate and revitalize our city with a focus on economic advancement for working families.

GCC/IBT Local 3-N jumped in with our full support, time and energy to aid his campaign – not because Walsh pledged to support us in return. All politicians do that. It was because Marty Walsh is us.

Local 3’s friendship with our country’s new labor secretary – who still carries his union card from days as a construction worker – began because of a common interest in issues Walsh now is charged with addressing for our nation.

He has been on the front lines of labor’s battles here in Boston for decades. Marty has an informed, tactical understanding of the issues that we face everyday because he has lived it as a union worker and head of the Building and Construction Trades Council.

From issues relating to immigration, working-class goals for a better future and even the challenges of maintaining sobriety – Walsh has publicly acknowledged overcoming a struggle with alcoholism – Marty Walsh gets it right off the bat.

President Joe Biden could not have made a better selection for his administration.

Marty Walsh is an excellent example of striving each day to live a life of service. He will be a champion for all workers. He will not choke over the word “union,” but trumpet it.

Boston’s loss is the nation’s gain. Most conversations between our former mayor and our union typically start and end with Marty Walsh saying, “What can I do to help?”

You can do plenty Mr. Secretary. We are all counting on you, brother.

Stephen Sullivan is president of GCC/IBT Local 3-N, Boston



As mayor of Boston, Marty Walsh never forgot his union roots and proved a reliable friend of Local 3-N. Walsh, second left, joined vice president Patrick Sullivan, left, secretary-treasurer Kevin Toomey, second right and president Steve Sullivan for a 3-N Labor Day cookout.

Others had expressed interest in the labor department job – including independent Vermont senator Bernie Sanders – but Biden said Walsh had the fortitude and determination to prevail in the fight to rescue workers from the ravages of the coronavirus disaster. “I know him,” said Biden, announcing the Walsh nomination. “Tough as nails.” ■

Leaders Press Covid Battle and Hope for Better 2021

By Dawn Hobbs
Special to the Communicator

As the coronavirus pandemic passed the one-year mark, GCC/IBT leaders braced themselves for possible spikes caused by business re-openings, lifting of mask mandates and circulation of highly transmissible covid variants while urging eligible members to get vaccinated.

For the most part, GCC/IBT officials reported coronavirus cases have leveled off. However, there were some late winter surges.

Israel Castro, secretary-treasurer of GCC/IBT District Council 3, reported spikes in shops located in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and Youngstown, Ohio, and a temporary shutdown at the Dominion Post newspaper in Morgantown, West Virginia.

“I am definitely seeing an uptick in cases,” Castro said.

Despite generally improving conditions in many parts of the country, the death toll of GCC retirees continued to climb, leaders said. Among the victims was former GCIU general board member Edward Treacy, who died Dec. 30 of covid-related causes at a hospital in Sun City Center, Florida. (Obituary, Page 13.) Treacy’s wife, Elizabeth, died of the virus a few weeks earlier.

In New York, Pat LoPresti, president of Local 1-L, said the number of retirees who died of covid-related causes was significant. Until 2020, he said, 40-50 retired 1-L members died each year. The number reached 341 in 2020. “Covid had to be the reason,” LoPresti said. “A sad report.”

After months of struggle and sacrifice, GCC/IBT leaders expressed hope for a return to some sort of normal activity by the end of the year and hailed passage of the \$1.9 trillion stimulus package advanced by the Biden administration and passed by Democrats in the House and Senate without a single Republican vote. Teamster general president James Hoffa noted that critical support for financially troubled multiemployer pension plans was built into the administration’s American Rescue Plan. Hoffa said 50 IBT pension programs, including the largest, the Central States Pension Fund, are eligible for assistance aimed at assuring that members receive “hard-earned” retirement benefits

Castro and other GCC leaders joined Hoffa in emphasizing the importance of pension

fund relief. “This is great news and is absolutely huge for our retirees,” Castro said.

With medical experts offering hope that vaccines perhaps will help bring the pandemic under control by the end of this year, union leaders are underlining the importance of the life-saving injections. Also important, union leaders say, is to follow Centers for Disease Control safety guidelines and continue to wear masks in public whether vaccinated or not.

GCC/IBT President Kurt Freeman months ago urged government officials to extend vaccination priority to union members by designating them essential workers but there has been little movement on the part of authorities, he said.

In many places, GCC/IBT leaders said, those in eligible categories were finding it difficult to get vaccination appointments.

“I’ve been on four different lists and still can’t get a vaccine,” said Harry Selnow, secretary-treasurer of the Eastern Conference and president of Local 612-M, West Caldwell, New Jersey. “And I’m hearing a lot of my members are having difficulty as well.”

On the West Coast, District Council 2 secretary-treasurer Clark Ritchey said approximately 10 percent of his members – mostly workers with underlying conditions – have been vaccinated.

“But the good news is that we are nowhere near where we were in the beginning with cases,” Ritchey said. “We are still seeing some positive tests, but it’s not to the point of having to close down facilities anymore.”

Some Americans – including union members – are hesitant to seek vaccinations but, as Castro said, the GCC/IBT is steadfastly “pro-vaccine.” Castro said members have asked how to respond if an employer mandated vaccinations. The matter, Castro said, would be resolved by collective bargaining.

Another concern relates to political leadership in Republican-led states like Texas and Mississippi where mask mandates have been dropped.

“Not only myself, but most people in Texas think it’s a stupid move purely politically driven by business because they want things open to recoup as much as they can from last year,” said Oscar Lopez, president of Local 4535-M, Houston.

Nonetheless, Lopez said, most businesses, including all GCC/IBT shops in the Houston area, still plan to have masks mandates for workers and clientele. “We will continue to follow science in our shops regardless of what the governor says.” ■



*Specialty Conference: Atlanta, Georgia
Dates to be announced*



*Midwestern Conference: Chicago, Illinois
April 9-10, 2022*

‘Full Steam Ahead’ – but Safely

By Dawn Hobbs
Special to the Communicator

Since the outset of the covid-19 crisis, union leaders have been striking a delicate balance between scheduling conferences and a convention while protecting the health of those planning to attend.

This has meant rescheduling of all conferences at least twice in 2020 but leaders are optimistic that meetings this year will be possible as the Biden administration continues an aggressive campaign to produce and distribute vaccines.

Barring spikes in covid cases or unexpected travel bans, the North American Newspaper Conference (NANC) and the Eastern Conference will be held in September of this year. The Specialty Conference may follow in October or November, although this is yet to be determined. The Midwestern Conference will be put off until April of next year.

The GCC/IBT convention – held every five years in Las Vegas simultaneously with the Teamsters international convention – will be held virtually in June.

Conference organizers have made clear that while in-person events are most desirable, they will not hesitate to reschedule if health concerns are an issue.

“We’re going full steam ahead with the foremost objective of the conference being safety,” said NANC president Joe Inemer. “We want people to come and enjoy themselves and not worry about becoming ill.” The newspaper conference is scheduled Sept. 19-22 in Scottsdale, Arizona.

Officials said conference venues will be subject to safety guidelines issued by the Center for Disease Control and that organizers will review procedures with hotel staff.

“We’re getting larger rooms so we can spread out and we’ll be wearing masks,” said Harry Selnow, vice president of the Eastern Conference, usually held in spring but now scheduled for Sept. 26-28 in Atlantic City. “We want to make sure to put them at ease with covid safety whether at the conference center or in their rooms.”

Scheduling issues have presented challenges – from re-negotiating hotel rates to sending mass updates to members – but conference organizers said in-person meetings, where valuable networking and face-to-face discussions are possible, should be the goal.

On the national level, however, organizers of the GCC/IBT convention said the best choice this year was to rely on Zoom video conferencing.

“It was actually an easy decision,” said Kurt Freeman, GCC/IBT president. “I didn’t want to put people in a position of saying they aren’t going to go.”

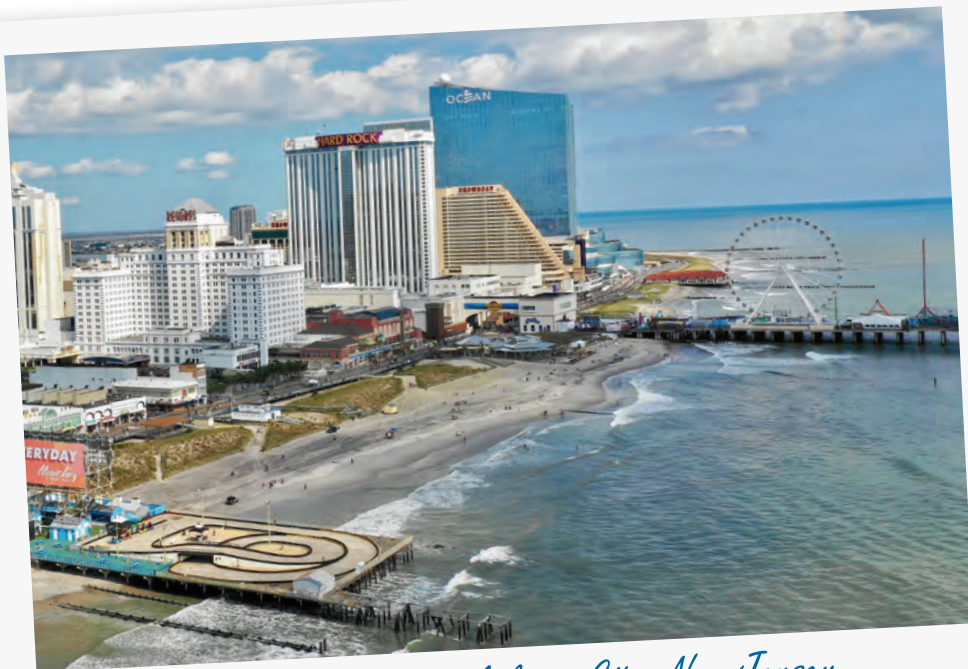
Freeman said planners worked hard to make the remote meeting a meaningful experience. “It will look almost like it has in past years – same agenda, but maybe a little shorter,” Freeman said.

While video conferencing has proven a useful tool during the pandemic, Freeman said, nothing compares with the networking and socialization that occurs at on-site events.

But safety must come before all other considerations, Freeman said. “Unfortunately, this is the new reality of what is going on right now.”

Here are conference dates. All are subject to change depending on public health considerations.

- GCC/IBT Convention – held virtually – June 17-19
- North American Newspaper Conference: Scottsdale, Arizona – Sept. 19-22
- Eastern Conference: Atlantic City, New Jersey – Sept. 26-28
- Specialty Conference: Atlanta, Georgia – Dates to be announced
- Midwestern Conference: Chicago, Illinois – April 9-10, 2022



*Eastern Conference: Atlantic City, New Jersey
September 26-28*



*North American Newspaper Conference:
Scottsdale, Arizona – Sept. 19-22*

President Means it When He Says ‘Buy American’

Buy American.

Even in an inter-dependent global economy, our own nation rates top priority. The best jobs should be on these shores, not overseas. Covid ravaged the employment market. Nothing is more important than putting Americans back to work.

Joe Biden gets it.

Without the overstuffed rhetoric and empty threats of his predecessor, Biden is advancing Made-in-America policy initiatives aimed at rallying the economy and reclaiming the 10 million jobs lost during the disastrous coronavirus health crisis.

A few days after inauguration, the new president signed an executive order “ensuring that when the federal government spends taxpayer dollars they are spent on American made goods by American workers and with American-made component parts.”

Biden signed a historic \$1.9 trillion economic recovery plan and promised the federal government would invest in businesses that created “well-paid, union jobs, and build our economy back better so that everybody has a fair shot at the middle class.”

Can you imagine that? A president who not only promises to boost employment but with union jobs.

Scott Paul, president of the Alliance for American Manufacturing, a trade association founded, in part, by the United Steelworkers union, told the New York Times the Biden plan was a breakthrough. “The package that they put together is the closest thing we’ve had to a broad industrial policy for generations,” Paul told the newspaper.

What a difference an election makes.

Donald Trump was great for posing with labor leaders in the Oval Office and bragging that he was bringing back jobs by the thousands from foreign shores, but, as so often was the case with Trump, facts told a different story.

The highly respected Economic Policy Institute noted in a report last year that while Trump boasted he had ended offshoring, his “erratic, ego-driven, and inconsistent trade policies have not achieved any measurable progress.”

In fact, EPI said, nearly 1,800 factories disappeared in the first two years of the Trump presidency and since February, 2020, when the pandemic hit, the United States lost an incredible 740,000 manufacturing jobs.

The same EPI survey said Biden’s commitment to American jobs and products could make a profound difference.

With a focus on infrastructure, climate, and rebuilding manufacturing, EPI said, Biden “could make a substantial contribution to meeting U.S. investment needs and generating a strong, sustainable, broadly shared recovery.”

Now Biden is following through on campaign promises.

No overblown rhetoric. No strutting or self-congratulations. Just a good solid plan implemented by government professionals and not the industry officials and incompetent favorites Trump installed.

Under Biden, federal agencies would have to measure domestic content in products more accurately. Loopholes allowing companies to operate offshore while still selling to the government would be closed. Biden officials will connect American businesses with American suppliers. Priority will be given U.S. firms that treat workers “with dignity and respect.”

The program will have an impact beyond just government purchasing.

Biden’s worker-first approach is consistent with the “Build Back Stronger” campaign announced earlier this year by Teamster General President James Hoffa.

The IBT wants elected officials – and not just Biden – to place priority on good jobs, secure pensions and strong unions. Hoffa says the Teamsters are ready to “harness the power of its members to reach out to lawmakers and make sure our voice is heard.”

Joe Biden has been a friend of labor throughout his long political career. Now he is in a position to achieve major progress at a time when the nation needs it most.

He’s off to a good start. But there is plenty to do. We’ll be cheering – and watching, too. ■



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Point of View

BY HAROLD MEYERSON

Let’s Hear it for those Golden Oldies: Democracy, Integrity, Civility, Truth

Joseph R. Biden’s presidential inauguration came as a golden oldie – a restoration of familiar values. Yes, we value democracy. Yes, we need and value truth.

Affirming those ideals wasn’t lip service. That’s how grotesque things had become during the misrule of Donald Trump.

Biden’s was far from the most eloquent of inaugural addresses, but it surely was among the most heartfelt. It didn’t soar, but it movingly called for an end to the demonization of political differences, to the scourge of white supremacy, to the “uncivil war” that has defined our times.

That he personally felt these missions, and the need to mount an effective federal response to the pandemic and the economic havoc it has wrought, was made clear by his lapsing into his own Bidenesque forms of sincerity.

I can’t recall an inaugural address – and I’m old enough to have heard a whole lot – punctuated by a new president’s use of the word “folks” as a form of direct address.

It was Biden’s way of suggesting we’re all in this together – a word that appeals to all of us, a word that signals Biden thinks of himself as one of us and hopes that we’re part of that “us,” too.

An eloquent statement of Biden’s themes came from the inaugural’s designated poet, 22-year-old Amanda Gorman, who sounded Biden’s calls for inclusiveness, justice, and democratic norms.

If Biden spoke as the “folksy” grandpa trying to bring the nation around to a more commonly shared sense, Gorman spoke as the quicksilver street kid demanding a better tomorrow – but both, somehow, sounded the same message and affirmed the same values.

The transition from Trump to Biden signals many changes, not least of which is a refocusing of government away from the personal needs, hates, and fears of the president himself.

During Trump’s term, the Republican Party



essentially became the action arm of the president’s psychological deficiencies – and, after the November election, his inability to see himself as a loser, his rejection by the American electorate notwithstanding. By the time he left office the base of his party had itself embraced that inability.

If that’s not a prime example of mass psychosis, I don’t know what is.

What the nation is left with is a party defined by raging resentments, fear of our multiracial future, and the hungry swallowing of lies that reinforce those fears and resentments. And precious little else.

That puts Biden’s hoped-for unity out of reach but what it doesn’t put out of reach is progress – movement toward a more efficient distribution of vaccines; toward greater racial, gender, and economic equity; toward a political system less dominated by big money.

Joe Biden must give new meaning to old values if his presidency – and his nation – is going to succeed. ■

Harold Meyerson is editor at large at the American Prospect magazine and contributing writer to the Opinion section of the Los Angeles Times. His work has appeared widely in newspapers and magazines, including The New Yorker, The Atlantic and The New Republic. This piece first appeared on the American Prospect website, prospect.org, and is reprinted with permission of the author.

Covid Bill a Win for Workers

When President Joe Biden announced there will be enough covid vaccine to treat every adult by the end of May the importance of his massive \$1.9 trillion relief bill should have been clear to everyone – including obstinate Republicans.

There is \$14 billion for testing and contact tracing in the bill and \$46 billion for vaccine distribution.

The aim was simple: Get people vaccinated so they can go back to work and get the economy moving.

Teachers will feel safer after getting the shots. Kids can go back to school, parents return to work – with some help for the family budget. One provision of the Biden package provides a tax credit to Mom and Dad for each child ages 6-17 and \$3,600 for youngsters under 6.

Without the bill, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said, another 4 million jobs would be lost. And still Republicans did all they could to block it.

Though the GOP passed a budget-busting, \$1.5 trillion tax bill that favored the rich early in the Trump administration, Republican lawmakers complained the Biden initiative was too expensive.

What a joke.

There's billions for aid to state and local government which have lost major tax revenues because of closed business and unemployment – a situation so dire that 1.3 million government workers were laid off during the pandemic.

The Biden plan provides a weekly federal unemployment bonus of \$300 until early September as a means of aiding job-seekers while the economy continues to recover.

But the most important item is the \$1,400

direct payment to low- and middle-income employees.

This time the payout won't reach as many people. A single taxpayer earning less than \$75,000 and couples earning under \$150,000 would get the full amount.

Single parents would be capped \$112,500. Single filers making \$80,000 and couples making \$160,000 or more will get nothing. The previous cutout was \$100,000 and \$200,000.

That change could mean 17 million Americans won't get a check this time around but Biden had to compromise to assure passage.

Other features of the American Rescue Plan:

\$130 billion for K-12 education to make schools safer by improving ventilation, reducing class size, buying PPEs and social distancing.

Colleges will get \$39 billion to provide emergency grants to students affected by hunger and homelessness caused by the pandemic.

Billions for rental and mortgage assistance.

Health care premiums for many families will be reduced by increasing the Affordable Care Acts tax credits for 2021 and 2022.

This is a good bill, badly needed. American workers are sure to appreciate Biden's efforts on their behalf even if Republicans don't.

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



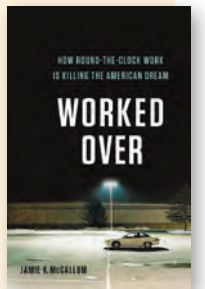
All the Best

Print

Worked Over: How Round-The-Clock Work is Killing the American Dream

Jamie K. McCallum

Declining wages, long hours, unstable schedules – for millions of Americans, employment is a brutal, daily test of ingenuity and endurance. In her insightful assessment of a growing crisis, award-winning sociologist Jamie K. McCallum says “seismic shifts” in the value of work has created a divided economy that puts too many at profound disadvantage. “Some are always on, others are scrambling to the next job, and still others are spending hours and hours just looking for more work, a job in and of itself,” McCallum notes. Many factors play into this troubling situation, McCallum says, including outsized corporate power and a precipitous decline in union membership. The only “sane way forward,” he contends, is for workers to “regain control” over their work lives. “After all, time isn't just money or power – it's justice.” **Basic Books, \$28**



Music

Songs of Comfort and Hope

Yo-Yo Ma and Kathryn Stott

From its opening moment, this album soars above the fear and uncertainty of difficult times. The music of cellist Yo-Yo Ma and English pianist Kathryn Stott is subdued and familiar – a soothing assurance that we will survive the heartbreak and disruption of a worldwide health crisis and retrieve our lives. The album begins and ends with versions of, “Amazing Grace,” and includes favorites like “Shenandoah,” “Over the Rainbow,” and “Goin' Home.” The idea, say Ma and Stott, was to “bring a sense of community, identity and purpose.” They succeeded – memorably. **Sony Classical, \$13.98**



Film/Streaming

The Dig

Simon Stone, director

This is the oddest of working class film only because of the labor involved: Digging into the soil of eastern England to unearth the past. In 1939, a wealthy estate owner, Edith Pretty (Carey Mulligan), hired an amateur archeologist named Basil Brown (Ralph Fiennes) to search for what might be hidden below the huge burial mounds on her substantial property in Suffolk. Brown, confident hard-working and determined to press on despite the skepticism of upper-class “experts,” discovers not just an artifact or two but an 88-foot ship from the Anglo-Saxon period that ultimately drew praise as a profound, history-changing archeological breakthrough. There is romance and humor – usually at the expense of Brown's pretentious rivals – and a portent of danger as World War 2 approaches. If a story about a pile of dirt sounds uninviting, have faith. This one is a winner that, rich and insightful, reveals as much about honor and perseverance as it does the distant past. **Stream on Netflix**



Internet

USAFacts

usafacts.org

How many covid vaccines delivered? Average life expectancy of Americans? Aggregate household wealth? Using government data, USA Facts is a non-profit, user-friendly, one-stop source of statistics and essential information on everything from the number of union members to the size of American families. “Facts deserve to be heard,” the site declares. In a time of crazy conspiracy theories and social media madness, let's listen up.



Guest Spot

BY SANDRA WILLIAMS

The Battle Against ‘Jim Crow 2.0’

The victories of Raphael Warnock and Jon Ossoff in Georgia runoff elections gave Democrats control of the U.S. Senate – and prompted Republicans in the state to make sure they never suffer losses like that again.

GOP lawmakers quickly introduced bills limiting voting rights – a blatant attempt to disenfranchise elderly citizens and, especially, minority members.

Civil rights activists call the proposals racist and undemocratic – so transparently prejudicial that the measures have become known as “Jim Crow 2.0.”

Early voting would be curtailed and absentee ballots far more difficult to obtain. One piece of legislation makes it illegal to provide water and snacks to people waiting on line at polling places. Another would end the right to vote by mail for those under 65 unless applicants can claim one of the few state-approved excuses.

More than 1.3 million people voted by mail in the November general election. Joe Biden won the state – the first time since 1992 that Georgia went Democratic in a presidential contest. No wonder Republicans are worried.

The Atlanta-North Georgia Labor Council has been working with community organizations, faith-based groups and unions to get the word out to our members about these egregious anti-voter initiatives.

We also have joined with organizations raising public awareness by calling out corporations that contribute campaign funds to Republicans co-sponsoring voter suppression bills.

And we also are pressing for passage of essential voter rights legislation at the national level – specifically, the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act.

Named after the equal justice icon who represented Georgia's Fifth Congressional District from 1987 until his death in 2020, the bill, also known as HR1, would help restore ballot box protections lost when the U.S. Supreme Court undercut anti-discrimination safeguards in 2013.

“If enacted, the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act would help protect voters from racial discrimination and vote suppression,” said the widely respected Brennan Center for Justice.”

John Lewis called upon us to never stand by and let evil take root. “If you see something that is not right, not fair, not just, you have a moral obligation to do something about it,” he said.

In Georgia, union members – and other people of goodwill across the state – are heeding Lewis's words. Voter suppression is not right. It is not fair. It is not just. We will not be silent.

Sandra Williams is executive director of the Atlanta-North Georgia Labor Council.



GCC Leaders Look Toward Progress As Biden Takes Charge

By Zachary Dowdy
Special to the Communicator

After contending with a president who vowed to be the friend of workers but often proved the opposite, GCC/IBT leaders hailed the election of Joe Biden as a trustworthy ally with a long pro-labor record and an agenda aimed at strengthening unions and protecting the rights of their members.

Pat LoPresti, president of Local 1-L, New York, recalled that Biden often said during his successful 2020 campaign to oust Donald Trump that “the middle class built this country – and labor built the middle class.”

Biden’s early pro-labor moves and “Build Back Better” agenda – including passage of the \$1.9 trillion economic relief package – show the president intends to keep his promises to working people, LoPresti said. “I believe him.”

LoPresti said Biden is widely known in labor ranks and, in fact, launched his presidential bid from a Teamster union hall in Philadelphia.

“He firmly has his feet in our shoes and he will put the American people first, LoPresti said. “Our needs are his priority. He will be especially good for labor.”

GCC/IBT officials said Biden’s initial actions – ousting a notoriously pro-business NLRB general counsel, ordering more aggressive OSHA enforcement, nominating Boston mayor Marty Walsh, a former union leader, as labor secretary – were a welcome change from Trump’s cronyism and questionable personnel decisions.

“As soon as he walked into the White House, Joe Biden showed his word was good,” said GCC/IBT president Kurt Freeman.

The GCC/IBT and Teamsters endorsed Biden in last year’s election and union leaders are calling on the president to help advance the IBT’s own “Build Back Stronger” recovery program aimed at protecting pensions, strengthening unions and creating good jobs.

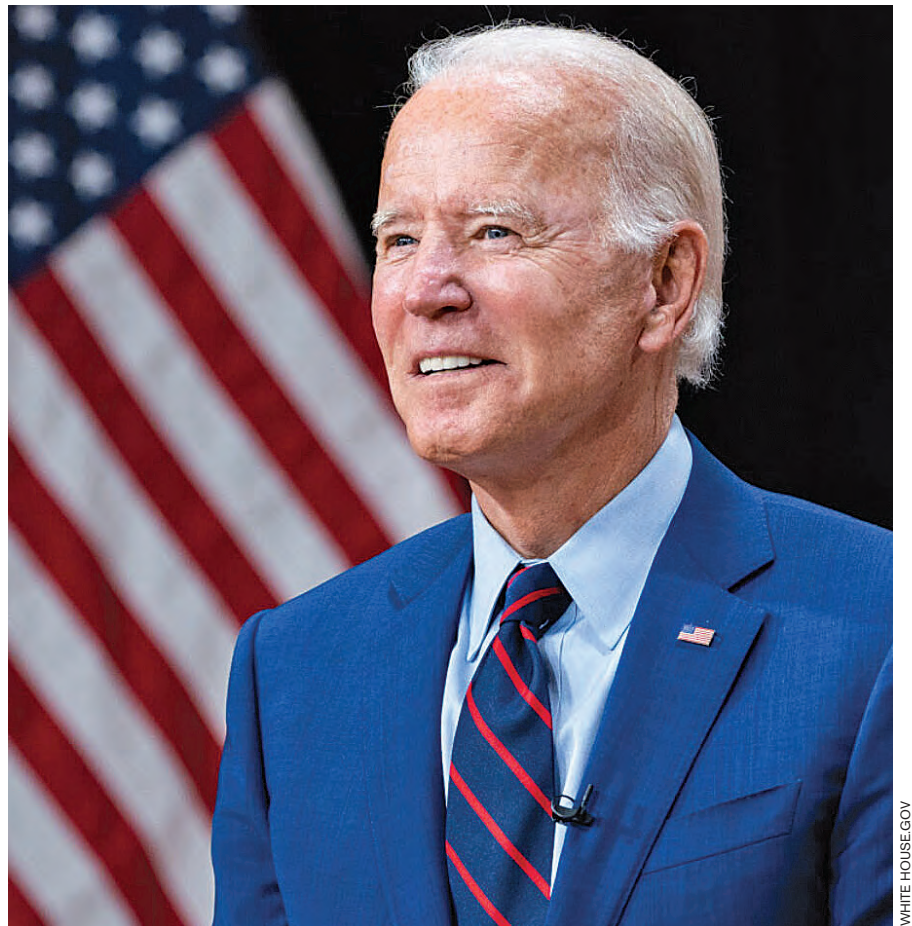
“The Teamsters know there is a lot more work to do to build strong unions,” said IBT general president James Hoffa.

Immediately after taking office, union leaders noted, Biden signed an executive order saying the “policy of the United States is to encourage union organizing and collective bargaining.” Within a month, Biden met with union leaders to discuss infrastructure and the administration’s \$1.9 trillion covid relief plan.

The president is showing his promises to labor were not “mere campaign fluff,” said GCC/IBT general counsel Peter Leff.

As Biden pursued a pro-labor agenda, House Democrats passed the Protect the Right to Organize (PRO) Act. The Senate had not taken action at press time but anti-labor Republicans are likely to oppose any measure aimed at union organizing.

It’s all welcome news to Steve Sullivan, president of GCC/IBT Local 3-N, Boston.



“Straight away, he signed executive orders to roll back some Trump-era restrictions that were harmful to working people,” Sullivan said. “I think he’s reading what the American people want. He’s 100 percent behind the union movement.”

Sullivan praised Biden’s NLRB shakeup and said he was particularly excited about the nomination of Walsh as labor secretary.

Walsh, a former Boston construction trades union leader, will bring a real-world view to the labor department post, Sullivan said. “He knows what it’s like to not only talk the talk but walk the walk.”

Biden’s choices for important administration jobs show solid judgment, Sullivan said. “We’re psyched that the president is putting people in places that understand the struggle.”

GCC/IBT Local 406-C president Mike LaSpina, also enthusiastic about Biden’s labor-related moves, said the president was taking appropriate steps to remedy some of the worst labor policies of the Trump administration.

“Thank God he started off right away with getting rid of dead wood at the NLRB,” LaSpina said. “That does nothing but help the labor movement. Biden will do everything opposite the last administration and help the labor movement go forward.” ■

Zachary Dowdy is editorial unit vice-president of Local 406-C, Long Island, and a former Newsday reporter.

IBT APPLAUDS RECOVERY PLAN – AND OFFERS ONE OF ITS OWN

GCC/IBT and Teamster leaders hailed the pro-labor initiatives of President Joe Biden and his Build Back Better agenda as a “good start” on improving life for working Americans. To make sure progress continues, the IBT crafted its own far-reaching renewal plan emphasizing pension protection and “worker power.” It is called “Build Back Stronger.” Here are important points outlined by the Teamsters:

- **Pensions:** Enact the Rehabilitation for Multiemployer Pensions Act or the Emergency Pension Plan Relief Act to protect against cuts to pension benefits
- **Organizing:** Pass the Protect the Right to Organize (PRO) Act which assures a “fair, timely and direct path to form a union.”
- **National Labor Relations Board:** Appointment and nomination of individuals to the NLRB, National Mediation Board and U.S. Federal Relations Authority who have “demonstrated professional commitment to worker’s rights.”
- **Worker Health and Safety:** The Occupational Safety and Health Administration should make “full use” of enforcement authorities to support covid-19 prevention and response, fill all vacancies for enforce-



ment-related personnel, double the number of OSHA inspectors and boost enforcement activities with any available discretionary funding.

- **Health Care:** Address the high cost of prescription drugs. Improve the Affordable Care Act and consider “new systems for providing fair, comprehensive and affordable care” with labor unions “engaged as full stakeholders” in the development process.

- **Immigration:** Pass comprehensive immigration reform legislation that “protects all workers, holds employers accountable, and includes a rational and reasonable path to citizenship.” Regardless of status, all workers should be protected by labor, health and safety laws.

‘Appetite for Real Change’

continued from PAGE 1

agenda was “smart and aggressive” and pointed toward a stronger future for organized labor. Biden must not settle for only doing “repair work” on the damage done by Trump but “defy the opposition” and re-invest in American workers.

Union leaders were encouraged by the first steps of a president described by the Los Angeles Times as “the most avowedly pro-labor chief executive in decades.”

Within the first weeks of taking office Biden:

- Fired Peter Robb, the anti-union general counsel of the National Labor Relations Board, and subsequently nominated NLRB veteran Jennifer Abruzzo for the job.
- Issued executive orders assuring collective bargaining rights for federal employees.
- Backed a \$15-an-hour minimum wage and said, “No one working 40 hours a week should live below the poverty line.”
- Nominated Boston mayor Marty Walsh, a former construction union official to head the U.S. Labor Department.
- Moved pro-labor officials into important jobs at the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs, White House Office of Management and Budget, and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA).
- Demanded the resignations of 10 Trump appointees to the Federal Services Impasses Panel, a labor relations board that seeks to resolve disputes between executive agencies and federal unions.
- Signed an executive order requiring the Labor Department to issue guidance to states regarding the right of workers to receive unemployment benefits if they quit jobs for fear of contracting the coronavirus.

“The early signs are already significant and show an appetite for real change,” Michael Wessel, a trade and labor specialist who served on the staff of former House Democratic Leader Richard Gephardt, told the Times.

Firing Robb, a longtime union enemy, was of particular importance, said GCC/IBT general counsel Peter Leff and proved that Biden’s promises were not “mere campaign fluff.”

Biden followed up by appointing top labor violations prosecutor Peter Ohr acting general counsel and then nominating Abruzzo, who has wide NLRB experience

and most recently served as a special counsel to the Communications Workers of America, for the permanent spot.

“Replacing Peter Robb with Peter Ohr restores the dual purposes of the labor board to promote collective bargaining and afford workers the right to organize and begins to end the reign of those who sought to weaponize the law to make unions weaker and more ineffectual,” Leff said.

Leaders say they have high hopes for continued progress under Biden.

“I think our affiliates are expecting an administration that views labor unions as part of a responsible community, and really part of the fabric of a community that holds things together,” Kevin Dalton, executive secretary-treasurer of the Greater Northwest Ohio AFL-CIO, told The Blade of Toledo, Ohio.

During the 2020 campaign, Biden sent a video message to Teamsters calling Hoffa “a good friend, a long time,” thanking IBT members for “what you do every single day” and saying that he considered all Teamsters “essential workers.”

Biden said middle class workers – not Wall Street – had built America and “unions built the middle class.” He promised to be an unfailing champion of working people. “I’ve stood with labor my whole life and there is no place I’d rather stand,” he said.

The Teamsters Build Back Stronger campaign will put Biden and Democrats to the test.

“A new administration and a new Congress are in place in the nation’s capital,” Hoffa said. “The Teamsters and other pro-worker allies worked hard to get them there. So now it’s time to ensure these elected officials follow through on their promises and deliver policy changes that put hardworking Americans first.”

The IBT said that as part of Build Back Stronger, individual members will be asked to make video statements related to their experiences during the covid-19 crisis.

Testimonials will be made into digital ads and circulated on social media. “They are the faces of real working Americans who are on the job during a pandemic and are worried about their health, their families and their future,” the union said.

Virtual meetings also will continue as a means of keeping members informed, Teamster officials said. GCC/IBT president Freeman said training sessions for organizers conducted by Teamster professionals via the Zoom video conferencing service already had met with significant success.

GCC/IBT and Teamster leaders say progress for working people demands a team effort – at the local union level, in the White House and with bi-partisan cooperation on Capitol Hill.

Hoffa said Biden had made a “good start” on an ambitious labor agenda.

“But Teamsters aren’t done pushing their priorities,” the IBT leader said. “And rest assured, after hearing from union members, Washington won’t be either.” ■

A Powerfully Pro-Union President

Joe Biden is pro-union – and proving it.

With policy decisions, staff appointments, executive orders and passage of a historic \$1.9 trillion economic relief program, the new president signaled his commitment to workers from the day he took office

But little could match what has been called the “most pro-union speech given by any modern president” – a forthright, no-nonsense endorsement of union organizing and, at the same time, support for the rights of Amazon.com workers seeking to unionize in Alabama.

“Unions put power in the hands of workers,” Biden said in a 2-minute, 20-second video statement released Feb. 28 on his Twitter account. “They level the playing field. They give you a stronger voice for your health, safety, higher wages, protections from racial discrimination and sexual harassment. Unions lift up workers, both union and non-union but especially black and brown workers.”

In terms seldom risked by public officials, Biden said workers must be able to seek unionization free from management pressure. He reminded viewers that the National Labor Relations Act aims not only to protect union organizing but “encourage” it.

“And there should be no intimidation, no coercion, no threats, no anti-union propaganda,” Biden said. “No supervisor should confront employees about their union preferences.”

Noting the Amazon drive in Alabama where workers seek affiliation with the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union, Biden said he was not telling workers how to vote. He said bosses should not, either.

“It’s not up to me to decide whether anyone should join a union,” Biden said. “But let me be even more clear: It’s not up to your employer to decide that either. The choice to join a union is up to the workers – full stop.”

Biden’s remarks were viewed as extraordinary.

“There is likely no historical precedent for Biden’s statement, which explicitly frames unionization as a material and social good,” said New York Magazine.

Erik Loomis, a labor historian at the University of Rhode Island, told The Washington Post that even Franklin Roosevelt did not endorse unions in such powerful terms and Faiz Shakir, founder of the group More Perfect Union, said the Biden speech was nothing less than “monumental,” according to the Post.



“It’s not up to me to decide whether anyone should join a union. But let me be even more clear: It’s not up to your employer to decide that either. The choice to join a union is up to the workers – full stop.”

Also impressed was Nobel Prize-winning economist Paul Krugman who said in the New York Times that Biden’s remarks could represent an historic “turning point.”

One speech wouldn’t suddenly reverse union losses over the last several decades, Krugman said, but the Biden statement was the most “pro-union” by any recent president – “maybe by any president ever.”

Krugman concluded: “This could be the beginning of a very big deal.” ■

Making the Labor Board Great Again

On his first day in office, President Joe Biden asked Peter Robb, the powerful, pro-business general counsel of the National Labor Relations Board, to resign.

Robb, an appointee of Donald Trump, refused.

Biden fired him.

Alice Stock, another anti-union Trump pick who served as Robb's chief deputy, became acting general counsel.

Biden ousted Stock the next day.

Not long after, the new president nominated Jennifer Abruzzo, an NLRB veteran who most recently served as special counsel for the Communications Workers of America, to the general counsel post.

Abruzzo, who worked at the NLRB for more than 20 years in various capacities, must be confirmed by the Senate. Until then, Peter Ohr, previously NLRB regional director in the agency's Chicago office, is serving as acting general counsel.

In another move, President Biden elevated Lauren McFerran, the sole Democrat on the NLRB, to role of chairperson, replacing John Ring, a Republican appointed in 2018. At the moment, three board members are Republican.

There is an open seat on the five-member board for Biden to fill but Republicans will be in a majority until August when the term of GOP member William Emanuel expires.

"Given his vocal support of unions on the campaign trail, it's no surprise Biden acted quickly to clean house at the National Labor Relations Board," commented the online news publication Slate.

Robb's firing was the first time an NLRB general counsel had been removed from office, according to the National Law Review. It was a sign that Biden intended to end the advantage manage-



ment had enjoyed during the Trump years and signal to organized labor and workers that election season promises were not "mere campaign fluff," said Peter Leff, GCC/IBT general counsel.

Stock claimed the removals were illegal but her charge lacked merit.

As reporter Mark Joseph Stern noted in the Slate story, Robb and Stock were "at-will employees" of the executive branch and had no job protection like "the countless American workers whom they prevented from unionizing." By removing them from the board, Biden was giving the two Trump functionaries "a taste of their own medicine," Stern said.

As acting general counsel, Ohr, a top prosecutor of labor law violations, took decisive action on behalf of unions – another indication that the

Biden administration intended to honor its pledge to protect workers' rights.

Ohr halted an attempt by Robb to undermine neutrality agreements guaranteeing union organizers a range of essential rights, including the ability to enter company property and approach employees during work hours.

"Replacing Peter Robb with Peter Ohr restores the dual purposes of the labor board to promote collective bargaining and afford workers the right to organize and begins to end the reign of those who sought to weaponize the law to make unions weaker and more ineffectual," Leff said.

Announcing Abruzzo's nomination, the White House again made clear its pro-labor outlook.

"A tested and experienced leader, Abruzzo will work to enforce U.S. labor laws that safeguards the rights of workers to join together to improve their wages and working conditions and protect against unfair labor practices," the announcement said. ■

FORMER IBT COUNSEL TO OSHA

Leah Ford, who served as executive assistant and counsel to Teamster general secretary-treasurer Ken Hall, has ended an 18-year IBT career to take a top job at the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA).

Named OSHA chief of staff by the incoming Biden administration, Ford will "continue to work to improve the lives of working people," Hall said in an announcement.

Ford served in the IBT legal department and then as assistant director and counsel to the union's package division. In that role, Ford "did a tremendous job for our members during UPS national negotiations," Hall said.

Hall said Ford, who earned a law degree at the University of Maryland, was "one of the most effective people I have seen in my long history with the union."

GCC/IBT president emeritus George Tedeschi also praised Ford.

"Leah is a talented person with a high sense of purpose," Tedeschi said. "The White House made a wise choice in tapping her for a vital OSHA assignment at a time when covid-19 has made plant safety more important than ever. She will be a great success and I wish her all the best."

Unions Back Voter Rights in Georgia

By Dawn Hobbs
Special to the Communicator

Georgia labor leaders – including those from GCC/IBT 527-S, Atlanta – have committed themselves to a monumental round of political activity that could help set the tone of social justice and minority rights in the state and nation for years to come.

First, there were the crucial January runoff elections – determined in large part by a significant turnout of union and minority voters – that gave Democrats control of the U.S. Senate when challengers Raphael Warnock and Jon Ossoff defeated Republican senators Kelly Loeffler and David Perdue.

Soon after the Democratic sweep, Republican legislators in Georgia introduced a number of bills that critics say would undercut minority rights by limiting early and absentee voting.

"Once we saw the win and how African-American voters came out in support of Jon Ossoff and Raphael Warnock, we knew that there would be a backlash – and this is what we've been greeted with," said Sandra Williams, executive director of the Atlanta-North Georgia Labor Council.

With three recounts in Georgia proving no voter fraud or misconduct during the presidential election, Williams said, "You just have to ask why propose legislation to fix a problem that doesn't exist if not to suppress the vote?"

Eddie Williams, 527-S president, said his local – and the Georgia labor community – would not stand by as Republicans seek to undercut voter rights.

"We will do whatever it takes," Williams said. "This is another Republican tactic designed to restrict minority voting."

Republican attempts to limit voter access in Georgia reflect similar actions in 43 states by GOP lawmakers beholden to former President Trump and his supporters.

"It's absolutely crazy, it's frightening, and it's disappointing to say the least because we know it's targeted at African Americans and other people of color," Sandra Williams said.

Various labor and minority right groups are already looking into legal options to block the unconstitutional voter suppression movement, she said, adding that numerous protests are already in the planning as well – even though one of Georgia's proposed bills attempts to limit protests to no more than two people.

She is also grateful for the support received from Local 527-S. "During both the presidential election and the runoff, president Eddie Williams and secretary-treasurer Ralph Meers worked diligently with us to get out the vote," the labor council leader said. "They put up signs, did phone banking, literature drops. They were with us every step of the way and we thank them for showing up and being a part of what we do at the labor council."

Eddie Williams said Republicans refuse to accept Biden's victory and are furious that wins by Warnock and Ossoff gave Democrats control of the Senate.

Republicans already were angered by the November victory of Joe Biden who flipped Georgia to the Democratic column for the first time since Bill Clinton won the state in 1992.

"They are still upset about Trump losing the presidential election due to the minority vote here," he said. "But the loss in the Senate put it over the top. If we hadn't won those two Senate seats, I don't think we'd be going through this right now."

GOP anti-voting initiatives could have long-lasting effects by undermining fair elections and weakening minority rights, Eddie Williams said.

"It's just wrong – and it could throw us back decades." ■

UNIONS JOIN CALL FOR CHARGES AGAINST FORMER GOV. SNYDER IN FLINT, MICH. WATER SCANDAL

Prompted in part by pressure from labor unions, prosecutors recently charged former Republican governor Rick Snyder with willful neglect of duty in the 2016 water crisis in Flint, Michigan – a debacle that led to illness and death in some of the city's poorest neighborhoods.

"Unions have tried to keep the human cost of these terrible decisions at the forefront," said Israel Castro, GCC/IBT District Council 3 secretary-treasurer. "This has severely impacted kids and families and they are going to have to suffer the consequences of what was a very greedy and self-serving decision for a very long time."

Throughout the ordeal, GCC/IBT Local 2/289-M, which represents workers in Flint, has continued to work with Teamsters Joint Council 43 and Teamsters Local 332 to assist the community by distributing bottled water and raising money to help residents buy water filtration systems.

Though Flint's 100,000 residents – most poor and black – had been drinking, cooking, and bathing in the tainted water since 2014, Snyder didn't respond, authorities said, until two years later when tests revealed high levels of lead in children.

Eight staff members also were charged with involuntary manslaughter for their part in the scandal which began when officials ordered city water drawn from the Flint River instead of Lake Huron – a cost-cutting move that allowed dangerously high levels of lead to enter the community's water supply.

Doctors and local activists had warned for months that behavioral problems, neurological ailments and thwarted child development could result but officials repeatedly downplayed the dangers.

Criminal indictments against state and city personnel were handed down in 2016 but unions and civic groups demanded that Snyder also be held accountable for catering to big money interests while failing to address the crisis with sufficient urgency.

"They put money over people – and their own residents died as a result of their decision," Castro said. "They did the most greedy thing possible and didn't care what the consequences were."



1-L GOOD GUYS REALLY COOKING IN ANNUAL COMMUNITY EFFORTS

Two friends from Local 1-L, New York, have an appetite for community service.

Dave Bartlett, 1-L business agent, hosts a barbeque fundraiser for the Cassville Volunteer Fire Department each February and June.

"We cook 300 chicken halves in the winter and 400 in the summer," Bartlett said. "We have been doing the drive through the pandemic and usually sell out in a half an hour."

Proceeds – usually about \$2,000 – help support the purchase of firefighting department equipment.

"I think community service is part of being a union member," Bartlett said. "Helping people and members is part of giving back to your community and the fire service is a strong brotherhood like our union."

1-L vice president Gene Kreis, longtime pal of Bartlett, also is committed to helping his neighbors.

Kreis holds a Food Fest every August for The Daily Bread Food Pantry in Cherry Valley, New York.

"I have 150 sausages custom made. Volunteers clean and cut potatoes for French fries and chop onions," Kreis said. There's corn on the cob, hot dogs and hamburgers on the menu, too.

The event brings in about \$3,000 for hunger relief.

"By engaging the community," Kreis said, "unions can demonstrate how their efforts benefit everyone, not just union members."

BIDEN INAUGURAL MATERIALS PRODUCED AT GPO BY 'PROUD' UNION MEMBERS

With a sense of pride and duty, GCC/IBT union members at the U. S. Government Publishing Office produced material – some highly sensitive – for the inauguration of President Joe Biden.

"It gives you a real sense of pride to know you had a direct impact on freedom and the Democratic process," said Melvin Prailow, building representative and chairman of the GPO Joint Council. "Work like this makes you proud to be American."

Prailow, of Local 1-C, Washington, D.C., said union members – all required to submit to background checks and gain security clearance – printed invitations, seating charts and credentials in addition to classified items that he could not discuss.

"This was truly a team effort by all of our hard-working members," Prailow said.

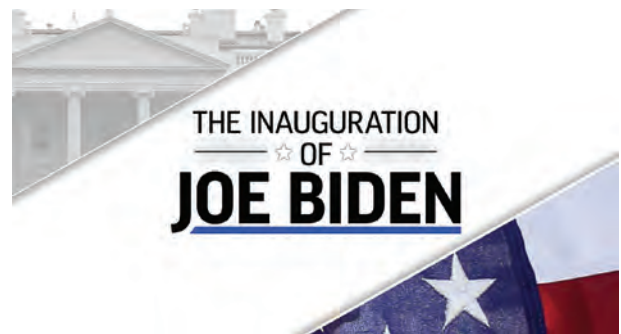
For decades, Prailow said, the GPO has handled materials for various inaugural and White House events.

While the pandemic has forced many companies to either lay off workers or shutter completely, production demands have increased at the federal facility during the past year, leaders say.

"Covid caused many people to be off work, but we were pressed into working overtime and six to seven days per week," said Danny Whitmer, Local 1-C president.

Whitmer said union GPO workers take great pride in their work.

"This is what we consider an honor and a duty to the United States," he said. "Whether it be printing money at the Bureau of Engraving or material for an inauguration at GPO, we consider it an important mission for us to serve the people of this country."



LARGEST GCC PLANT WINS CONTRACT

More than 1,500 full-time and seasonal workers at the TomaTek tomato packing plant in California's Central Valley recently won a three-year GCC/IBT contract after only eight days of negotiations.



Though not a print industry shop, TomaTek has the largest number of GCC-represented workers in the country.

"Most of the GCC has no idea," said Clark Ritchey, secretary-treasurer of District Council 2, who was chief negotiator for the contract.

The plant, which employs 1,500 workers during peak season and 300 throughout the year, was brought aboard 22 years ago by Daniel Cabada, then an organizer and now president of DC2.

"We rented a house and had 10 organizers down there doing house calls," Ritchey said. "It was a huge organizing drive."

The new contract provides workers with wage increases and pay adjustments for various job classifications. It also offers seasonal workers the opportunity to participate in the TomaTek 401(k) plan and earn company matching funds.

Ritchey paid tribute to the negotiating skills of Cabada and plant representative Fernando Aguilera, and acknowledged the cooperative spirit of TomaTek management.

"We have a very good working relationship with the company and a great committee," Ritchey said.

CANCUN CRUZ OUTRAGES TEXANS

After enduring a year of the pandemic, Texans found themselves battling a deadly winter storm that left millions – including many union members – without power, heat or water for days in sub-zero temperatures.

A number of GCC/IBT families were hit hard by the storm, said Oscar Lopez, president Local 4535-M, Houston. "Quite a number of our membership lives in parts of Houston that did go without electricity for days. It was terrible, but people survived the best they could."

And to top it off, after urging residents to stay home during the winter disaster, Sen. Ted Cruz gathered his family and boarded a plane for a Ritz-Carlton resort in Cancun, Mexico.

"Everyone was outraged," Lopez said. "Cruz just has nothing in common with the average person in Texas and is an insult to the working class."

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

Biden connaît un « bon début » avec ses mesures protravailleurs

Par Fred Bruning
Graphic Communicator

Le président Joe Biden, qui a hérité d'une économie chancelante, d'une crise massive en matière de santé publique et d'une nation ébranlée par quatre années de provocations et coups bas politiques, a connu un début impressionnant avec sa campagne Build Back Better qui vise à aider les travailleurs et à protéger les syndicats, estiment les dirigeants syndicaux.

C'est maintenant que les choses se corsent.

Au cours des 100 premiers jours de la présidence Biden, les républicains ont levé le nez sur ses tentatives bipartisanes alors que les membres d'une coalition démocratique vaste et diversifiée réclament des mesures immédiates – que cela plaise ou non au parti républicain.

Les Teamsters et la CCG-FIT, qui ont leur propre programme, affirment clairement que Biden ne doit pas se contenter de réparer les dégâts laissés par Donald Trump et ses alliés congressistes, qui sont profondément conservateurs.

Dans un énoncé de politique intitulé Build Back Stronger, la FIT et son président général James Hoffa affirment que l'administration Biden – et les élus de tous niveaux – doivent travailler avec les syndicats pour « apporter le changement véritable dont ont besoin nos familles ».

Les Teamsters accordent tout particulièrement une grande priorité à la protection des retraites, à la création d'emplois et à la sécurité des travailleurs. Comme l'a fait remarquer

J. Hoffa, la FIT a joué un rôle important dans l'élection présidentielle de 2020 et continuera d'exercer son influence pour le compte des travailleurs.

« Comme l'an dernier, le syndicat va mettre à contribution le pouvoir de ses membres pour atteindre les législateurs et faire entendre notre voix. »

Le président doit « saisir le moment », a convenu Kurt Freeman, président de la CCG-FIT, et réclamer des réformes essentielles comme l'adoption de la Protect the Right to Organize (PRO) Act (loi visant à protéger le droit syndical) qui élargit les droits de négociation et colmate les failles que les entreprises utilisaient pour profiter des employés.

Dans sa chronique en page 2 du présent numéro, K. Freeman écrit que le programme Build Back Stronger de la FIT était « intelligent et audacieux » et visait à assurer un avenir plus fort au milieu syndical. Biden ne doit pas se contenter de « réparer » les dégâts causés par Trump, mais aussi « défier l'opposition » et réinvestir dans les travailleurs américains.

Les dirigeants syndicaux ont été encouragés par les premiers pas d'un président décrit par le Los Angeles Times comme « le dirigeant en chef le plus ouvertement prosyndical depuis des décennies ».

Au cours des premières semaines qui ont suivi sa prise de fonctions, Biden a :

- limogé Peter Robb, le conseiller général antisindical du National Labor Relations Board, et nommé à sa place Jennifer Abruzzo, qui a longtemps travaillé pour l'organisme;
- émis des décrets accordant aux fonction-

naires fédéraux des droits pour mener des négociations collectives;

- appuyé un salaire minimum de 15 \$ l'heure;
 - nommé le maire de Boston Marty Walsh, un ancien dirigeant syndical du milieu de la construction, à la tête du Département du travail des États-Unis;
 - placé des responsables protravailleurs à des postes importants au sein de l'Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs, du White House Office of Management and Budget et de l'Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA);
 - demandé la démission de 10 personnes nommées par Trump au Federal Services Impasses Panel, un conseil des relations du travail qui vise à régler les différends entre les agences exécutives et les syndicaux fédéraux;
 - signé un décret exécutif obligeant le Département du travail à émettre des directives aux États relativement au droit des travailleurs à recevoir des prestations de chômage s'ils quittent leur emploi par crainte d'attraper le coronavirus.
- C'était particulièrement important de congédier Robb, un ennemi de longue date des syndicats, a indiqué Peter Leff, conseiller général de la CCG-FIT, et cela a prouvé que les promesses de Biden n'étaient pas de « simples propos de campagne ».
- « Le remplacement de Peter Robb par Peter Ohr marque la fin du règne de ceux qui cherchaient à utiliser la loi comme une arme pour affaiblir les syndicats et les rendre plus inefficaces »

Biden a ensuite nommé Peter Ohr, le procureur en chef chargé des violations des droits des travailleurs, au poste de conseiller juridique général, et Jennifer Abruzzo, qui a une vaste expérience du National Labor Relations Board et était jusqu'à tout récemment conseillère spéciale auprès des Communications Workers of America, au poste permanent.

Les dirigeants syndicaux espèrent grandement que les progrès vont se poursuivre sous Biden. La campagne Build Back Stronger des Teamsters sera un test pour Biden et les démocrates.

« Il y a une nouvelle administration et un nouveau Congrès en place dans la capitale nationale, a déclaré J. Hoffa. Les Teamsters et autres alliés protravailleurs n'ont pas ménagé leurs efforts pour les installer. Le temps est venu de s'assurer que ces élus tiennent promesse et introduisent des changements de politiques accordant la priorité aux Américains qui travaillent fort. »

Les dirigeants de la CCG-FIT et des Teamsters affirment que les progrès à accomplir pour les travailleurs exigent un effort collectif – au niveau des sections locales, à la Maison-Blanche et avec la coopération bipartisane du Capitole.

Selon J. Hoffa, Biden a connu un « bon début » avec son ambitieux programme axé sur les travailleurs.

« Mais les Teamsters n'ont pas fini de faire valoir leurs priorités. Et Washington ne s'arrêtera pas là non plus après avoir entendu les syndiqués, vous pouvez en être sûrs. »

Biden “arranca bien” con medidas favorables a los trabajadores

Por Fred Bruning
Graphic Communicator

Frente a una economía herida, una crisis masiva de salud pública y una nación desconcertada tras cuatro años de una política divisiva y brutal, los líderes sindicales dicen que el presidente Joe Biden ha arrancado con impresionante fuerza su campaña “Build Back Better” que llama a “reconstruir y hacerlo mejor”, para beneficiar a los trabajadores y proteger al movimiento laboral.

Ahora viene lo difícil.

Durante los primeros 100 días de Biden, los republicanos han desdeñado sus intentos de bipartidismo, mientras que miembros de una amplia y diversa coalición demócrata exigen acción ya, le guste o no le guste al GOP.

Siguiendo su propia agenda, los Teamsters y los aliados de GCC/IBT están diciendo claramente que Biden tiene que hacer más que meramente deshacer el daño que han dejado atrás Donald Trump y sus profundamente conservadores aliados en el Congreso.

En una declaración de política con el lema “Build Back Stronger”, es decir “reconstruir más sólidamente”, la IBT y el presidente general James Hoffa dicen que la administración Biden, y los funcionarios elegidos a todos los niveles, tienen que colaborar con los sindicatos para “lograr el verdadero cambio que nuestras familias necesitan”.

Específicamente, los Teamsters están dando gran prioridad a la protección de las pensiones, la creación de empleo y la seguridad

de los trabajadores. Hoffa indicó que la IBT había desempeñado un importante papel en las elecciones presidenciales de 2020 y continuaría ejerciendo influencia en representación de los trabajadores.

“Y al igual que el año pasado, el sindicato utilizará el poder de sus miembros para llegar hasta los legisladores y asegurarse de que se escuche nuestra voz”, dijo Hoffa.

El presidente tiene que aprovechar el momento, manifestó el presidente de GCC/IBT Kurt Freeman, y abogar por reformas esenciales, como la aprobación de la Ley de Protección del Derecho de Sindicación (PRO) que expande los derechos de negociación y cierra las brechas legales que las compañías usan para aprovecharse de los empleados.

En su columna de la página 2 de esta edición, Freeman dice que el lema “Build Back Stronger” de la IBT es inteligente, energético y conducente a un futuro más sólido para el movimiento sindical. Biden no debe conformarse simplemente con hacer “reparaciones” del daño causado por Trump, tiene que “desafiar a la oposición” y reinvertir en los trabajadores de Estados Unidos.

A los directivos sindicales les alentaron los primeros pasos de un presidente que el diario Los Angeles Times describe como “el jefe del Ejecutivo más abiertamente prosindical desde hace décadas”.

Durante las primeras semanas siguientes a su toma de posesión, Biden:

- Despidió a Peter Robb, el director jurídico antisindicalista de la Junta Nacional de Relaciones Laborales, y subsiguientemente nombró para el puesto a Jennifer Abruzzo, veterana de la Junta.

- Emitió órdenes ejecutivas que aseguran los derechos de negociación colectiva de los empleados federales.
 - Apoyó un salario mínimo de \$15 por hora.
 - Nombró al alcalde de Boston, Marty Walsh, anterior oficial del sindicato de la construcción, para dirigir el Departamento de Trabajo de Estados Unidos.
 - Colocó funcionarios favorables a los derechos de los trabajadores en la Oficina de Información y Asuntos Reglamentarios, la Oficina de Administración y Presupuesto de la Casa Blanca, y la Administración de Salud y Seguridad Ocupacional (OSHA).
 - Exigió la dimisión de 10 miembros nombrados por Trump al Federal Services Impasses Panel, una junta de relaciones laborales para la resolución de disputas entre agencias ejecutivas y sindicatos federales.
 - Firmó una orden ejecutiva que requiere que el Departamento de Trabajo proporcione directrices a los estados sobre el derecho de los trabajadores a recibir beneficios por desempleo si dejan el trabajo por temor a contraer el coronavirus.
 - El despido de Robb, un viejo enemigo de los sindicatos, fue de especial importancia, manifestó el director jurídico de GCC/IBT, Peter Leff, y demostró que las promesas de Biden no eran meras promesas vacías de campaña.
- “La sustitución de Peter Robb por Peter Ohr pone fin al reinado de los que buscaban

hacer de la ley un arma para debilitar a los sindicatos y hacerlos más ineficaces”, dijo Leff.

Seguidamente Biden nombró al destacado fiscal en materia de abusos laborales Peter Ohr para el puesto de director jurídico en funciones, tras de lo cual nombró a Abruzzo, que posee amplia experiencia con la Junta Nacional de Relaciones Laborales (NLRB) y que recientemente había sido asesora jurídica especial del sindicato Communications Workers of America, para el puesto permanente.

Los líderes dicen que con Biden tienen muchas esperanzas de seguir avanzando. La campaña “Build Back Stronger” de los Teamsters va a poner a prueba a Biden y a los demócratas.

“Tenemos una nueva administración y un nuevo Congreso en la capital de la nación”, dijo Hoffa. “Los Teamsters y otros aliados de los trabajadores trabajaron duro para ponerlos allá. Y ahora toca asegurarnos de que esos funcionarios elegidos cumplen sus promesas introduciendo cambios en las políticas que pongan por delante a los estadounidenses que trabajan duro”.

Los líderes de GCC/IBT y de los Teamsters dicen que para que los trabajadores progresen es necesario un esfuerzo de equipo, a nivel de sindicato local, en la Casa Blanca y con cooperación bipartidista en Capitol Hill.

Hoffa dijo que Biden ha “arrancado bien” con una ambiciosa agenda en pro de los derechos de los trabajadores.

“Pero los Teamsters no han terminado la lucha por sus prioridades”, dijo el líder de IBT. “Y que nadie lo dude, tras escuchar a los sindicalistas, Washington seguirá también luchando por las suyas.”

Listed here are GCC/IBT members for whom death benefits were paid, according to the Membership Department of the office of the GCC/IBT secretary-treasurer. Locals wishing to list members who died but did not participate in the death benefits program should contact the Graphic Communicator.

Local	Date of Death	Local	Date of Death
Death Benefit Claims Paid June 2018		285M Herman C Arndt Jr	05-07-18
14M Thomas Constance	05-10-18	285M Stanley L Payne, Jr	04-05-18
14M Geraldine M Dutton	04-08-18	285M Bobby L Williams	03-26-18
14M Delbert F Fitzgerald Jr	05-21-18	458M Thomas T Ellenwood	05-04-18
14M Norman C Pennock	04-10-18	458M Gus J Fickteman	04-15-18
14M Richmond Smith	11-09-15	458M William H Kaucher	05-12-18
16C Wilfred G Loethen	10-18-17	458M Stanley T Klosowski	01-19-18
24M Stanley F Mandela	04-30-13	458M Edward R Kroll	04-04-18
24M Frederick R Rheam	04-08-18	458M Robert N Macdonald	04-29-18
72C Daniel W Ryce Jr	05-24-18	458M Edward L Makowski	05-14-18
77P Norman J Gawinski	05-06-18	458M Anthony S Muffoletto	06-05-18
119B John J Dash	04-26-18	458M William P Pilk	05-28-18
119B Marazetta Jenkins	03-31-18	458M Charles H Thomas	04-17-18
119B Mary C Ortini	05-25-18	458M William J Tobin	04-27-18
137C Lawrence J Mcdonald	04-21-15	503M Florence G Adolphson	03-17-17
235M Milford Morris	06-04-18	503M Kenneth J Siejak	04-07-16
261M Florian V Paradowski	11-30-17	508M Berlyn Fisher	04-13-18
		508M Ralph A Johnson	05-24-18
555M Jean-Guy Daigneault	04-29-18	555M Yvon Deschatelets	05-09-18
555M Rita Lavigne	11-08-17	555M Laurent Lemelin	05-27-18
555M Michel Macera	01-08-18	555M Roger St-Onge	05-23-18
555M Anna Maria Wagenhauser	02-04-18	568M Ruth E Hutton	04-25-18
572T Isabel Ochoa Munoz	04-09-18	572T Kostatenos E Stathes	03-09-18
577M Ruby Beauchamp	04-22-18	577M David J Brehm	05-10-18
577M Anton C Daube	12-28-17	577M Joseph S Kaminski	05-27-18
577M Vivian Miller	10-19-14	577M Karen J Scheel	05-08-15
612M Emilia J Campos	01-16-18	612M James S Van Gorder Jr	05-22-18
853T Joseph S Bruno	02-06-18	853T Billy S Wingate	06-02-18
999ML Mary L Beck	10-27-17	999ML Harry E R Barbe	05-06-18
6505M James P Bobbett	02-04-18	6505M Earnest Bonner	04-09-18
6505M William H Chrisman	05-04-18	6505M Sylvester G Smith	05-16-18
Death Benefit Claims Paid July 2018		1B Eugene E Beaudry	06-06-18
1C Leonard J Fallin	05-16-18	1L Lena A Pickering	06-10-18
1M Wallace R Heidbrier	05-26-18	2N George V Dunn, Jr	08-15-17
3N John D Lovendale	05-25-18	3N John J Morey	05-16-18
3N Paul J Pilkington	04-10-18	3N John W Henkel	05-30-18
16C Billy D Ford	05-21-18	16C Bernice M Graham	04-07-18
17M Billy S Wingate	06-02-18	24M Harry E R Barbe	05-06-18
235M Lola M Miller	06-06-18	285M Richard M Anckner	06-01-18
286C Jack L Norman	04-28-18	388M Laurance G Haskett	05-04-18
458M James R Lantvit	01-24-17	508M Donald G Ream	02-10-17
518M Edward V Criswell	11-18-06	518M Norma J Hill	06-15-18
518M Forrest A James	05-26-18	518M Ralph E Schneider	06-12-18
527S Virgil A Jones	04-22-18	527S Frank G Shudak	05-24-18
543M David L Rhodes	06-03-18	568M Paul G Householder	02-13-18
572T Apolarin O Maciel	03-01-18	572T Betty J Wubker	05-31-18
625S Lanny G Bitzer	05-16-18	625S Rudolph P Martinez	05-01-18
999ML Mary C Allen	06-14-18	999ML Margaret I Mc Collum	06-12-18

By Fred Bruning
Graphic Communicator

He was GCIU Eastern Conference president, vice president of the New Jersey AFL-CIO, chairman of the Employees Retirement Fund and general board member of the GCIU, and, subsequently, GCC/IBT, from June 2000-May 2008.



Edward A. Treacy

Mindy Outwater, executive assistant at Local 612-M who

The family requests that memorials be in the form of donations to St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, 501 St. Jude Place, Memphis, Tennessee 38105.



John J. Sweeney

Tedeschi said Sweeney knew that, to survive, the labor movement must expand its reach and seek to organize in all sectors of the economy – and that no one should be left out.

Continues on page 16

Anne Feeney: Songs of Solidarity

Anne Feeney was a “hell raiser” by her own description – a disturber of the status quo whose lush voice, stirring guitar licks and powerful lyrics thrilled crowds at concert halls, folk festivals and union rallies.

“She just wasn’t singing about the union movement, she was part of the movement,” musician and songwriter Evan Greer told the Washington Post after Feeney’s death in February. “She was always passing the hat at her gigs for one strike fund or another, even when she was scraping by herself.”

The Post said Feeney toured 200-300 days a year and appeared with some of the greatest stars in the folk and country music firmament including Pete Seeger, John Prine and Loretta Lynn.

Feeney, who died at 69 in a Pittsburgh hospital after developing what the Post said was covid-related pneumonia, sang songs of solidarity and social activism. Her biggest hit, “Have You Been to Jail for Justice?” was recorded by Peter, Paul and Mary.

A tribute posted by the online publication Labor Notes, recalled Feeney’s remarkable energy, “feisty spirit” and unwavering commitment to working class Americans.

“She sang for steelworkers, car wash workers, miners, strawberry workers, railroad workers, anti-sweatshop activists, homeowners fighting foreclosure, public transit supporters, auto workers opposing NAFTA, and many more,” said Labor Notes editor Alexandra Bradbury.

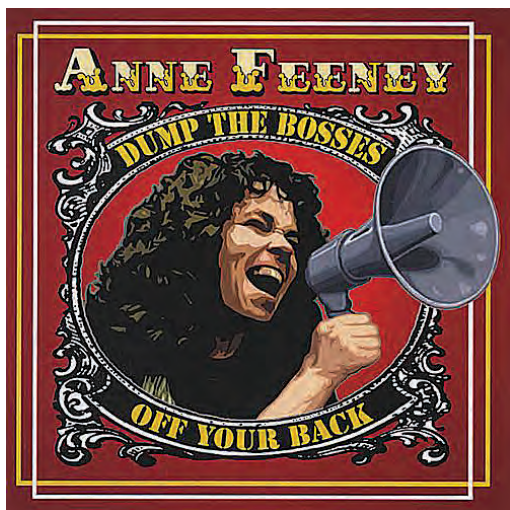
In the 1980s, Feeney gave up a law career to become a singer who blended “elements of Irish, bluegrass, folk and pop music while coupling many of her melodies with political lyrics, sometimes tinged with satire and humor, that were reminiscent of the ‘60s protest songs,” the Post said.

Feeney served as president of the Pittsburgh Musicians Union – she was the first woman to lead a musician’s union in the United States – and helped form Local 1000 of the American Federation of Musicians, which represented traveling performers.

In recent years, health issues limited Feeney’s touring schedule – the singer survived two bouts of cancer and lately had been undergoing therapy for a fractured back – but she continued to perform online as late as December.

With her inspiring music and unfailing devotion, Feeney made an incalculable contribution to the American labor movement, said Bradbury of Labor Notes.

“She is irreplaceable,” Bradbury said, “and gone too soon.”



Percent of Union Workers Grows

How has organized labor held up during the pandemic? Mixed results.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that the number of union members was down 321,000 last year, a decline of 2.2 percent. That’s a lot of people.

On the upside, the percentage of American workers in unions rose from 11.6 percent to 12.1 percent. It was the most robust increase in years but, says the Economic Policy Institute, the rate still amounts to less than half of what it was 40 years ago.

Accounting for the union percentage gain, EPI says, was the so-called “pandemic composition effect” – meaning that job losses were more severe in industries with lower unionization rates like leisure and hospitality.

And, said analysts, union members also were able to speak effectively on their own behalf.

Workers with union protection “had a voice in how their employers have navigated the pandemic” and were in a position to negotiate terms of furloughs or set up “work-share” arrangements that saved jobs.

“This crisis will continue to reshape our economy, our workforce, and our democracy,” EPI said. “We must demand policies that create economic equality and a just democracy.”



Pandemic? Great for Billionaires

Guess who’s getting rich during the pandemic.

Bingo! You got it – Americans who were loaded in the first place.

A Bloomberg survey showed that billionaires added \$1 trillion to their fortunes as many Americans struggled to survive, according to the Washington Post.

At the top of the heap were automotive and space travel innovator Elon Musk and Jeff Bezos, founder of Amazon and owner of the Post.

Bezos, richest person in the world, benefited by a sharp increase in online sales during the coronavirus crisis. His net worth surged by 63 percent to \$188.7 billion.

That kind of income growth hasn’t happened since the Carnegies and Rockefellers early in the 20th Century, the Post said. “...we as a society are only just beginning to grapple with the ethical considerations,” the paper added.



SUPERVISOR MARK RIDLEY-THOMAS - LOS ANGELES COUNTY

Whatever Happened to ‘Hero Pay?’

Remember “hero pay” – the stipend some retail stores were giving front line workers as recognition for courageous service early in the pandemic?

Didn’t last long.

Researchers found that retail and grocery companies earned \$17.7 billion more in the first three quarters of 2020 than the year before, according to the New York Times, but “most stopped offering extra compensation to their associates in the early summer.”

That was bad enough.

When cities – mainly on the West Coast – began mandating hazard pay for workers, companies threatened to close stores.

In Long Beach, California, grocery giant Kroger wasn’t kidding.

City officials passed an ordinance requiring that chain supermarkets increase pay by \$4-an-hour for 120 days.

Kroger, which operates two Food 4 Less outlets in the city, promptly announced it was shutting the stores.

Coercion was the aim, said a leader of the United Food and Commercial Workers International Union (UFCW) which represents approximately 160 employees at Food 4 Less stores in Long Beach.

“Kroger is sending a message, more than anything else,” Andrea Zinder, president of UFCW Local 324, told the Times. “They are trying to intimidate workers and communities: If you pass these types of ordinances, there will be consequences.”

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GCC-IBT-MM-3-16-2021

SUMMARY ANNUAL REPORT FOR GRAPHIC COMMUNICATIONS BENEVOLENT TRUST FUND

This is a summary of the annual report for the GRAPHIC COMMUNICATIONS BENEVOLENT TRUST FUND, (Employer Identification No. 52-1632857, Plan No. 502) for the period July 1, 2018 to June 30, 2019. The annual report has been filed with the Employee Benefits Security Administration, as required under the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 (ERISA).

BASIC FINANCIAL STATEMENT

The value of plan assets, after subtracting liabilities of the plan, was \$53,829,952 as of June 30, 2020 compared to \$54,222,556 as of June 30, 2019. During the plan year the plan experienced a decrease in its net assets of \$392,604. This decrease includes unrealized appreciation or depreciation in the value of plan assets; that is, the difference between the value of the plan's assets at the end of the year and the value of the assets at the beginning of the year, or the cost of assets acquired during the year. During the plan year, the plan had total income of \$2,886,646. This income included employee contributions of \$182,755, realized gains of \$302,433 from the sale of assets and earnings from investments of \$2,575,720. Plan expenses were \$3,279,250. These expenses included \$414,153 in administrative expenses and \$2,865,097 in benefits paid to participants and beneficiaries

YOUR RIGHTS TO ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

You have the right to receive a copy of the full annual report, or any part thereof, on request. The items listed below are included in that report:

1. An accountant's report;
2. Assets held for investment; and
3. Transactions in excess of 5 percent of the plan assets.

To obtain a copy of the full annual report, or any part thereof, write or call the office of

Steve Nobles
25 Louisiana Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20001
202-508-6660

or the Plan Sponsor

Graphic Communications Benevolent
Trust Fund
Plan Sponsor
25 Louisiana Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20001
52-1632857 (Employer Identification Number)
(202) 508-6660

You also have the right to receive from the plan admin-

istrator, on request and at no charge, a statement of the assets and liabilities of the plan and accompanying notes, or a statement of income and expenses of the plan and accompanying notes, or both. If you request a copy of the full annual report from the plan administrator, these two statements and accompanying notes will be included as part of that report. These portions of the report are furnished without charge.

You also have the legally protected right to examine the annual report at the main office of the plan:

25 Louisiana Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20001

and at the following address:

Graphic Communications Benevolent
Trust Fund
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SCAN ME

Sweeney, Legendary IBT Leader

Continued from page 13

"He believed that everyone deserved a chance to succeed and that discrimination of any form – in unions or the country at large – was self-defeating and could not be tolerated," Tedeschi said.

Sweeney often recalled that his father, James, a bus driver, was able to provide a comfortable life for his family because of union benefits, whereas, his mother, Agnes, a household worker, had no protection.

"Because of the union, my father got things like vacation days or a raise in wages," Sweeney told the Times just before retiring. "But my mother, who worked as a domestic, had nobody. It taught me from a young age the difference between workers who are organized and workers who were by themselves."

Born in the Bronx on May 5, 1934, Sweeney attended Catholic elementary and high school and worked as a grave digger to help pay tuition at Iona College, in New Rochelle, New York, another Catholic institution.

He majored in economics, worked briefly for IBM, and then began a union career with the International Ladies Garment Workers Union. In 1960, he moved to the SEIU as a contract specialist and, 20 years later, was elected SEIU president.

As leader of the AFL-CIO, Sweeney knew that organizing was essential. Union membership was dropping dramatically and conservative opponents sought to undermine the labor movement. The trend was not easily reversed. Union jobs were disappearing and employers were emboldened. Even Sweeney could not stem the losses.

In 2005, was re-elected to a final term.

"He was seen as a stabilizing force for the federation of 57 unions representing about 9 million workers," the Associated Press observed.

His successor, Richard Trumka, said Sweeney was "a legend pure and simple," motivated by a strong Catholic faith and passionately committed to working people. "John viewed his leadership as a spiritual calling, a divine act of solidarity in a world plagued by distance and division," Trumka said in a statement.

Sweeney, who recalled his life and career in a 2017 memoir titled, "Looking Back, Moving Forward: My Life in the American Labor Movement," is survived by his wife of 59 years, Maureen; son, John; daughter, Patricia; and, sisters, Cathy Hammill and Peggy King.

He will be remembered for "consistently exhibiting grit over flash and pursuing progress instead of posturing," Trumka said.

Tedeschi added: "He was one of the best."