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### Rick Street Retires After Stellar Career As Organizer



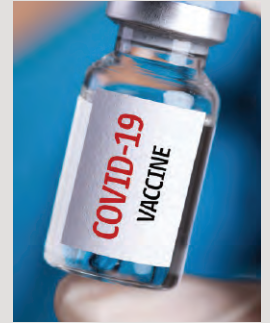
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### RWDSU Loss at Amazon Plant Prompts Debate Over Strategy



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## TOP STORY

# It Wasn't Vegas but GCC Online Convention Draws Wide Praise as a Winner

By Fred Bruning  
*Graphic Communicator*

**P**lan B worked. The Fourth GCC/IBT convention, originally scheduled for Las Vegas, went totally online as the nation continued to battle the covid-19 pandemic and union leaders opted for maximum safety.

For two days, it was strictly business – no hospitality rooms or evenings on the Strip – but officials and delegates judged the meeting a remarkable achievement and tribute to union solidarity and resilience.

“Virtual will not take the place of an in-person event, but I think we were able to deliver the feel of a traditional convention and the same vision of the future,” said GCC/IBT President Kurt Freeman. “Delegates told me they were very impressed.”

So was Secretary-Treasurer/Vice President Steve Nobles.

“I was tremendously pleased,” Nobles said. “For a ‘Plan B.’ the convention was very successful. While we wish we could have met in person, I couldn’t be happier with the outcome.”

Freeman and Nobles said behind-the-scenes work took months and praised executive secretary Dinese Askew and Bonnie Lindsley, membership director, and the entire Washington, D.C.-based staff of the GCC/IBT.

With a theme of “Organizing for a Better Tomorrow,” the mid-June convention drew high-profile speakers including U.S. Labor Secretary Marty Walsh, IBT General President James Hoffa and IBT General Secretary-Treasurer Ken Hall.

Despite the difficulties and heartbreak caused by covid-19, the mood was upbeat as leaders and delegates celebrated a pro-labor administration in the White House and applauded the commitment of President Joe Biden to working people and the labor movement.

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### Freelance NWU and GCC Enter Service Agreement

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## Biden Continues To Prove He's A 'Union Guy'

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THE WHITE HOUSE

# WHERE I STAND

**KURT FREEMAN** GCC/IBT PRESIDENT

## Covid Turned World Upside Down but the GCC/IBT Carried On

WHEN PLANNING BEGAN NEARLY TWO YEARS AGO FOR the fourth GCC/IBT convention, we knew where we were headed – Las Vegas.

The event – held every five years – always is memorable.

Delegates and officers work hard, exchange ideas, rekindle old friendships and have a chance to relax for a few days in one of the nation's most exciting cities.

Then the pandemic arrived – a public health crisis that turned life upside down in the United States and Canada and around the world.

Amid terrible news of death and illness, masks and social distancing became essential. Travel was interrupted and indoor activity curtailed.

Scientists developed vaccines sooner than anyone might have hoped, but doctors and government officials continued to urge caution – especially about those iffy, indoor gatherings.

So we played it safe – at union headquarters in Washington, at local union halls, and at regional and national meetings. An in-person convention in a crowded metropolitan setting just didn't make sense. Like the Teamsters who traditionally meet in Las Vegas around the same time as the GCC, we opted for caution.

For the first and (let's hope) last time, the GCC convention went virtual.

It took plenty of work to conduct a successful two-day convention by means of virtual conferencing – a team effort, for sure.

Secretary-Treasurer/Vice President Steve Nobles was a major source of ideas and helped coordinate arrangements with delegates and local officials

Bonnie Lindsley, director of information systems and membership records, and executive secretary Dines Askew devoted hours to the set-up and smooth operation of a complicated enterprise under challenging conditions.

And, to our delight, Steve Sullivan, president of Local 3-N spoke to his sources and arranged for Labor Secretary Marty Walsh, the former mayor



WORDPRESS.COM VIA GOOGLE IMAGES

of Boston and a well-known friend of unions, to greet the convention with a virtual prerecording.

Walsh's cooperative spirit and resounding pro-worker remarks were welcome signs of how remarkably things have changed since Election Day, 2020.

Donald Trump promised to be a pro-worker president but turned out to be the opposite. Trump undercut OSHA, favored business interests and put workers at serious – and, too often, catastrophic – risk by underplaying the pandemic.

With a long record of supporting organized labor, Joe Biden showed immediately that he was a "union guy" the moment he entered the White House.

Biden ousted a notoriously corporate-minded NLRB chief counsel. He revived OSHA and enthusiastically backed the Protect the Right to Organize Act (PRO) while urging American workers to consider the advantages of unionization. And with an able White House staff, Biden launched a vast nationwide vaccination campaign that has significantly halted the spread of covid-19 and diminished the likelihood of another awful surge.

It was with hope and renewed energy that we held this unusual convention. The pandemic appears in retreat. We have a strong pro-union ally in the White House. Our industry did far better than many during the crisis and, with an improving economy, better days could be ahead.

The convention theme was "Organizing for a Stronger Tomorrow."

That is Job One and we know it won't be easy. The labor movement faces plenty of challenges and strong opposition from the reactionary right. But the enthusiasm of delegates made clear union resolve is not diminished by social distance.

Our convention may have been virtual. Our commitment, and solidarity, is real.

## OUTLOOK

**JAMES P. HOFFA** TEAMSTERS GENERAL PRESIDENT

## Quit the Political Games and Do What's Right

THE TEAMSTERS AND OTHER unions for years have been urging lawmakers in Washington, D.C. to prioritize the needs of working people, given that the wealthy in this country have never done better. Finally, elected officials are responding.

More than a million hardworking Americans are set to benefit from a multi-employer pension fix enacted by Congress in March, and efforts to help U.S. workers haven't stopped there. President Biden in recent weeks rolled out substantive proposals like the American Jobs Plan and the American Families Plan that would bring good-paying jobs and added work-home balance to many workers.

The AJP offers a broad vision for creating better paying jobs and promoting worker protections. The Biden administration's commitment to modernizing the nation's aging infrastructure will produce quality opportunities that will revitalize the middle class.



But that's not all the legislation aims to reform. The White House push for Congress to enact the Protecting the Right to Organize Act (PRO) is another sign that President Biden is fulfilling his promise to reform labor law and empower millions of workers.

Meanwhile, the families initiative is a sweeping measure that lifts up hardworking Americans by expanding education opportunities, mandating paid leave, subsidizing child care and health care for low- and middle-income workers and providing tax relief to the middle class.

Not only will workers be able to receive free workforce training like the Teamsters and other unions already offer or earn a two-year degree at a community college, but their children will also be eligible for free pre-K schooling beginning at age three. Child-care costs will be capped for many workers, and they will be eligible for up to 12 weeks of paid leave to care for themselves or ailing loved ones.

It's time to drop the political games and do what's right for those just trying to earn an honest living, and not just those who have already seen good fortune in the past few years.



## Graphic Communicator

The Newspaper of the Graphic Communications Conference / IBT

Volume 39 Number 3  
July-Aug.-Sept. 2021

(USPS 410-750)

Official organ of the Graphic Communications Conference/International Brotherhood of Teamsters

25 Louisiana Ave. NW  
Washington, D.C. 20001  
202-508-6660

e-mail: [webmessenger@gciu.org](mailto:webmessenger@gciu.org)  
Internet: [www.gccibt.org](http://www.gccibt.org)

**GEORGE TEDESCHI**  
Editor

**FRED BRUNING**  
Managing Editor

### AFFILIATIONS

Change to Win Coalition

Canadian Labour Congress

Member of International Labor Communications Association of Labour Media



GRAPHIC COMMUNICATOR  
(ISSN 0746-3626)

is published quarterly in January-February-March, April-May-June, July-August-September, October-November-December for a total of four issues a year for \$12 per year in the United States and Canada and \$15 for all other countries by the Graphic Communications Conference/International Brotherhood of Teamsters, 25 Louisiana Ave. NW Washington, D.C. 20001. Periodical postage paid at Washington, D.C. and additional mailing offices

### POSTMASTER:

Send address changes to the GRAPHIC COMMUNICATOR, 25 Louisiana Ave. NW Washington, D.C. 20001.

Publications Mail Agreement  
No. 41461512.

### CANADA POST:

Return undeliverables to P.O. Box 2601, 6915 Dixie Rd, Mississauga, ON L4T 0A9.

## Fast-Paced Convention More Than a 'Virtual' Success

THERE WERE NO STROLLS ALONG THE STRIP OR SIDE TRIPS TO THE GRAND Canyon, but the Fourth GCC/IBT Convention was a star-studded success.

Covid demanded that the meeting – originally scheduled for Las Vegas – go virtual. And it did, big-time (Pages 1, 8-9).

Using advanced video conferencing technology, GCC leaders and staff members put together a fast-paced convention.



Union officials and experts from a number of allied fields addressed the group via pre-recorded remarks or from a studio set up for live appearances.

Labor Secretary Marty Walsh, former mayor of Boston, reaffirmed the Biden administration's commitment to organized labor – Steve Sullivan, president of Local 3-N, Boston, helped arrange Walsh's appearance – and IBT General Secretary-Treasurer Ken Hall joined IBT General President James Hoffa in vowing the Teamsters would continue protecting working people as the economy recovers from the pandemic.

Getting back to "normal" won't be easy, of course.

As Dawn Hobbs reports on Page 13, union officers are urging all members to get vaccinated against a virus that has claimed 600,000 lives in the United States, more than 25,000 in Canada and nearly 4 million worldwide. "We are in this together," says a notice distributed by District Council 3. "Get vaccinated so we can go on with living."

Leaders also worry about the health of the labor movement.

Our story on the defeat of a union drive at Amazon's facility in Bessemer, Alabama, notes that some officials have begun to question familiar, on-site organizing attempts.

They wonder if it might be better to address employee concerns one at a time, and not necessarily through a union (Page 5).

But top GCC/IBT officers reject that idea.

Union president Kurt Freeman said traditional organizing is essential – a message that was echoed often at the GCC virtual convention – while employing 21st Century



communications when appropriate. "We should continue a more historic approach using technology to enhance a positive outcome," Freeman told the Communicator.

A trusted union professional who has done just that – used traditional techniques with a modern approach – is retiring after 17 years as a full-time organizer and leaders hailed Rick Street for his outstanding career (Page 4). Street said that his late colleague and dear friend Rick Putman used personal contact and modern means effectively during organizing campaigns. "We did some mighty, mighty good work," Street said.

That good work continues at the GCC/IBT. President Freeman and Secretary-Treasurer/Vice President Steve Nobles reached a service agreement – first for the GCC – with the National Writers Union, representing freelance writers, editors and screenwriters (Page 4).

Larry Goldbetter, president of the 1,200-member NWU, said he hopes the "resources of the GCC/IBT" help add 800 members over the next year. Quoting a famous movie line, Goldbetter said: "I think this is the beginning of a beautiful friendship." ■

*Correction: The union affiliation of legendary labor figure John Sweeney was misstated in two headlines associated with Sweeney's obituary in the spring edition of the Communicator. Sweeney was a longtime president of the AFL-CIO and not an IBT leader.*

### COMMENTARY JIM HIGHTOWER

## During Covid, Rich got Richer But Regular Folks Fell Behind

Not only are the rich different from you and me – they're getting more different than ever.

In the past year, while ordinary Americans have lost jobs, businesses, and homes due to the economic crash caused by the pandemic, America's 664 billionaires have found themselves nearly 40 percent richer than before covid.

These fortunate few collectively added more than a trillion dollars to their personal stashes of wealth. And practically all of them got so much richer by doing nothing – their money made the extra money for them, because corporate stock prices zoomed even as regular people lost income.

Take a peek at the richest of the rich:

Jeff Bezos of Amazon hauled in an additional \$75 billion last year, giving him \$200 billion in total wealth. You could do a lot of good in our world with such riches or you could splurge on yourself.

Jeff splurged. He bought an ocean-going ship – one of the largest sailing vessels ever built – at a cost of approximately a half-billion bucks.

Plus, he had to buy a "support yacht" to tag along with his main boat. Why? Because the three sails on his big rig are so huge that a helicopter can't land on the deck. An auxiliary yacht was required to provide a helipad.

See, the rich really are different – where to park our helicopter while at sea is a problem you and I don't have to face.

But what really unsettles the super-rich are taxes. They want to pay as few as possible.



A chorus of woe is arising now from powerful plutocratic interests enjoying windfall profits

Why? Because, they cry, that meanie in the White House, Joe Biden, intends to jack up their corporate tax rate up from 21 percent to 28 percent.

"Outrageous," screeched the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. "Archaic," moaned the National Association of Manufacturers. "It doesn't feel fair," whimpered the giant Bechtel construction company.

But wait – wasn't their tax rate 35 percent when Trump and the GOP Congress slashed the corporate share of our nation's upkeep nearly in half just four years ago, shifting the burden to the middle class and poor?



And didn't they promise that those cuts would create millions of new jobs and raise the incomes of the working class? Yes, that was supposed to be the deal but yet corporations got richer and working stiffs got shafted.

Still, here they come again, howling that raising corporate taxes would crash the stock market. Well, on the day Biden announced his plan, stock prices did fall – by less than 1 percent. The next day, they bounced right back, and still are booming.

As Biden made clear, his proposed tax increase will not affect the standard of living of the nation's wealthiest people – "not a little tiny bit."

But with them paying just a bit more toward the common good, our country will be able to reinvest in society's physical and human infrastructure, making America stronger and fairer for all. ■

*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](http://Hightowerlowdown.org)*

# GCC, NWU Enter Service Agreement To Aid Freelancers

By Dawn Hobbs  
Special to the Communicator

The GCC/IBT and National Writers Union recently concluded a service agreement that will boost the GCC's presence in the journalistic sphere and allow the NWU the support and services needed to increase membership, leaders of both organizations announced.



It was the first such arrangement for the GCC/IBT. The NWU previously had a long-standing relationship with the United Auto Workers (UAW).

While service agreements are not unique, they have been used in more novel ways lately as unions seek to aid freelancers, independent workers and smaller unions.

"Although the ultimate goal may be to grow both organizations and eventually achieve full membership for the NWU into the GCC, the bottom line is freelance workers need help and support to gain better working conditions," said Kurt Freeman, GCC/IBT president.

Members of the NWU – freelance journalists and writers in other fields – lack the legal and workplace protections usually afforded employees of a company.

"We are a union that has to use creative measures to ensure rights for our members," said Larry Goldbetter, NWU president since 2009. "Our agreement with the GCC/IBT rests on the concept of doubling the size of our union and increasing the strength of our organization. It is in all of our interests to try to make this happen."

Freeman said the GCC and IBT are committed to doing whatever they can to assist freelance workers. "This agreement will hopefully bring dignity and respect to members of the NWU," he said.

Steve Nobles, GCC/IBT secretary-treasurer/vice president, noted that unions have been offering service agreements for at least 15 years.

"With the abundance of freelance and sole proprietors, unions have been trying to help these folks gain a voice," Nobles said.

Rather than move immediately into full affiliation with the NWU, Nobles said, a gradual approach made more sense.

"The concept of setting goals before actually merging is to insure both parties completely know and understand the ramifications of such a move on the memberships," he said. "The agreement between the NWU and the GCC is a natural fit for both organizations."



**'We'll now have the ability to carry more weight in legislative battles and to organize and be part of labor solidarity.'**

– Larry Goldbetter, NWU president



**'This agreement will hopefully bring dignity and respect to members of the NWU.'**

– Kurt Freeman, GCC/IBT president



**'Our intent is to assist the NWU to help them grow their membership and bring a bigger voice to the table.'**

– Steve Nobles, GCC/IBT secretary-treasurer/vice president

Goldbetter said he hopes to recruit 800 freelancers over the next year and welcomes professionals working in a broad range of fields from journalism to screenwriting.

Nobles said the GCC/IBT is ready to back the effort.

"Our intent is to assist the NWU to help them grow their membership and bring a bigger voice to the table," he said.

GCC/IBT and NWU representatives began talks in 2019 after the writers' group sought more support for a campaign called the Freelance Solidarity Project aimed at organizing freelance digital media workers, Goldbetter said.

The GCC/IBT supported the campaign after the NWU and UAW mutually agreed to end their relationship. Goldbetter said he will renew organizing efforts through the Freelance Solidarity Project and expects recruitment to accelerate with support of the GCC/IBT.

"By adding the resources of the GCC/IBT, we are hoping to significantly expand our capacity," Goldbetter said. "We'll now have the ability to carry more weight in legislative battles and to organize and to be part of labor solidarity."

Goldbetter characterized the GCC/IBT-NWU arrangement with a line made famous by Humphrey Bogart in "Casablanca," the classic 1942 film: "...I think this is the beginning of a beautiful friendship."

## Rick Street Retires: 'He Put Union First'



**'We have two ears and one mouth and should use them proportionately. You can't preach this stuff. You have to ask engaging questions.'**

– Rick Street

On Sept. 14, 1989, Joseph Wesbecker entered the Standard Gravure printing plant in Louisville, Kentucky, with a semi-automatic rifle and duffel bag full of handguns and ammunition.

Wesbecker, on disability leave from the company and taking anti-depressant medication, rode an elevator to the third-floor reception area and began firing. He killed eight workers, wounded 12 and fatally shot himself.

The incident remains the deadliest mass shooting in Kentucky history.

Wesbecker was a member of GCIU Local 619-M. So was Rick Street.

It was a devastating episode – and one that affected Street deeply.

At a press conference 10 years after the Standard Gravure shooting, Street, by then president of his local, urged help for those struggling with emotional distress and mental illness.

"We need to do something besides make plaques and ring bells and say peoples' names," Street said, according to a story in the Louisville Courier-Journal.

Street went on to become an international organizer for the GCC/IBT and, in that role, continued his advocacy for workers who sometimes sink into despair. Not enough is done to combat workplace violence, he says.

"We're far behind."

Street, 68, retired in April after what GCC/IBT leaders say was a stellar career as a compassionate and tireless union professional.

"He always was looking out for others, always putting workers and the union first," said GCC/IBT president emeritus George Tedeschi,

who brought Street aboard as a GCIU organizer in 2004. "Rick's devotion to our brothers and sisters who are struggling with mental health issues has helped raise awareness and, quite possibly, saved lives."

GCC/IBT president Kurt Freeman hailed Street's record as an organizer. "Rick has had much success over the years," Freeman said. "I wish him a long and happy retirement."

Street began his print industry career as a union photoengraver like his grandfather and father before him and joined the Graphic Arts International Union in 1973. He soon became active in Local 225, Louisville, predecessor of what now is 619-M.

"I started volunteering – leafletting, at first," Street said. "I was shop steward, local organizer, vice president and when the president quit to go back to the shop, I became president."

As an organizer, Street worked for nearly 16 years with his dear friend and ally, Rickey Putman, who took his own life in 2017. Despite their closeness, Street said, "you never know what's going on in someone's mind."

They were a powerful duo – Putman and Street. "Like a tag team in wrestling," Street said. "We did some mighty, mighty good work."

Putman and Street used innovative organizing techniques like video testimonials from GCC/IBT members who stressed the advantages of union affiliation. But essential to their success was a determination to show workers respect and listen carefully.

"We have two ears and one mouth and should use them proportionately," Street said. "You can't preach this stuff. You have to ask engaging questions."

Continued on page 13



TDU.ORG VIA GOOGLE IMAGES

# No Letup in Fight to Organize Amazon

By Fred Bruning  
Graphic Communicator

**W**hen Amazon resoundingly defeated a highly publicized union drive in Bessemer, Alabama, workplace experts and some union officials said the time had come for the labor movement to review fundamental assumptions and assess the future of traditional organizing.

Did it any longer make sense to spend time and money on unionization drives at large corporations or was it better to address grievances in a more direct and immediate fashion?

“After an election defeat in Alabama, many in labor are shifting strategies, wary of the challenges and expense of winning votes site by site,” said the New York Times.

That is not the case in the GCC/IBT. Traditional organizing methods – aided by 21st Century communications – will remain the union’s focus.

“I believe we should continue a more historic approach using technology to enhance a positive outcome,” said GCC/IBT president Kurt Freeman. “We have learned during the pandemic how to use newer methods of communication that will carry over when the health crisis is over.”

Union membership has been declining for more than a half-century and, no question, the one-sided vote against affiliating with the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union seemed to provide fresh evidence of a worrisome, and perhaps, irreversible trend.

The RWDSU drive in Bessemer lost 1,798-738 – a bitter setback especially because President Joe Biden had all but called for a union victory in a video message characterizing the vote as a “vitaly important choice.”

However, many labor leaders saluted the RWDSU for launching a unionization campaign that drew national attention while making clear they did not intend to abandon traditional, on-site organizing techniques.

A story in Fortune magazine said union officials believe the “highly publicized fight against Amazon will inspire more workers to stand up for their rights” and noted that “worker activism has been growing at other companies.”

Union leaders – including IBT General President James Hoffa – say the Amazon fight is not over, in any case, even though billionaire founder Jeff Bezos and his company prevailed in Alabama.

Hoffa said recently that the Teamsters would be part of a multi-union effort to organize the retail giant. “We’re ready for the fight, Hoffa told WJBK-TV, Fox 2, in Detroit. “That’s our next goal.”

Randy Korgan, who leads the IBT’s Amazon effort and holds the title Teamster National Director for Amazon, hailed the courage of Bessemer workers who supported unionization and, like Hoffa, said the battle for representation would continue.

“Despite going up against one of the world’s richest men in a country with weak labor laws, the workers in Bessemer brought national attention to issues that many non-union workers face in this industry,” Korgan said. “This fight is not over, and the Teamsters will always support workers who want to build power by standing together and demanding dignity, a safe workplace, and a fair return on their work.”



Jeff Bezos

WIKIPEDIA VIA GOOGLE IMAGES

There was widespread agreement that the Bessemer experience points again to the need for labor law reform and passage of the Protect the Right to Organize Act (PRO) approved by the Democratic-led House of Representatives but stalled in the U.S. Senate.

“The Amazon workers in Bessemer would already have their union if we had the PRO Act a year ago,” Shaun Richman, a labor expert at the State University of New York, told the publication, *In These Times*.

After results of mail-in balloting were announced in April, some labor officials quietly wondered whether the RWDSU had picked its spot well – Amazon pays above the average starting pay in Bessemer and offers health care protection immediately upon employment – and other experts suggested big, costly labor drives were inefficient and too often likely to fail.

Addressing employee grievances and workplace inequities might better be done on a case-by-case basis, some authorities said.

“The idea is to combine workplace actions like walkouts (the ground war) with pressure on company executives through public relations campaigns that highlight labor conditions and enlist the support of public figures (the air war),” the *Times* story said, characterizing the opinion of those favoring a non-traditional plan.

But many are not prepared to quit the sort of resourceful, in-the-trenches organizing that has built the American labor movement. Especially in campaigns that do not tackle mega-corporations like Amazon or Walmart, officials say, old-fashioned unionization drives still are essential – albeit, perhaps, with some 21st Century updating.

GCC organizers frequently use video presentations during organizing campaigns and, during the pandemic, local GCC official attended Teamster-sponsored video workshops focusing on organizing techniques. Freeman has called the program “a great success.”

Time-tested organizing still works, said Steve Nobles, GCC/IBT secretary-treasurer/vice president, but takes maximum effort and commitment.

“In the end, I believe it is still advantageous to organize by one-on-one meetings leading to committees and worker-to-worker contact,” Nobles said. “As the pandemic slows to an eventual end, we will keep our focus on organizing and giving workers a voice in their own future.”

Peter Leff, GCC/IBT general counsel said only strong union contracts guarantee workplace protection and progress.

“I don’t see the logic in abandoning traditional organizing campaigns for alternative-type campaigns,” Leff said. “Workers’ lives improve the most under collective bargaining agreements, and you legally cannot negotiate contracts unless a majority of workers in a unit select you to do so.”

Leff noted that while it may be possible to address certain issues through public relations campaigns and other non-traditional methods, it is essential that unions continue efforts to build membership using established organizing strategy.

“The reality is that unions cannot grow and become more powerful in order to help workers without increasing membership,” Leff said. “I don’t see how non-traditional campaigns accomplish that goal.”

**‘The Teamsters will always support workers who want to build power by standing together and demanding dignity, a safe workplace, and a fair return on their work.’**

–Randy Korgan,  
IBT national director  
for Amazon

## Is the United States Still A Land of Opportunity?

Jeff Bezos, the Amazon billionaire, is building a sailboat. Is he ever.

As Jim Hightower notes on his Page 3 commentary in this edition, the Bezos yacht-to-be is more than 400 feet long and has three huge masts. Cost is estimated to be \$500 million.

Only drawback: No room for a helicopter on the deck.

But Jeff has it covered. You don't get to be the world's richest man without a knack for problem solving.

Bezos reportedly will have the big boat followed by a "support yacht" with a helipad and maybe a personal submarine, which, of course, is essential should Bezos want to search the ocean bottom for treasure. Never let a money-making opportunity drift by.

Even before the pandemic, Bezos was extraordinarily rich but the covid crisis provided him – and other billionaires – an additional, astounding bonanza.

Crazy-rich Americans gained \$1.1 trillion in 2020, according to CNN, "making them 40 percent richer than before the pandemic hit." Bezos profited especially because the online market boomed as consumers played it safe and stayed home.

Far more important than one man's silly ocean-going indulgence is the wealth disparity it reveals.

According to the respected Pew Research Center:

For 50 years, the top 20 percent of U. S. households have earned more than the rest of the country combined.

Income inequality in the United States is greater than any of the other "G7" industrialized democracies: Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom.

Black-white income disparities continue. Median black household income was 61 percent of median white household income in 2018, according to the most recent data.

More than 60 percent of Americans say the income gap is too wide – though far fewer Republicans (41 percent) agree there is a problem than Democrats (78 percent).

The wealth divide between the richest and poorest families more than doubled over a quarter-century.

For five decades, the earnings of middle-income workers have grown at a slower rate (49 percent) than upper income Americans (64 percent).

In other words, our country is less the land of opportunity than we'd like to believe.

Wealthy Americans have rarely been in better shape but many others have been stalled.

"...fewer people in the lower- and middle-classes are climbing the economic ladder," said an analysis by the World Economic Forum.

There are many reasons for the kind of stagnation that puts millions of Americans at a disadvantage. Among the most worrisome is the decline in union membership.

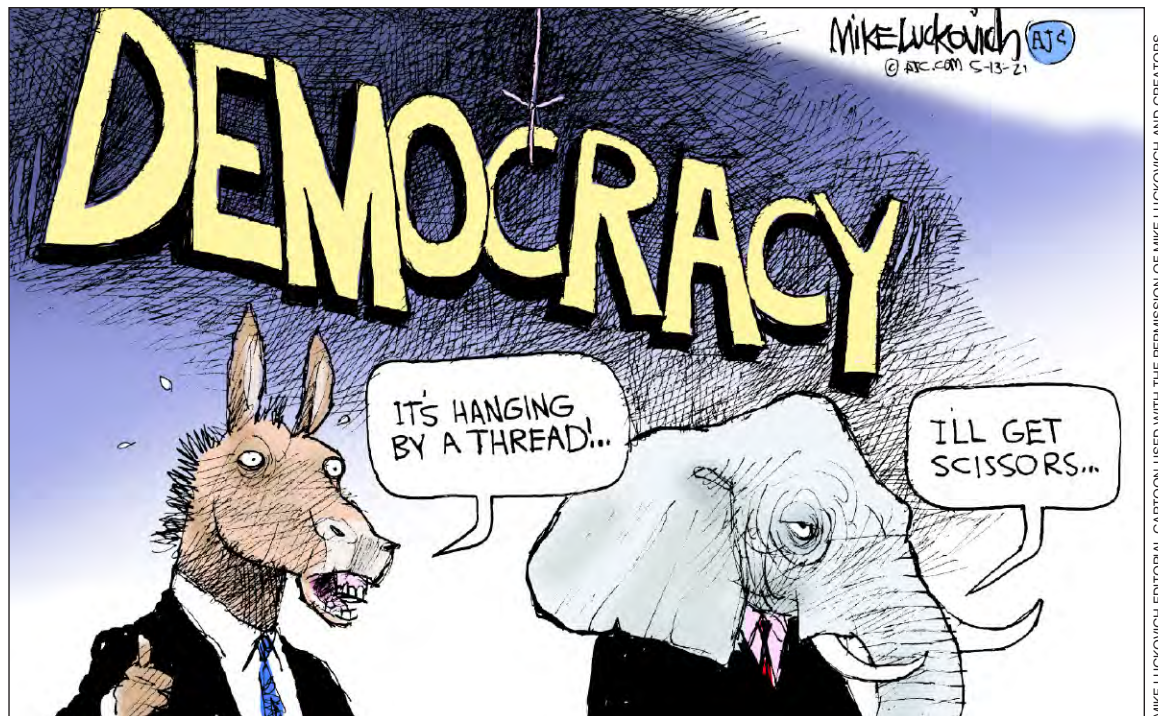
In 1983, 20.1 percent of employed Americans were members of a union, according to data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics. By 2019, the number had dropped to approximately 10.3 percent.

Labor leaders warn often that the trend must be met head-on. GCC/IBT President Kurt Freeman and Secretary-Treasurer/Vice President Steve Nobles talk at every opportunity about the need to build the base.

Fittingly, the theme of the recently concluded GCC/IBT convention – held virtually because of the continuing threat of coronavirus – underlined the urgency: "Organizing for a Stronger Tomorrow."

That's what employees at one of Jeff Bezos' Amazon warehouses tried to do recently. The campaign failed but the spirit shown by workers in Bessemer, Alabama, was inspiring and union leaders say Amazon is certain to be a target for unionization again.

Billionaires like Bezos can flaunt their wealth with preposterous playthings like three-masted superyachts. In the real world of working people, that sort of glitz goes only so far. Bezos may think of himself as captain of the universe, but, to those of us standing on the shore, he's just another rich guy who went overboard. ■



## Point of View

BY ROBERT B. REICH

### Essential Lessons as Pandemic Passes

Maybe it's wishful thinking to declare the pandemic over in the United States, and presumptuous to conclude what lessons we've learned from it. So consider this a first draft:

**1. Workers are always essential.**

We couldn't have survived without millions of warehouse, delivery, grocery, and hospital workers literally risking their lives. Yet most of these workers are paid squat. Most essential workers still don't have health insurance or paid leave.

*Lesson: Essential workers deserve far better.*

**2. Healthcare is a basic right.**

Too many Americans who contracted covid-19 got walloped with humongous hospital bills. By mid-2020, about 3.3 million people had lost employer-sponsored coverage, and the number of uninsured increased by 1.9 million. Research by the Urban Institute found that people with chronic disease, Black Americans, and low-income children were most likely to have delayed or forgone care during the pandemic.

*Lesson: America must insure everyone.*

**3. The stock market isn't the economy.**

The stock market rose throughout the pandemic, lifting the wealth of the richest 1 percent who own half of all stock owned by Americans. Meanwhile, from March 2020 to February 2021, 80 million in the United States lost their jobs. Between June and November 2020, nearly 8 million Americans fell into poverty. Black and Latino adults were more than twice as likely as white adults to report not having enough to eat: 16 percent each for Black and Latino adults, compared to 6 percent of white adults.

*Lesson: Stop using the stock market as a measure of economic wellbeing. Look instead at the percentage of Americans who are working, and their median pay.*

**4. Wages are too low to get by on.**

Most Americans live paycheck to paycheck. Conservatives say the extra \$300 weekly unemployment benefit Congress enacted discourages people from working. What's really

discouraging them is lack of childcare and lousy wages.

*Lesson: Raise the minimum wage, strengthen labor unions, provide universal childcare, and push companies to share profits with their workers.*

**5. Billionaires aren't the answer.**

The combined wealth of America's 657 billionaires grew by \$1.3 trillion – or 44.6% – during the pandemic. Jeff Bezos, with \$183.9 billion, became the richest man in the United States and the world. Larry Page, cofounder of Google, added \$11.8 billion to his \$94.3 billion fortune, and Sergey Brin, Google's other cofounder, added \$11.4 billion. Yet billionaire's taxes are lower than ever. Wealthy Americans today pay one-sixth the rate of taxes their counterparts paid in 1953.

*Lesson: To afford everything the nation needs, raise taxes at the top.*

**6. Government can be the solution.**

Ronald Reagan's famous quip – "Government is not the solution to our problem, government is the problem" – can now officially be retired. The \$900 billion in aid Congress passed in late December prevented millions from losing unemployment benefits and helped sustain the recovery when it was faltering. The \$1.9 trillion that Democrats pushed through Congress in March will help the United States achieve something it failed to achieve after the 2008-09 recession: a robust recovery.

*Lesson: Government must play an active role solving other fundamental problems – ending poverty, reducing inequality, battling climate change, and fighting systemic racism.* ■

*Robert B. Reich served as secretary of labor in the Clinton administration and was named one of the 10 most effective cabinet secretaries of the 20th Century by Time magazine. He is Chancellor's Professor of Public Policy at the University of California at Berkeley and senior fellow at the Blum Center for Developing Economies. Reich has written 18 books, including his most recent, "The System: Who Rigged It, How we Fix It," and is co-creator of the documentary, "Saving Capitalism," streaming on Netflix*

## Pro-Labor, Unapologetically

When President Biden promises to “Build Back Better,” he’s not just talking about the economy or infrastructure.

He’s also talking about the labor union movement.

Unions built the middle-class in America after World War 2, Biden often says, but there has been a war against collective bargaining for decades and unions have been losing.

Without apology, Biden is proposing to rebuild the labor movement. He has always been a union guy. He has an ambitious plan that would prevent companies from interfering with organizing, cheating workers by not paying overtime and misclassifying jobs to save payroll costs.

He wants legislation to do away with right-to-work laws in 27 states. Biden favors card check, which allows employees to choose unionization by handing in cards instead of enduring drawn-out fights with the company.

He wants a minimum hourly wage of \$15 for federal contractors. The President intends to put \$48 billion into workplace development and create as many as 2 million apprenticeship slots leading to good union jobs. Another \$40 billion would retrain out-of-work Americans for jobs in the fields of clean energy, manufacturing and care giving.

Biden’s infrastructure plan also will create millions of jobs rebuilding bridges, highways, power plants and mass transit.

Biden is a railroad guy who, as a congressman and later Delaware senator, took the train home from Washington, D.C. almost every night. He loves

Amtrak and wants to rebuild the system. That means more union jobs.

Conservatives, of course, want no part of a robust plan to revive unions.

They want to stop organizing by allowing employers to continue holding workers captive in mandatory meetings and conducting bad faith bargaining sessions – tactics that Biden wants outlawed through legislation like the Protect the Right to Organize Act (PRO).

At the same time, the President insists that workers in the so-called “gig economy” – independent contractors, on-call workers, temporary employees – must be able to organize and protect themselves from predatory business owners. That would be a boon to ride-share drivers and food delivery workers who served us so well during the pandemic.

And Biden wants more products made in America, especially electric vehicles. China is the world leader but Biden says the U.S. auto industry must take the initiative while, at the same time, our nation builds 500,000 charging stations essential to the emerging electric car industry.

With organized labor, Joe Biden is looking toward the future. More jobs. More union members. Better pay. Building back better. ■

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



## Guest Spot

BY GEORGE TEDESCHI

## For Workers, One Party Delivers

It’s been eight months since voters removed Donald Trump from office, put Joe Biden in the White House and gave a Senate majority to the Democrats.

At the GCC/IBT we welcomed the outcome. President Biden is turning out to be exactly what he always proclaimed himself to be – “a union guy.”

Still, I know many members voted Republican. They ask why the union often supports Democrats.

There are plenty of reasons, in my opinion. But perhaps none is more important than this:

Democrats will protect your pensions. Republicans will not. Here are the facts:

Pension reform – long demanded by the Teamsters and other unions – went nowhere under Republican leadership.

Trump, who claimed he was a friend of workers, turned out to be all talk and no action.

On the other hand, Biden and the Democrats took steps immediately to protect the pensions and benefits of union members.

Built into the administration’s \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan was a special fund to provide financial assistance to certain distressed multi-employer retirement plans, assuring their stability and protecting existing and future benefits.

This essential provision was a tribute to the tireless efforts of IBT General President Jim Hoffa, who led the charge for reform, and outstanding work by IBT international vice-president John Murphy, legislative director Christy Bailey, and IBT

staff members Sunshine McBride, Jan Oliver and Galen Munroe.

More than 50 Teamster pension plans – including its largest, the Central States Pension Fund – immediately became eligible for assistance.

GCC/IBT members also should be celebrating.

Our primary pension plans – National Pension Fund, Joint Pension Trust Fund, Employer Retirement Fund – now are protected, too.

Without government safeguards, the funds would have been in trouble – and, according to our own experts, might have failed under the worst of circumstances.

Now GCC/IBT retirees can breathe easily thanks to Biden and the Democrats.

The President proved his commitment to working-class Americans again with a stimulus program that provided desperately needed financial help as the covid crisis raged.

If Republicans showed any signs of backing workers and organized labor, I’d be glad to consider them. But the GOP has swung far to the right. The party winks at working-class Americans but rarely delivers. Republicans do little for us. We should not give them our votes. ■

*George Tedeschi is GCC/IBT president emeritus.*



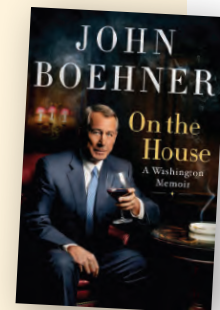
## All the Best

### Print

#### On the House: A Washington Memoir

John Boehner

How far has the Republican Party drifted from its traditional roots? Former House Speaker John Boehner – a working class guy and hardly a progressive reformer – says the Trump-obsessed GOP has been commandeered by “crazies” more interested in raw power than consensus government. He can’t stomach loud-mouth agitators like Ted Cruz (“reckless”) and, in general, says the party has swung so far to the right that even Ronald Reagan likely could not gain grassroots GOP support. As speaker, Boehner was provocative and pugilistic but still in the mold of a traditional politician willing to wheel, deal and compromise. That’s not the way things work anymore. “There are people we are electing who will destroy this country if we aren’t careful,” Boehner writes. The assessment would have been stark from a Democrat. From a Republican of Boehner’s stripe it is remarkable and, with Trump still wielding power, scary, too. *St. Martin’s Press, \$29.99*

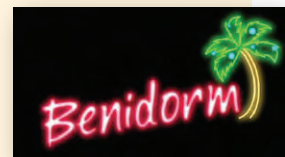


### Video/Streaming

#### Benidorm

Derren Litten, creator

The beloved British comedy series, “Benidorm,” may not be everyone’s cup of tea. Humor can be over-the-top, impolite and, often, embarrassing. But fans of Benidorm’s 10 seasons – the last was in 2018 – know that beyond the scatological jokes, seedy surroundings and ridiculous romances there is a touching look at working-class life too often missed by more sophisticated TV projects. Set in the real Spanish coastal resort city of the same name, Benidorm plays out mostly at poolside and in the karaoke nightclub of a tacky, high-rise hotel called the Solana. Guests are ordinary folks who fly over from England for a brief “all-inclusive” vacation in the southern sun. They eat and drink too much, gripe about faulty plumbing, have brief and foolish flings and then go home. It may not be four-star but it’s what their budgets allow. One character calls Benidorm the “whooping cough of the travel world” – difficult to get out of your system. Hopelessly afflicted, the Brits complain bitterly and then book themselves back for next year. Streaming on BritBox

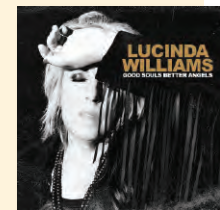


### Music

#### Good Souls Better Angels

Lucinda Williams

Lucinda Williams says she is a rebel at heart and this Grammy-nominated album makes the case. Long associated with social justice and mental health issues, Williams, an outspoken pro-union performer, tackles subjects as daunting as depression (“Big Black Train”), social media excesses (“Shadows & Doubts”) and domestic abuse (“Wakin’ Up”). She doesn’t miss the chance to scold a certain recently defeated U.S. President (“Man Without a Soul”) but knows that in difficult times, everyone needs a little uplift. With the gorgeous, album-closing, “Good Souls,” Williams offers hope and strength – and gratitude for the embrace of better angels. *Highway 20/Thirty Tigers, \$13.98*



### Internet

#### BBC Long Reads

For those who enjoy news reporting with depth – no sound bites or abridged versions – comes a wide selection of expansive feature stories, courtesy of the British Broadcasting Corporation – the good, old BBC. Put “BBC Long Reads” into your search engine and you are apt to find stories updating the failed 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion, the toll covid-19 is taking on children in Brazil and an alleged Nazi war criminal who may have served as a British spy. Top notch stuff. Take the time.



## Wasn't Vegas but 'Plan B' Worked

continued from PAGE 1

Hoffa spoke optimistically about “the kind of change we can achieve when we have politicians who support our values” and Secretary Walsh, the former mayor of Boston and a labor leader, made clear the Biden administration was determined to guarantee – and advance – union rights.

Organized labor, said Walsh, is at “the center of our economic recovery” and promised the White House would place high priority on “expanding worker opportunities for organizing.”

It was welcome news at a time that union ranks continue to dwindle nationwide and right-wing voices on Capitol Hill and in conservative media seek to undercut the labor movement.

Steve Sullivan, president of Local 3-N, Boston, who helped arrange Walsh's appearance, said the secretary typified the Biden administration's pro-labor approach. “He is not only with us, but for us,” Sullivan said.

Since inauguration in January, Biden has proved to be perhaps the most pro-labor president since Franklin Delano Roosevelt and consistently endorses passage of the Protect the Right to Organize Act (PRO) that union authorities consider essential.

Biden's support for the PRO Act, alone is a profound measure of his dedication to the labor movement because the initiative – easing the organizing process and holding anti-union tactics in check – would have such far-reaching impact, labor leaders say.

If the PRO Act became law, said GCC/IBT general counsel Peter Leff, it would “reinvigorate the middle class” and “revitalize working in America.”

The difference between Biden, who consistently calls himself a “union guy,” and the administration of Donald Trump was noted most directly by George Tedeschi, the union's president emeritus who led the GCC/IBT from 2005 until retirement in 2019.

Tedeschi noted the measures Biden and Democrats already had taken to protect



Covid-related health concerns required that the Fourth GCC/IBT convention go all-digital but union leaders and delegates called the event a notable success. Gathering when the convention wrapped up were, left-right, Secretary-Treasurer/Vice President Steve Nobles, GCC/IBT general counsel Peter Leff, GCC/IBT President Emeritus George Tedeschi and GCC/IBT President Kurt Freeman.

PHOTO BY JIM SLAUGHTER

*It succeeded. We got all of the business taken care of that we needed to and it went relatively smoothly. But I prefer being able to talk and mingle with everyone. And for a lot of people this was their last convention because they were retiring and couldn't talk to the people they haven't seen since the last convention five years ago.*

– James Corbit, 25-M, Detroit

union pension plans and the President's forthright endorsement of organized labor. “It matters who you vote for,” said Tedeschi. “The bottom line: Joe Biden and the Democrats are pro-worker and pro-union and Republicans are not. They are not going to help us. Why vote for them?”

The improved atmosphere since Biden took office is encouraging, Christy Bailey, director of the IBT's political and legislative action department, told delegates representing 43 locals across the nation.

She noted that Biden had fired the anti-union general counsel at the National Labor Relations Board, pushed a broad infrastructure program that would create thousands

## High Gear into Unknown Territory

By Zachary Dowdy  
Special to the Communicator

Plans for the June GCC/IBT convention were up in the air as pandemic-related questions bedeviled even seasoned conference planners.

President Kurt Freeman and Secretary-Treasurer/Vice President Steve Nobles considered two options: Can we pull off an in-person event in Las Vegas? Or should we go virtual?

“It's been a very interesting process,” said Nobles. “We had a Plan A and a Plan B.”

It soon became clear that a virtual conference was the best choice after the Teamsters canceled their convention at the Paris Hotel – right next door to the GCC's location at Planet Hollywood on the Las Vegas Strip.

At GCC/IBT headquarters, planning went into high gear – and unknown territory.

It was essential, Freeman and Nobles said, to keep delegates and guests engaged through computer screens for hours at a time.

Dynamic speakers including U.S. Secretary of Labor Marty Walsh, IBT General President James Hoffa, General Secretary-Treasurer Ken Hall, and Jeff Farmer, IBT's director of organizing, and Christy Bailey, director of the IBT's political and legislative action department, appeared live or through pre-recorded videos.

With a theme of “Organizing for a Stronger Tomorrow,” the convention

was transmitted by a video conferencing system even more sophisticated than Zoom, Freeman said.

Images of speakers filled the screen. Committee reports, resolutions and reports from the president and secretary-treasurer were presented in the style of previous conventions.

And those beloved grab bags of goodies that are convention favorites? The giveaways were mailed to delegates in advance, Freeman said. “We didn't want to disappoint anyone,” he said.

Dinese Askew, executive secretary to Freeman, said she searched for union-made products for the gift bag, which contained a cell phone charger and stand, thumb drive and – as a sign of the times -- a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention vaccination card protector.

“We were going to conduct it like we always do at every convention,” Nobles said. Missing only, he said, were the usual handshakes and hugs.

Critical to the convention's success was the work of Askew and Bonnie Lindsley, director of membership and information systems, union official said.

“Without the assistance of Dinese and Bonnie it would have been a struggle,” Nobles said. “We banked on their experience of working on conventions in the past.”

The convention – innovative and unprecedented – was an achievement under difficult circumstances, Freeman and Nobles said. Planning paid off.





Labor Secretary Marty Walsh told delegates unions are “at the heart” of the nation’s post-pandemic recovery and promised the Biden administration would continue “expanding opportunities” for organizing.

***I’m a long-time convention-goer and you lose some of the excitement with the new delegates being there live, but I thought they did well. It was well put together and very informative, but nothing is the same as being there with people when they come to the mic.***

– Mike Floyd, 747-M, Los Angeles

of union jobs, overseen a successful covid vaccination initiative essential to restarting the nation’s economy and urged swift passage of the PRO Act stalled by Republicans in the U.S. Senate.

Bailey said the IBT’s DRIVE program – Democrat, Republican and Independent Voter Education – would devote significant funds to helping Democrats hold the House and Senate in next year’s midterm elections so that Biden’s “pro-labor agenda” could go forward.

Civic involvement is essential, GCC/IBT president Kurt Freeman said. “We have to be willing to work,” he said.

While national politics are of vital importance, union leaders said, nothing is more essential to the future of the labor movement than organizing.

“It’s full speed ahead,” said Jeff Farmer, IBT director of organizing, and saluted GCC/IBT leadership for “moving organizing to the front and center.”

Farmer noted recent polls that showed public support for unions increasing during the pandemic. “We have to take advantage of this moment and organize like never before,” he said.

Teamster organizers Jarrod Skelton and James Curbeam conducted a virtual organizing seminar and, on the convention’s second day, IBT national campaign coordinator Greg Chockley emphasized the power of one-on-one contact with potential members. “Organizing is about relationships,” Chockley said.

Freeman left no doubt regarding the challenges ahead for the GCC/IBT – and the labor movement broadly.

“Organizing is not only the theme of the convention but of what we do going forward,” he said. “Organize, organize, organize.” Nobles added: “We have to move forward. We have to organize.”

District Council 3, DC-9 and Boston Local 3-N underlined the message with recruitment videos used in organizing drives. “The union makes us strong,” said a speaker on the DC-3 presentation. “We are organizing for power,” said another.

***I can only imagine the coordination it took to pull this off. The voting was very well coordinated and everything was easy to follow, but I miss Vegas! Sometimes we only see each other once every five years and it would have been nice to see everyone. Just hope in five years we are all in person together and back in Vegas!***

– James Santangelo, 1-L, New York

## DELEGATES QUOTES

Delegates to the GCC/IBT virtual convention said the event was impressive and went off smoothly. A sample of their comments, compiled by reporter Dawn Hobbs and shown in italics, appear throughout the centerfold.

***Hats off to president Freeman, secretary-treasurer Nobles and the GCC office staff for putting together the technology and support that made a virtual convention a complete success. The process from committee meetings prior to the convention to voting live was seamless and productive. The programs and speakers provided great information for the delegates to share with their local unions and district councils. But I do prefer in person for the camaraderie and social activities after the convention.***

– John Potts, 14-M, Philadelphia

A promising development, Freeman said, was a new arrangement with the National Writers Union, an organization representing freelance journalists and writers in other fields

The GCC/IBT recently entered a service agreement that will increase the GCC’s role in the journalistic sphere and provide the NWU the support essential to boosting membership, Freeman said.

Over time, Freeman said, he hoped the NWU would be able to build its rank-and-file enough to become “full-time members of the GCC/IBT.” In turn, NWU president Larry Goldbetter wrote on the convention chatline: “Thanks for having us, GCC! To the future!”

On the business side of the convention agenda, delegates approved a one-time dues increase of 50 cents per member, per month.

Union finances were stable, Nobles reported and thanked Tedeschi and former secretary-treasurer/vice president Robert Lacey for their work in “straightening out” what once was a worrisome situation. “Their efforts are the reason we are still an independent union,” Nobles said.

There were more than a few touching moments at the convention.

***This was my first convention so I can’t compare to a live one, but other than a couple of hiccups I think everything ran smoothly. A bunch of us got together at the hall and we were able to ask questions, discuss issues with each other and enjoy it together.***

– Roger Lindon, 508-M, Cincinnati

***I think aside from a few technical glitches, it went as well as could be expected. But a large part of these conventions is the personal interaction and the off-the-record conversations between delegates. That is what fuels our conference – the exchange of information and ideas in person.***

– Oscar Lopez, 4535-M, Houston

Amy Edwards, of Southport, North Carolina, and the niece of George Tedeschi, sang stirring renditions of the Canadian and American national anthems and a soulful version of “Amazing Grace,” following a memorial presentation noting the nearly 6,000 members, officials and retirees who died since the 2016 convention. In the last year, many of the deaths were related to covid, officials said.

At another point, Freeman, who presided over the meeting from a closed-circuit studio in Maryland operated by The Kelly Companies of Cheverly, Maryland, took note of the new Juneteenth federal holiday commemorating the end of slavery after the Civil War.

Despite progress, Freeman said, “not everyone is free in terms of a living wage, affordable health care and access to high-speed Internet.” Freeman praised Opal Lee, the 94-year-old activist who has pushed for years to make June 19 a national holiday, and said the move for an equal society must continue. “We still have a long way to go,” he said. “We have to keep fighting this fight.”

As the convention drew to a close, attention focused on Tedeschi, who announced that he would leave his post as a Teamster vice president-at large and head toward full retirement when his IBT term expires in 2022.

Kevin Toomey, secretary-treasurer of Local 3-N, read a resolution honoring Tedeschi’s 60 years of union service. “He put the interest of the rank-and-file first, and never forgot where he came from,” Toomey said.

Ken Hall, who also soon will retire his IBT post, called Tedeschi a personal friend and “great representative” of union workers. Freeman said Tedeschi was a “role model of leadership and integrity. Sullivan, of 3-N, Boston, recalled that “no issue was too big or too small that you couldn’t call George any time of day or night.”

Tedeschi, 81, who is known lovingly in union ranks as, “King George,” surprised delegates by donning a crown and wielding a scepter. He expressed confidence that Freeman and Nobles would carry out the union’s mission and promised still to be available if help needed.

“I will always be there for you, as you have always been there for me,” Tedeschi said. ■

## Biden: Most Pro-Union Since FDR?

**A**fter six months in the White House, Joe Biden is turning out to be exactly what he promised – a “union guy.”

The president celebrates his working-class roots at every opportunity, hails organized labor as a noble institution that built the great American middle class and promises to create “millions of good-paying union jobs.”

Biden has removed anti-labor officials from the National Labor Relations Board, installed fair-minded replacements and nominated pro-worker labor lawyers Gwynne Wilcox and David Prouty for NLRB seats.

To lead the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), Biden picked Doug Parker, a lawyer and long-time advocate of tough workplace standards who worked in the Obama administration and now leads California’s occupational safety agency.

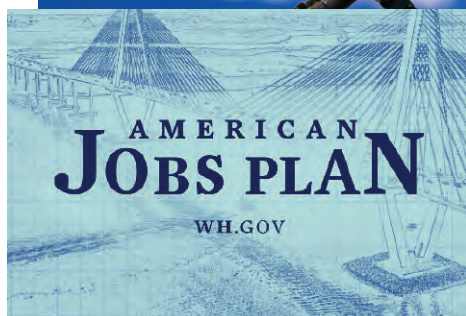
In a speech to a joint session of Congress, Biden called for approval of the Protect the Right to Organize Act (PRO). The bill, passed in the Democrat-controlled House of Representatives but facing uncertain prospects in the Senate, is intended to stop management from unfairly influencing or punishing employees during a union drive.

“Nearly 60 million Americans would join a union if they get a chance, but too many employers and states prevent them from doing so through anti-union attacks,” Biden said in an earlier statement. “They know that without unions, they can run the table on workers — union and non-union alike.”

Biden’s remarks point to the need for broad overhaul of labor law, said GCC/IBT general counsel Peter Leff.

“In order to truly reinvigorate the middle class in America, we need comprehensive labor law reform to be supported by the Senate that re-levels the playing field between workers, the unions they desire and employers that want to keep unions out,” Leff said.

With rhetoric and action, Biden is being viewed widely as perhaps the most pro-union president since Franklin Delano Roosevelt.



“For so many years, organized labor has been given lip service even though labor has supported candidate after candidate who said they would have our backs only to be taken for granted,” said GCC/IBT president Kurt Freeman. “Joe Biden and his administration have done more than any other in recent memory. They are following through on their promises.”

Freeman was referring to initiatives like an executive order Biden signed a few days before the Capitol Hill speech setting up a task force of advisers and cabinet members who will study ways government might promote union membership.

Led by Vice President Kamala Harris with Labor Secretary Marty Walsh serving as vice-chair, the task force “will be dedicated to mobilizing the federal government’s policies, programs,

and practices to empower workers to organize and successfully bargain with their employers,” the White House said.

According to a story in the Guardian newspaper, the task force reflects Biden’s belief that unions are essential to the nation’s economic wellbeing.

“This is an all-hands-on-deck effort,” Jared Bernstein, a member of the president’s council of economic advisers, told the Guardian. “The marching order from the president is everything we do in the job market space needs to reflect the importance of unionization.”

Central to what Biden calls his \$2.3 trillion “American Jobs Plan” is the President’s determination to address the climate crisis and boost high-paying jobs for American workers.

“For me, when I think climate change, I think jobs,” he told lawmakers sitting socially distant in the House chamber because of covid-19 safety protocols.

At one point in his address, Biden referred specifically to union job opportunities and envisioned members of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) “installing 500,000 charging stations along our highways so we can own the electric car market.”

Biden’s proposals – which face fierce opposition from Republicans – are welcome but cannot substitute for aggressive action by unions to halt the perilous decline in membership, said GCC/IBT president emeritus George Tedeschi.

“It is still up to the union movement to actually do the work and organize,” Tedeschi said. “This seems like a difficult task to get many of our leaders and members committed to accept this challenge and do it, but we must.”

Still, labor officials say they are pleased to have a staunch and competent ally in the White House after four years of erratic leadership by former President Donald Trump who claimed to be the friend of workers but did little to improve their circumstances.

Steve Nobles, GCC/IBT secretary-treasurer/vice president, said Biden represents a much needed new direction.

“This is the most labor friendly administration in my lifetime,” Nobles said. “President Biden gets it: You need a thriving working class to return America to the place that is safe and prosperous for all of its citizens, not just the 1 percent.”

### IN 2020, A BROAD CONSTITUENCY

**Who elected Joe Biden?**

An in-depth examination of the 2020 Election by Catalyst, a respected Democratic analytics firm, provided these takeaways:

Voters aged 18-29 went to the polls in record numbers and Biden won 60 percent of that segment of the electorate. Among voters 30-45, the Democrat earned a 56 percent share.

Sixty-one percent of Biden voters were white and 39 percent, minority.

College-educated white men gave Biden a 50 percent share of their vote – five points better more than Hillary Clinton’s in 2016.

Biden drew significant support from Latinos but less than Clinton four years earlier. Clinton drew 71 percent of Latino votes. Biden earned 63.

Donald Trump, the vanquished incumbent, did best among older Americans but that portion of the voting public is shrinking. In 2008, baby boomers and older people made up 51 percent of the electorate. Last year, their portion was 44 percent.

**What about union households?**

An Edison Research analysis shortly after the election showed Biden winning union households, 57-40 – double what Clinton managed, according to the Bloomberg Law website.

But, Bloomberg noted, Trump drew more union votes in the vital states of Ohio and Pennsylvania than in 2016 – “especially painful for Biden, a candidate whose blue-collar roots are central to his brand.”

Though Biden won the election by more than 7 million votes nationwide, Bloomberg sounded a warning. Trump’s protectionist trade policies and conservative social stances “may continue to sway union members and their allies” in future elections, Bloomberg said.



**FIRST CONTRACT AT AMCOR – FINALLY**

Following a five-year struggle marked by illegal firings, a failed decertification attempt and numerous unfair labor practice charges, workers at Amcor in Centerville, Iowa, won a first-time contract.

GCC/IBT members remained strong throughout the ordeal despite the aggressive, anti-union tactics of the Bemis Company, owners of the global packing company before Amcor took over in 2019, said GCC/IBT representative Phil Roberts.

“Despite an atmosphere created by the company, people hung in there,” said Roberts, who served as chief negotiator.

The National Labor Relations board found Bemis guilty of bad faith bargaining, among other labor law violations, and also ordered back pay and reinstatement for workers who were demoted, or forced to leave through layoff and termination, Roberts said.

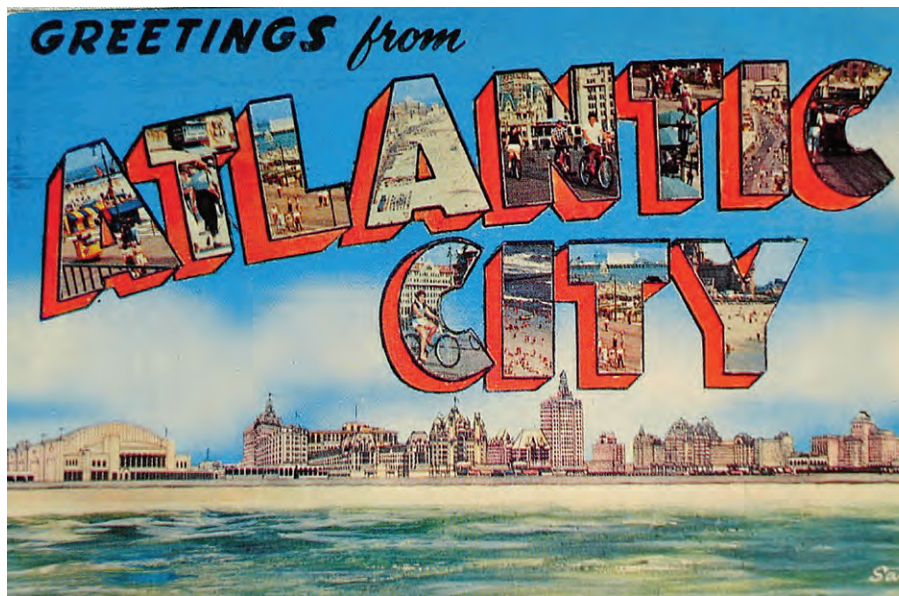
Additionally, the board demanded reimbursement for the union’s bargaining expenses from November 2016 through April 2018.

Circumstances improved when Amcor assumed ownership, Roberts said. “The nature and tenor of the negotiations changed dramatically.”

Highlights of the three-year pact include a 2.75 percent wage increase dated back to April 1; a 3 percent increase January 2022; a 2.75 increase in January 2023; and a 2.5 percent increase in January of 2024 and 2025.

Roberts said the union also achieved strong language regarding grievance procedures, seniority, job security, promotions, vacation, holidays, overtime and protection against unfair discipline.

“Even though people were discouraged at times, we are ready to move forward,” Roberts said.



**COVID DECLINES, CONFERENCES RETURN**

After several delays prompted by public health concerns, the Eastern Conference will be held Sept. 26-28 in Atlantic City, New Jersey.

“With covid restrictions being lifted and the vaccination rate going up, I am happy to announce we will finally be moving ahead with our Eastern Conference,” said Harry Selnow, conference vice-president.

The conference will be held at Harrah’s Hotel and Casino. Invitational letters will be distributed in July with more details and a conference code assuring delegates a special room rate of \$85.

“It’s been two years now since we’ve gotten together,” Selnow noted. “It will be time to see old friends and make some new ones.”

Other GCC/IBT conferences are returning as the threat of covid-19 declines:

The North American Newspaper Conference will be held Sept. 19-22 in Scottsdale, Arizona.

The Midwestern Conference will be held April 10-12, 2022, in Chicago.

Dates are yet to be determined for the Specialty Conference in Atlanta, Georgia.

**WALSH SALUTES COMMUNICATOR STORY**

The last issue of the GCC/IBT Graphic Communicator made it all the way to the desk of U.S. Labor Secretary Marty Walsh.

After reading an article by Local 3-N president Stephen Sullivan hailing President Joe Biden’s choice of DOL chief, Walsh – a former labor leader and mayor of Boston – sent word that he appreciated Sullivan’s support.

Local 3-N backed Walsh since 2013 when he announced his mayoral candidacy.

“Boston is a big city, but a small town,” Sullivan said. “So when our article was passed along through friends and posted on Facebook, it made its way to the labor secretary’s office who still keeps tabs on his hometown from Washington D.C.”

Walsh, who addressed delegates via video recording at the GCC/IBT’s virtual convention in mid-June, responded quickly.

“Within 48 hours of the Communicator hitting our members’ homes, I got a text from a friend in DC that said Marty Walsh had read the article and appreciated the support from the GCC,” Sullivan said.

GCC/IBT president Kurt Freeman had initially contacted the Boston local following Walsh’s appointment to the White House to gauge his interest in delivering remarks at the GCC/IBT convention. After reading Sullivan’s piece in the Communicator, Walsh agreed.

“It’s a really huge honor to have him speak,” Sullivan said. “But it’s like he’s our mayor, and he’s our friend. He’s the guy who’s at labor events with us. We relate to him as another union leader and person in the struggle.”



**DC3 GAINS JUNETEENTH AS PAID HOLIDAY**

Juneteenth, the annual observation marking emancipation of slaves after the Civil War, will become a paid holiday at some Gannett newspapers in the Midwest thanks to the efforts of GCC/IBT District Council 3.

“It was time,” said Israel Castro, DC3 secretary-treasurer. “We plan for it to be part of our standing agreement for larger shops that can afford it.”

Gannett papers in Detroit, Knoxville, Indianapolis, and Canton, Ohio, will allow workers a paid day off 30 days before or after June 19, depending on work schedules.

In addition, Castro said, a Cleveland-area print shop has agreed to include the additional holiday and proposals are under consideration on behalf of the clerks at the City of Warrensville Heights, also in Ohio, and the Marriott Hotels in Ypsilanti, Michigan.

With consciousness-raising efforts of groups like Black Lives Matter in mind, Castro said he began pushing for Juneteenth recognition after several large corporations – including Disney and Nike – announced June 19 would be a paid holiday.

“The current climate adds incentive for companies to agree to the day and it was something I thought would be achievable,” Castro said.

Juneteenth, recently signed into law as a federal holiday by President Joe Biden, recalls June 19, 1865 when a Union general arrived in Galveston, Texas, to inform slaves of their freedom.

Every state but South Dakota eventually came to commemorate the day, but only a handful of states observe it as a paid holiday.

“There are certain events in our history that we should not forget,” Castro said.

*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 continue de prouver qu'il est un président protravailleur

Par Fred Bruning  
Graphic Communicator

Après six mois à la Maison-Blanche, Joe Biden s'avère être exactement ce qu'il avait promis d'être — un « type favorable aux syndicats ».

Le président affiche ses origines ouvrières chaque fois qu'il en a l'occasion, clame haut et fort que le travail organisé est une noble institution qui a bâti la grande classe moyenne américaine et promet de créer des « millions de bons emplois syndiqués bien payés ».

Biden a limogé les dirigeants anti-travailleurs du Conseil national des relations du travail, mis en place des remplaçants équitables et nommé récemment Gwynne Wilcox, une avocate spécialisée dans le droit du travail et protravailleur, à un poste vacant au sein de l'organisme.

Dans un discours prononcé lors d'une séance conjointe du Congrès, Biden a demandé l'adoption de la Protect the Right to Organize Act (PRO), la loi qui protège le droit de s'organiser. Le projet de loi, qui a été adopté par la Chambre des représentants contrôlée par les démocrates mais fait face à des perspectives incertaines au Sénat, vise à empêcher les dirigeants d'influencer, ou de punir, injustement des employés pendant une campagne syndicale.

« Près de 60 millions d'Américains se joindraient à un syndicat s'ils en avaient l'occasion, mais trop d'employeurs et d'États les empêchent en lançant des attaques antisyndicales, a déclaré plus tôt Biden. Ils savent que sans les syndicats, ils

peuvent dominer les travailleurs — syndiqués et non syndiqués. »

Les observations de Biden font ressortir la nécessité d'une refonte à grande échelle du droit du travail, a déclaré Peter Leff, conseiller juridique général de la CCG-FIT.

« Afin de redynamiser vraiment la classe moyenne en Amérique, nous avons besoin d'une réforme complète du droit du travail soutenue par le Sénat, qui nivelle à nouveau le terrain entre les travailleurs, les syndicats qu'ils désirent et les employeurs qui veulent tenir les syndicats à l'écart », a indiqué P. Leff.

Avec sa rhétorique et son action, Biden est largement considéré comme étant peut-être le président le plus pro-syndical depuis Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

« Pendant tant d'années, le mouvement syndical a eu droit à un service minimal, même si les travailleurs ont soutenu systématiquement les candidats qui déclaraient que leur protection était tenue pour acquise, a affirmé Kurt Freeman, président de la CCG-FIT. Joe Biden et son administration ont fait plus que n'importe qui de mémoire récente. Ils tiennent leurs promesses. »

K. Freeman faisait allusion à des initiatives comme un décret que Biden a signé quelques jours avant son discours au Capitole, qui annonçait la création d'un groupe de travail composé de conseillers et de membres de son cabinet qui allait étudier les façons dont le gouvernement pourrait promouvoir l'adhésion syndicale.

Le groupe de travail dirigé par la

vice-présidente Kamala Harris et dont le secrétaire au Travail Marty Walsh sera le vice-président, « s'attachera à mobiliser les politiques, programmes et pratiques du gouvernement fédéral pour donner aux travailleurs les moyens de s'organiser et de négocier avec succès avec leurs employeurs », a déclaré la Maison-Blanche.

Selon un article paru dans le Guardian, le groupe de travail reflète la conviction de Biden selon laquelle les syndicats sont essentiels pour le bien-être économique de la nation.

« Il s'agit d'un effort collectif, a déclaré au Guardian Jared Bernstein, un membre du groupe de conseillers économiques du président. Le président a donné pour consigne que tout ce que nous effectuons dans le marché de l'emploi doit refléter l'importance de la syndicalisation. »

La détermination du président à s'attaquer à la crise climatique et à stimuler les emplois bien payés pour les travailleurs américains tient une place centrale dans ce que Biden appelle son « plan d'emploi pour les Américains » à 2,3 billions de dollars.

« Quand je pense aux changements climatiques, je pense aux emplois », a-t-il dit aux législateurs assis en respectant les règles de distanciation sociale dans la Chambre en raison des protocoles de sécurité imposés par la COVID-19.

Pendant son discours, Biden a fait spécifiquement référence aux occasions d'emplois syndiqués et a envisagé que les membres de l'International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) « installent

500 000 bornes de recharge le long de nos autoroutes afin que nous puissions être propriétaires du marché des véhicules électriques ».

Les propositions de Biden — qui se heurtent à une opposition féroce des républicains — sont bien accueillies mais ne peuvent pas remplacer les interventions décisives menées par les syndicats pour freiner le déclin périlleux dans leurs rangs, a dit George Tedeschi, président émérite de la CCG-FIT.

« Il revient encore au mouvement syndical de faire le travail et l'organisation, a indiqué G. Tedeschi. Cela semble difficile d'obtenir que nos nombreux dirigeants et membres s'engagent à accepter ce défi et à le relever, mais nous devons le faire. »

Les dirigeants affirment néanmoins être contents d'avoir un allié étanche et compétent à la Maison-Blanche après les quatre années de leadership erratique de l'ancien président Donald Trump, qui affirmait être l'ami des travailleurs mais n'a pas fait grand-chose pour améliorer leur sort.

Selon Steve Nobles, secrétaire-trésorier et vice-président de la CCG-FIT, Biden représente une nouvelle orientation vraiment nécessaire.

« Il s'agit de l'administration la plus protravailleuse que j'ai connue de toute ma vie, estime S. Nobles. Le président Biden a bien compris qu'il faut une classe ouvrière dynamique pour refaire de l'Amérique un endroit sécuritaire et prospère pour tous ces citoyens, et pas seulement un pour cent d'entre eux. »

## Biden sigue cumpliendo con las promesas en pro de los obreros

Por Fred Bruning  
Graphic Communicator

Después de seis meses en la Casa Blanca, Joe Biden resulta ser exactamente lo que prometió: un « tipo sindical ».

El presidente celebra sus raíces de clase obrera en cada oportunidad, aclama a los organismos de obreros sindicales como una institución noble que levantó la gran clase media estadounidense y promete crear « millones de trabajos sindicales bien pagados ».

Biden ha destituido a los funcionarios antisindicales del Consejo Nacional de Relaciones Laborales (NLRB, por sus siglas en inglés [National Labor Relations Board]), ha instalado a sustitutos imparciales y recién nombró a Gwynne Wilcox, abogada laboral en pro de los trabajadores, para un puesto vacante en el NLRB.

En un discurso ante una sesión conjunta del Congreso, Biden pidió la aprobación de la Ley de Protección del Derecho a Organizar (PRO, por sus siglas en inglés [Protect the Right to Organize Act]). El proyecto de ley —aprobado en la Cámara de Representantes, misma controlada por los demócratas, pero que enfrenta un porvenir incierto en el Senado—, tiene como objetivo acabar con las influencias o castigos injustos dirigidos a los empleados por parte de la gerencia durante una campaña sindical.

«Casi 60 millones de estadounidenses se unirían a un sindicato si tuvieran la oportunidad, pero demasiados empleadores y estados les impiden hacerlo mediante ataques antisindicales», manifestó Biden en un comunicado anterior. «Saben que

sin los sindicatos, pueden pisotear a los trabajadores, tanto a los sindicalizados como a los no sindicalizados.»

Los comentarios de Biden señalan la necesidad de una reforma general de la legislación laboral, manifestó Peter Leff, el director jurídico de GCC/IBT (siglas en inglés de la Conferencia de Comunicadores Gráficos / Hermandad Internacional de Camioneros [Graphic Communicators Conference / International Brotherhood of Teamsters]).

«Para verdaderamente vigorizar a la clase media en Estados Unidos, necesitamos que una reforma integral de la legislación laboral sea apoyada por el Senado, una que vuelva a igualar las condiciones entre los obreros, los sindicatos que estos desean y los empleadores que quieren excluir a los sindicatos», dijo Leff.

Por su retórica y acción, muchos ven a Biden como quizás el presidente más en pro de los sindicatos desde Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

«Durante tantos años, se ha defendido de boquilla a los obreros sindicalizados a pesar de que los obreros han apoyado a un candidato tras otro que dijo que nos respaldaría para luego darnos por sentado», anunció Kurt Freeman, presidente de GCC/IBT. «La administración bajo Joe Biden ha hecho más que cualquier otra en los últimos tiempos. Está cumpliendo sus promesas.»

Freeman se refería a iniciativas como una orden ejecutiva que Biden firmó unos días antes del discurso del Capitolio, misma que establece un grupo de trabajo de asesores y miembros del gabinete quienes estudiarán las formas en que el

gobierno podría promover la afiliación sindical.

Dirigido por la vicepresidenta Kamala Harris con el Ministro de Trabajo Marty Walsh como vicepresidente del grupo de trabajo, dicho grupo «se dedicará a movilizar las políticas, programas y prácticas del gobierno federal para capacitar a los trabajadores para que se organicen y negocien con éxito con sus empleadores», anunció la Casa Blanca.

Según un artículo del periódico The Guardian, el grupo de trabajo refleja la creencia de Biden de que los sindicatos son esenciales para el bienestar económico de la nación.

«Este es un esfuerzo de manos a la obra», dijo Jared Bernstein, miembro del consejo de asesores económicos del presidente, a The Guardian. «La orden de ponerse en marcha del presidente es que todo lo que hacemos en el mercado laboral debe hacer eco de la importancia de la sindicalización.»

Un elemento central de lo que Biden llama su «Plan de empleo estadounidense» de 2.3 billones de dólares es la determinación del presidente de abordar la crisis climática e impulsar empleos bien remunerados para los trabajadores estadounidenses.

«A mí ver, cuando pienso en el cambio climático, pienso en trabajos», anunció a los legisladores sentados a sana distancia en la sala de la Cámara debido a los protocolos de seguridad del COVID-19.

En un momento de su discurso, Biden se refirió específicamente a las oportunidades de trabajos sindicales e imaginó a los miembros de la Hermandad Internacional de Trabajadores de la

Electricidad (IBEW, por sus siglas en inglés [International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers]) «instalando 500,000 estaciones de carga a lo largo de nuestras carreteras para que podamos ser dueños del mercado de automóviles eléctricos».

Las propuestas de Biden, mismas que enfrentan una feroz oposición de los republicanos, son bienvenidas pero no pueden sustituir a la acción agresiva por parte de los sindicatos para detener la peligrosa disminución de la membresía, manifestó el presidente emérito de la GCC/IBT, George Tedeschi.

«Todavía le toca al movimiento sindical hacer el trabajo en sí y organizarse», afirmó Tedeschi. «Parece una tarea difícil lograr que muchos de nuestros líderes y miembros se comprometan a aceptar este desafío y hacerlo, pero debemos hacerlo.»

Aún así, los funcionarios sindicales dicen que les complace tener a un aliado firme y competente en la Casa Blanca después de cuatro años de liderazgo errático del ex presidente Donald Trump, quien alegaba ser amigo de los trabajadores pero hizo poco para mejorar sus circunstancias.

Steve Nobles, secretario-tesorero/vicepresidente de GCC/IBT, dijo que Biden representa una nueva dirección muy necesaria.

«En mi vida no hubo ninguna administración más favorable para los obreros», afirmó Nobles. «El presidente Biden lo entiende: se necesita una clase obrera floreciente para devolver a Estados Unidos a aquel lugar seguro y próspero para todos sus ciudadanos, no solo para el 1 por ciento.»





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## Why Should the Wealthy Get a Pass?

**W**hat's worse than paying taxes? Finding the privileged get a pass. A survey by the Pew Research Center shows that 59 percent of Americans say they are bothered "a lot" by businesses and wealthy people who don't pay their "fair share."

Joe Biden is bothered, too.

The President wants to pay for his \$1.8 trillion American Families Plan by increasing taxes on individuals making more than \$400,000 annually. The hike would apply to less than 1 percent of American earners.

Revenue for Biden's \$2.3 trillion American Jobs Plan would come from hiking the corporate tax rate to 28 percent from the 21 set by Donald Trump and Republicans in 2017 and requiring that multinational businesses pay more.

Like most everything these days, opinion splits along party lines.

Pew says that Democrats – and those leaning toward the Democratic Party – are more likely to be angry than Republicans about low taxes paid by individuals and corporations.

Biden makes clear that he is not against wealth. He is for fairness and promises not to hike taxes on the middle class. "They're already paying enough," Biden said.

## Walsh: Give Gig Workers a Break

**G**ig workers – independent operators like food deliverers, child care providers and Uber drivers – represent nearly 35 percent of the nation's work force. Many should be considered employees, says Labor Secretary Marty Walsh.

In an interview with the Reuters news agency, Walsh, the former mayor of Boston and a union advocate, weighed into the highly charged debate.

Walsh said freelance workers deserve consistent wages, sick time and health care – "all of the things that an average employee in America can access," according to Reuters. However, cost-conscious employers have been reluctant to grant gig workers full-time status and access to benefits.

Of particular concern, Walsh said, was the lack of unemployment insurance for gig workers, who are not covered because of their non-employee status.

Had the federal government not stepped in during the pandemic, unemployed freelancers would have suffered even greater economic setbacks, he said. "... they wouldn't have had any unemployment benefits to keep their family moving forward. We'd have a lot more difficult situation all across the country."

Walsh said Biden administration officials will consult representatives of companies that rely on gig workers and made clear he understood the need to assure healthy profits.

"But we also want to make sure that success trickles down to the worker," Walsh said.



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## Sharing the Road, but Worried

**I**n 38 states, self-driving test vehicles are permitted to operate on public thoroughfares. Not everyone is happy about sharing the road.

A survey by the American Automobile Association and the Harvard Kennedy School found most motorists have fears about cars and trucks that rely on artificial intelligence.

Top worries, according to the AAA:

- Safety of sharing the road with self-driving vehicles.

- Responsibility in case of accidents.

- Uncertainty about who would oversee test vehicles.

- Need for advice on how to coexist with driverless vehicles.

- Not knowing if a nearby vehicle is self-driving.

In the trucking sector, driverless vehicles also present significant employment issues. Two years ago, the IBT warned that "Autonomous trucks threaten the livelihoods of millions of truckers across the country." Displaced workers must be protected "if they need to transition to new employment," the union said.

As driverless vehicles become an increasing presence, authorities must focus on public perception and education, said the AAA. "...it is critical for policymakers and other state government officials to take actions that will build confidence and foster public acceptance of self-driving vehicles," the organization said.



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## Pandemic Upped Exec Privilege

**B**reaking news from the front lines of executive privilege:

Another study is showing that CEOs did extremely well during the pandemic – with help from well-heeled friends on corporate executive boards.

The Associated Press said pay packages rose last year despite hard times for many companies as board members tweaked formulas by which executive compensation is figured.

Data from the consulting firm Equilar showed median pay for bosses of S&P 500 companies climbed to \$12.7 million last year – 5 percent higher than in 2019, according to AP.

In his commentary on Page 3 of this edition, Jim Hightower noted earlier studies that showed America's billionaire class became 40 percent richer during the covid crisis. For example, Hightower said, Amazon founder Jeff Bezos was among the "fortunate few." Bezos earned an additional \$75 billion as online purchasing boomed.

Things are seriously out of balance, Sarah Anderson of the Institute for Policy Studies, told the Associated Press.

"This should have been a year of shared sacrifice," she said. "Instead, it became a year of shielding CEOs from risk while it was frontline employees who paid the price."

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# Get Your Covid Shot: 'Let's Start Living'

By Dawn Hobbs  
Special to the Communicator

Reflecting national trends, covid vaccination rates in GCC/IBT ranks appear to vary between 50-70 percent, with geographic location and political affiliation figuring heavily into the equation, union leaders said.

GCC/IBT leaders across the country are urging that workers get the life-saving shots and help President Joe Biden meet his goal of a 70 percent national vaccination rate.

"I can only speak for myself and I think everyone who is able to get vaccinated has the duty to do so in order to protect those who are medically unable or too young to get vaccinated," said GCC/IBT president Kurt Freeman.

In one effort, Israel Castro, secretary-treasurer of District Council 3, sent a mass email to his members in the Midwest acknowledging the drastic toll the pandemic has taken on workers' lives and encouraging them to get vaccinated.

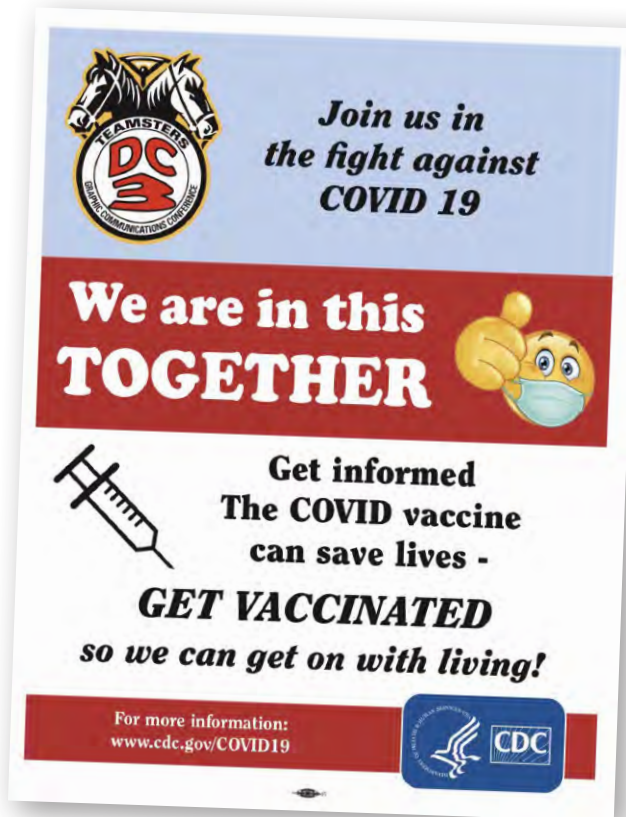
"All of us have been impacted in some form – some of our members have died, many have become severely ill and still suffer from the impact of this illness, and many have suffered mentally and emotionally from the devastating effects of isolation for long periods," Castro said in a statement.

A sense of common purpose is essential, the union leader said.

"We are all in this together and we will have to get out of this together," Castro said. "I am proud that our union is supporting the vaccination effort and I encourage all of our members, families, and friends to get the vaccine if you have not done so already. Let's get back to living."

Where vaccination rates are lower, some companies have rolled out creative programs to try to boost the numbers, including incentives ranging from extra time off to \$100 gift cards.

Even though Castro is promoting the vaccine, he said he thinks it's a "slippery slope" for employers to mandate vaccination. "We took the position that it's a manda-



tory subject of bargaining and that has to be negotiated," he said.

The DC-3 executive estimated that approximately 70 percent of his members have been vaccinated, and that active cases have plummeted especially in Ohio where Gov. Mike DeWine launched a \$1 million lottery to encourage participation.

On the West Coast, numbers are a little lower, according to Clark Ritchey, DC-2 secretary-treasurer. Ritchey estimated that perhaps 50 percent of GCC/IBT members had been vaccinated.

"There's several factors that include lack of time due to working long shifts and reluctance because they don't think they need it," Ritchey said. "And for some it's a political statement. Some don't have enough information. And some may have already had it and don't think it's a big deal."

Ritchey said covid cases are down and that he's actively been encouraging members to get vaccinated and is working with companies who will be rolling out incentive programs.

And after several horrific months, covid cases are down markedly in most sections of the East Coast.

As a result, said Pat LoPresti, president of Local 1-L, New York, it appears the deaths of retirees are down after soaring from a regular rate of 40-50 per year to nearly 350 in 2020.

Since the Biden administration began anti-covid efforts in January, the number of members seeking vaccinations has increased significantly, LoPresti said.

"I think the worst of this is over... and I think the vaccines are preventing the mass fatalities we saw in the beginning with bodies stacked up in parking lots."

LoPresti, who hung a Christmas ornament of Dr. Anthony Fauci on his tree, said he takes every opportunity to encourage his members to get vaccinated.

Some may ignore the advice, he said, "but I still encourage them."

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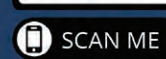


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