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Label Letter

Union Label & Service Trades Department, AFL-CIO

Buffalo Home to Another Groundbreaking Union Campaign

In February, workers at a Tesla factory in Buffalo, NY, announced a campaign to form a union, saying they want better pay and benefits. Buffalo, if you recall, is the home of the first successful Starbucks union campaign that ultimately opened the flood gates for hundreds of other campaigns across the country unionizing the coffee giant.

The Tesla factory in Buffalo makes solar panels and components for charging equipment. About 800 workers at the factory also develop driver-assistance software for cars. The Autopilot department workers initiated the union drive and went public on February 13.

The Buffalo workers say that Tesla pays them less than the national average and they have inadequate sick time. In addition to seeking improved job security and

increased pay, employees have said they want a say in workplace decision-making, and to curb monitoring, metrics, and production pressure that they claim are harmful to their health. Workers involved in the organizing campaign say Tesla monitors their keystrokes and tracks how long they spend per task and how much of the day they spend actively working. Some employees reported they have foregone bathroom breaks due to the pressure of being monitored.

Keenan Lasch, a member of the organizing team for the Tesla Workers United told the New York Times that the group are “only asking for a seat in the car that we helped build.”

The employees are working with Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Workers United on the campaign.

Workers United is also part of the Starbucks campaigns.

Workers at Tesla factories have previously attempted to unionize. In 2021, the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) found that Tesla had illegally fired a worker involved in organizing at the car makers’ Fremont, CA, factory. The Board found that Elon Musk had threatened workers with the loss of stock options if they unionized.

NEAR IMMEDIATE LAYOFFS SPUR CHARGES OF RETALIATION BY UNION

Just one day after employees announced they were launching an organizing campaign at the Tesla Buffalo plant’s Autopilot department dozens of employees were reportedly laid off.

The Workers United Union filed a complaint with the National Labor Relations Board on February 15, accusing the automaker of terminating some of the employees “in retaliation for union activity.”

The union says the company fired more than 30 employees, noting that the workers also received an email with an updated company policy prohibiting them from recording workplace meetings without all participants’ permission.

“This is a form of collective retaliation against the group of workers that started this organizing effort,” Jaz Brisack, a Workers United organizer who is helping spearhead the Tesla union drive, told Bloomberg News. The terminations are “designed to terrify everyone about potential consequences of them organizing, as well as to attempt to cull the herd,” she said.

The union asked the labor board to seek a federal court injunction “to prevent irreparable destruction of employee rights resulting from Tesla’s unlawful conduct.” ■

NLRB: Companies Can’t Require Employees to Waive Rights as Part of Severance Package

In late February, the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) ruled that companies cannot require employees to waive their rights as part of a severance agreement.

The decision, says the NLRB, restored an “important principle and longstanding precedent” that employees cannot be coerced into waiving their rights. The decision concerned a Michigan hospital that terminated 11 union employees during the COVID 19 pandemic and asked them to sign a severance agreement barring them from publicly disparaging the company.

In 2020, under the Trump-appointed chief, the NLRB twice ruled that limiting speech in instances like this were legal, arguing in one decision that severance agreements with no disparagement clauses are “entirely voluntary.”

The current NLRB, however, overruled that decision.

In a statement, NLRB Chairperson Lauren McFerran said that “employers cannot ask individual employees to choose between receiving benefits and exercising their rights under the National Labor Relations Act.” ■



Do Buy: 2023 Union-Built Vehicle Guide

UAW CARS

- » Cadillac CT4
- » Cadillac CT4-V
- » Cadillac CT4-V Blackwing
- » Cadillac CT5
- » Cadillac CT5-V
- » Cadillac CT5-V Blackwing
- » Chevrolet Bolt (Electric)
- » Chevrolet Bolt EUV (Electric)
- » Chevrolet Camaro
- » Chevrolet Corvette
- » Chevrolet Malibu
- » Ford Mustang Convertible
- » Ford Mustang Coupe
- » Ford Mustang Shelby
- » Lincoln Corsair (Hybrid)

UAW SUVs/GUVs

- » Buick Enclave
- » Cadillac Escalade
- » Cadillac Escalade (Hybrid)
- » Cadillac Escalade ESV
- » Cadillac Lyric (Electric)
- » Cadillac XT4
- » Cadillac XT5
- » Cadillac XT6
- » Chevrolet Suburban
- » Chevrolet Tahoe
- » Chevrolet Tahoe (Police)
- » Chevrolet Tahoe (Special Service)
- » Chevrolet Traverse
- » Dodge Durango
- » Ford Bronco
- » Ford Escape
- » Ford Escape (Hybrid)
- » Ford Expedition

- » Ford Explorer
- » Ford Explorer (Hybrid)
- » Ford Explorer (Police Interceptor)
- » GMC Acadia
- » GMC Hummer SUV (Electric)
- » GMC Yukon
- » GMC Yukon (Hybrid)
- » GMC Yukon XL
- » Grand Wagoneer
- » Jeep Cherokee
- » Jeep Grand Cherokee
- » Jeep Grand Cherokee (Hybrid)
- » Jeep Wrangler
- » Jeep Wrangler (Hybrid)
- » Lincoln Aviator
- » Lincoln Aviator (Hybrid)
- » Lincoln Corsair
- » Lincoln Navigator
- » Wagoneer

UAW TRUCKS

- » Ford F-150 (Electric)
- » Chevrolet Colorado
- » Chevrolet Medium-Duty Silverado Navistar (Regular and Crew Cab)
- » Chevrolet Silverado Heavy Duty
- » Chevrolet Silverado Light Duty (Crew** and Double Cab only)
- » Ford F 150 (Hybrid)
- » Ford F-650/750
- » Ford Ranger
- » Ford Super Duty 250/350/450/550
- » GMC Canyon
- » GMC Hummer Pick-up (Electric)
- » GMC Sierra Heavy Duty
- » GMC Sierra Light Duty (Crew** and Double Cab only)
- » Jeep Gladiator

- » Ram 1500
- » Ram 1500 Classic

UAW VANS

- » Chevrolet Express
- » Chevrolet Express (Cut-Away)
- » Ford E Series (Cut Away)
- » Ford Transit
- » Ford Transit (Electric)
- » GMC Savana
- » GMC Savana (Cut-Away)

UNIFOR CARS

- » Chrysler 300
- » Dodge Challenger
- » Dodge Charger

UNIFOR TRUCKS

- » Chevrolet Silverado Heavy Duty
- » Chevrolet Silverado Light Duty (Crew** and Double Cab only)

UNIFOR SUVs/GUVs

- » Ford Edge
- » Lincoln Nautilus

UNIFOR VANS

- » Chrysler Pacifica
- » Chrysler Pacifica (Hybrid)
- » Chrysler Voyager
- » GM ZEVO Electric Van for Brightdrop



These vehicles are made in the United States or Canada by members of the UAW and Canada's Unifor union, formerly the Canadian Auto Workers (CAW). Because of the integration of vehicle production in both countries, all of the vehicles listed as made in Canada include significant UAW made content and support the jobs of UAW members.

However, vehicles marked with a single asterisk (*) are also produced in Mexico.

Heavy duty Chevrolet Silverados and GMC Sierras are built in Flint, Michigan, and Heavy Duty Silverados are built in Canada. Light duty Chevrolet Silverado and GMC Sierra Regular Cabs are produced in Mexico only. Vehicles marked with a double asterisk (**) are the crew cab versions of the Chevrolet Silverado light duty and GMC Sierra light duty trucks. Those are assembled by UAW members in Fort Wayne, Indiana, and also in Mexico.

Canada produces the light Duty Silverado Crew Cab but not the GMC version. When purchasing a vehicle marked with a single or double asterisk, it's important to check the Vehicle Identification Number (VIN). A VIN beginning with "1" or "4" or "5" identifies a U.S. made vehicle; a "2" identifies a Canadian made vehicle; a "3" identifies a vehicle made in Mexico. Not all vehicles made in the United States or Canada are built by union-represented workers. Vehicles not listed here, even if produced in the United States or Canada, are not union made. ■

AFL-CIO Sports Council Continues to Grow

The 29th AFL-CIO Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia, PA, introduced the formation of the AFL-CIO Sports Council. In announcing the Council, the Federation said it was formed to “help professional athletes join together to form unions and strengthen their lives, livelihoods, and working conditions.”

The original founding members included the NFL Players Association (NFLPA), the United Football Players Association-USW, the NWSL Players Association (NWSLPA), the USWNT Players Association (USWNTPA) and USL Players Association-CWA (USLPA-CWA). The Major League Baseball Players Association (MLBPA) joined the AFL-CIO and the Sports

Council in September of 2022. The Women’s National Basketball Players Association joined the AFL-CIO in early February and the Major League Soccer Players Association announced it was joining the AFL-CIO in late February.

The MLSPA is the 60th affiliate of the AFL-CIO. ■

Biden Nominates Su for Labor Secretary



“There’s no one more dedicated and qualified to defend the fundamental rights of working people than Julie Su. It’s her life’s work. The AFL-CIO is thrilled with her historic nomination to become our next secretary of labor.”

— Liz Shuler, AFL-CIO President

On March 1, President Biden introduced his nominee to lead the U.S. Department of Labor, Julie Su. If confirmed, Su will become the first Asian American cabinet secretary in his administration.

“Julie brings decades of leadership experience in worker’s rights and a track record of implementing progressive policies to protect women, immigrants and workers of color,” said Sandra Engle, Secretary of the Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance’s (APALA) National Executive Board.

“APALA urges the Senate to take up Julie Su’s nomination quickly so that the Department of Labor can continue building a stronger and more inclusive economy for workers.”

Su, who is currently serving as the Deputy Secretary of Labor, is a civil rights attorney and former head of the California Labor Department.

If confirmed, Su will succeed Labor Secretary Marty Walsh who is departing to become the executive director for the

Nation Hockey League Players Association.

In a statement issued after Biden’s announcement, AFL-CIO President Liz Shuler said “there’s no one more dedicated and qualified to defend the fundamental rights of working people than Julie Su. It’s her life’s work. The AFL-CIO is thrilled with her historic nomination to become our next secretary of labor.”

A wide range of elected officials, labor leaders, and community advocates have championed the President’s nomination of Su.

United Food and Commercial Workers said, “UFCW has had the pleasure to work with Julie in her role as CA Labor Secretary where we saw first-hand her commitment to workers’ rights. We look forward to working with her in the coming years.”

Robert Martinez, Jr., international president of the Machinists Union noted “We know that as DOL Secretary, Julie Su will continue to champion unions as the answer to historically high inequality and aggressively take on employers that

trample on the rights of workers.”

“Deputy Secretary Su has an excellent record of being a fierce champion for working people,” Iron Workers General President Eric Dean said. “Her previous work at CA LWDA made important progress in protecting ironworkers. Su has been an active and skilled hand in implementing President Biden’s priorities for over two years and has contributed to the agency’s historic labor partnerships.”

Introducing Su, President Biden said “Julie is the American Dream. She’s committed to making sure that dream is in reach for every American.”

Accepting the nomination, Su said she believes in the “transformative power of America.” She noted that a union job gave her parents a path to the middle class, one that eventually led her to college at Stanford and law school at Harvard University.

“To all workers who are toiling in the shadows, know that we see you, we stand with you, and we will fight for you,” Su said. ■



Legislation for Minimum Salary of \$60,000 for Public School Teachers Introduced in Senate and House

“We should be paying public school teachers a minimum of at least \$60,000 a year,” Senator Bernie Sanders (I-VT) said at a February town hall at the Capitol with national teachers’ union leaders. “I am proud to tell you I will soon be introducing legislation to do just that.”

“If we can provide over a trillion dollars in tax breaks to the top 1 percent and large corporations, please don’t tell me that we cannot afford to make sure that every teacher in America is paid at least \$60,000 a year.”

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Participating in the ‘Respecting our Teachers Town Hall,’ American Federation of Teachers President Randy Weingarten and National Education Association President Rebecca Pringle, Senator Ed Markey (D-MA) and Sanders were joined by a panel of schoolteachers to discuss the challenges they and school systems across the country face, including low pay in retaining staff.

According to Education Week, the average starting salary for teachers is less than \$42,000 a year.

Sanders, who chairs the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee, said his Pay Teachers Act would triple funding for low-income schools, “ensure all starting teachers across the country are paid at least \$60,000 a year,” and boost the salaries of those “who have made teaching their profession—working on the job for 10, 20, 30 years.”

A similar bill introduced before the U.S. House of Representatives would incentivize states to raise teacher pay, setting a minimum salary of \$60,000. The American Teacher Act, introduced by Rep. Federica Wilson, D-Fla., and referred to the House Committee on Education and the Workforce in early February, would incentivize states and school districts to increase the minimum K-12 teacher salary to \$60,000 and provide yearly adjustments for inflation through new federal grants.

“Teachers are nation builders,” said AFT President Weingarten. “We are the pillars of democracy. We prepare our kids to be caretakers of tomorrow’s environment. We prepare the sparks that ignite innovation; we prepare the tenders of global relationships; we prepare the guardians of our prosperity; we prepare the creators of our arts. It’s important to place a value on what teachers do. ... Frankly pay is a way to do that.”

“What we have across this country is a shortage of professional pay for our educators,” said NEA President Pringle. “We have a shortage of basic dignity, a shortage of respect for the people who have dedicated their lives to educating America’s students—which means we have a shortage of people who are willing to take on the immense responsibility without the requisite recognition of the critical role they play in our society and in this democracy.”

BY THE NUMBERS

According to the US Census, in 2019, the average earnings of elementary and middle school teachers with a bachelor’s degree or more who work full-time, year-round was \$53,800. For high school teachers, it was \$57,840.

These earnings fall short of what their similarly educated peers earn:

- Biological scientists (\$69,880)
- Urban and regional planners (\$79,790).
- Physical therapists (\$81,580).
- Statisticians (\$96,320).

Just over one-half of elementary and middle school teachers and 58% of high school teachers also have a graduate degree. They still earn less (\$61,130 and \$64,340, respectively) than that of other equally educated workers.

For example, at least one-half of the workers in these occupations have a graduate degree, but they earn more than teachers:

- Judicial law clerks (\$77,960).
- Biological scientists (\$76,260).
- Geoscientists and hydrologists (\$111,100).

In addition, teachers earn less than workers in some occupations with a much lower percentage of advanced degrees:

- Human resources workers (19.4% with a graduate degree; \$77,430).
- Accountants and auditors (27.4% with a graduate degree; \$84,050).
- Registered nurses (12.6% with a graduate degree; \$82,210).

During his Town Hall, Senator Sanders reiterated “raising teacher salaries to at least \$60,000 a year and ensuring competitive pay for all teachers is the most important steps we can take to address the teacher shortage in America and to improve the quality of our public school systems.” ■

Richard L. Trumka PRO Act Introduced in House and Senate

A bipartisan group of House and Senate members introduced the Richard L. Trumka Protecting the Right to Organize (PRO) Act of 2023 (H.R. 20). A comprehensive proposal to protect workers' right to come together and bargain for higher wages, better benefits, and safer workplaces.

The House bill was introduced by the Committee on Education and the Workforce Ranking Member Bobby Scott (D-VA-03) and Representative Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA-01). The Senate companion was introduced by the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Chair Bernie Sanders (I-VT).

The PRO Act, now named in honor of the late AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka, would give unions and employers the ability to override state-level right-to-work laws, enhance strike protections, and ban employers from holding captive audience meetings.

As well, the PRO Act would increase remedies for violations of workers' rights, enhance workers' right to support

secondary boycotts, ensure unions can collect fair share fees, modernize union elections, and facilitate initial collective bargaining agreements. The legislation would also make it more difficult for employers to classify their employees as supervisors and independent contractors, designations that would keep them from being covered under the National Labor Relations Act.

"With the re-introduction of the PRO Act, members of Congress face a choice," said Everett Kelley, American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE) National President. "Legislators can stand with American workers whose legal rights are being trampled by private employers to the detriment of the nation. Or they can stand with the ultra-wealthy elites whose status depends on the continued oppression and exploitation of working-class Americans."

In introducing the legislation, Ranking Member Scott said, "unions are essential for building a strong middle class and improving the lives of workers and families. Regrettably, for too long,

workers have suffered from anti-union attacks and toothless labor laws that undermined their right to form a union."

Congressman Fitzpatrick called it "landmark legislation" that will "promote tremendous progress for workers' empowerment and the economy."

The PRO Act protects the basic right to join a union by:

1. Empowering workers to exercise their right to organize;
2. Holding employers accountable for violating workers' rights; and
3. Securing free, fair, and safe union elections.

"The PRO Act is how we level the playing field. It is how we stop the intimidation, the lies," said AFL-CIO President Liz Shuler. "This is how we let workers, not wealthy corporations, decide for themselves if they want the power of a union."

To show your support and tell Congress to Pass the PRO Act, sign the AFL-CIO's petition at <https://proact.aflcio.org/>. ■

Biden Announces Strict Buy American Standards, Calls for Passage of PRO Act in State of the Union

"Tonight, I'm announcing new standards to require all construction materials using federal money for federal infrastructure projects to be made in America," President Biden said during his State of the Union Address on February 7. "Lumber, glass, drywall, fiberoptic cable, must all be made in the U.S."

According to the Government Executive online publication, the proposal builds on the initial implementation guidance, issued in April 2022, for the Build America, Buy American stipulation included in the bipartisan infrastructure law and other efforts from the Biden administration to boost U.S. manufacturing.

In March 2022, the Biden administration issued rules to raise domestic content thresholds.

Products previously qualified as Made in America for federal purchases if 55

percent of their component parts are US made. The rule increased to 60 percent in October, 65 percent in 2024, and 75 percent in 2029.

In his State of the Union address, President Biden spoke a lot about rebuilding the middle class. He talked about respect on the job and creating American jobs.

Highlighting new projects aimed at shoring up the domestic supply chain and rebuilding our infrastructure, Biden introduced Saria Gwin-Maye, an ironworker and member of Cincinnati Local 44. "For 30 years, she's been a proud member of Ironworkers Local 44, known as the 'cowboys of the sky' who built the Cincinnati skyline," Biden said.

Gwin-Maye and other ironworkers in the region will have the opportunity to participate in infrastructure projects in Cincinnati like the Brent Spence Bridge

corridor after projects were given funding from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.

President Biden also called for passage of the PRO Act during his State of the Union. "I'm so sick and tired of companies breaking the law by preventing workers from organizing," he said. "Pass the PRO Act because workers have a right to form a union. And let's guarantee all workers a living wage."

His remarks continued to build on his pro-union, pro-worker stance, asking Congress to pass legislation for paid family leave and universal pre-k. Insisting he is the President for all Americans, not just those in blue states, President Biden said, "let's make sure working parents can afford to raise a family with sick days, paid family medical leave, affordable child care. That's going to enable millions more people to go and stay at work." ■

“The greatest threat to the American railroad industry and the communities with which it intersects is Precision Scheduled Railroading (PSR). The changes PSR has brought since its inception in 2017 have only served to make executives and Wall Street shareholders richer, while the risk to employees and the public has become greater.”

**—Jeremy Ferguson,
SMART-TD President**



SMART-TD President Ferguson: *‘Train Derailment Was Predictable and Preventable’*

SMART Transportation Division President Jeremy Ferguson issued a statement regarding the Norfolk Southern Corp., train derailment that occurred in East Palestine, Ohio, in February. Ferguson, whose union represents workers in the railroad industry said, “the greatest threat to the American railroad industry and the communities with which it intersects is Precision Scheduled Railroading (PSR). The changes PSR has brought since its inception in 2017 have only served to make executives and Wall Street shareholders richer, while the risk to employees and the public has become greater.”

PSR is a cost-cutting strategy that seeks to streamline rail operations by lengthening trains while cutting the workforce. The train that derailed on February 3 was 9,300 feet long and weighed 18,000 tons and had about 150 cars.

According to union officials, years

of cost-cutting and staff reductions within the freight rail industry have led to an increase in the rate of derailments and fostered an increasingly unsafe environment for workers and the public.

In a letter sent to Federal Railroad Administration Administrator Amit Bose, Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO, President Greg Regan urged the FRA to require the seven major Class I railroads to adopt the Confidential Close Call Reporting System (C3RS) to allow employees to report “close call” safety incidents without fear of repercussion. “We firmly believe that mandatory participation in this program will create a safer freight rail system and identify potential safety issues before they lead to dangerous catastrophes.”

On February 27, Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg called on all Class I railroads to sign up within the week for the C3RS system. In a letter to all major U.S. freight rail companies

Buttigieg said he “expects the industry to work in tandem with Congress and the U.S. Department of Transportation to improve safety, strengthen accountability and prevent future disasters.”

Although Buttigieg is currently “asking” the railroads to join, he said his department is taking steps to make the program mandatory.

A Senate committee has asked the CEO of Norfolk Southern to testify under oath about the train derailment in Ohio. The hearing will be hosted by the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, led by Chairman Tom Carper.

“The accident has been deemed 100 percent preventable,” said Senate Majority leader Chuck Schumer. “Norfolk Southern owes the American people some answers to some very important questions.” ■

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PERIODICALS
POSTAGE PAID
WASHINGTON, D.C.

TIME VALUE

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EndNotes



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By Rich Kline, *President, UL&STD*

E. Palestine Ohio Rail Wreck Cries Out for Safety Improvements



The recent rail disaster in E. Palestine, Ohio, occurred despite a history of rail unions calling for improved safety equipment and regulations to protect crews and the public. Unfortunately, the warnings were not heeded. In E. Palestine, rail crew and communities have suffered potentially grievous harm and long term adverse effects.

The people on the ground, those who operate systems and equipment, are often more knowledgeable than those who have only a theoretical expertise. Decision-makers bend to political and corporate pressure all too frequently when cost-cutting is the imperative.

Astonishing as it seems, The Guardian reports it has audio evidence of a Union Pacific rail yard manager being told by a supervisor not to report safety issues. If true, alarms should be

ringing throughout the government and rail industry.

Political leaders who have called upon Norfolk Southern, the company that operated the train which derailed in Ohio, to answer questions are not going far enough. A community has been devastated. Environmental damage extends to a great distance from the wreck. Compensation, reclamation and healthcare should be available to all those impacted by the disaster.

Positive steps to protect employees, the public and the community must be taken. The safety concerns expressed by railway workers must be taken seriously as they have the experience to identify problems.

Immediately Congress should pass the bipartisan Railway Safety Act of 2023. It is a measure designed to create a safe and efficient rail network in the United States and to curb the excesses of a profit driven rail industry.