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Label Letter

Union Label & Service Trades Department, AFL-CIO

Workers at D.C. Concert Venues Turn Up the Volume on Unionizing



The people who make Washington, D.C.'s live music scene come alive — from bartenders and box office staff to stagehands and security — are joining together to demand a voice on the job.

Workers at the 9:30 Club, The Anthem, The Atlantis, and the Lincoln Theatre launched a unionization effort in October, seeking fair pay, predictable schedules, and respect for the vital work they do behind the scenes.

The push comes after the sudden loss of a long-standing “shift drink” — a small post-show perk that many say symbolized appreciation for their hard work. Its quiet removal this year struck a nerve. “It wasn’t about the drink itself,” one worker explained. “It was about feeling valued.”

More than 300 employees across the four I.M.P.-operated venues have signed cards in support of the effort. Workers are organizing with UNITE HERE Local 25 and

IATSE Locals 22 and 868, representing both front-of-house and production crews. They’ve asked I.M.P. for voluntary recognition to move quickly toward collective bargaining.

The workers’ goals are simple: fair wages that reflect D.C.’s cost of living, consistent scheduling, a safe work environment, and a say in workplace decisions. As one bartender put it, “We make the show go on — it’s time our voices are heard, too.”

The union effort marks a major step for live-event workers in the District, showing that solidarity isn’t just for the stage — it’s alive in the crowd behind it.



WNBA Players Say: “Pay Us What You Owe Us”

The Women’s National Basketball Players Association (WNBPA) has launched a powerful campaign demanding fair pay and better working conditions as it renegotiates its contract with the league. Under the banner “*Pay Us What You Owe Us*,” players are calling for higher salaries, a fair share of growing league revenues, access to charter flights, and stronger benefits for players and families.

The WNBA is expanding—adding teams, signing new media deals, and drawing record crowds. Players argue that as the business grows, so should their paychecks. Many still earn a fraction of what male athletes make, even as they deliver the talent and visibility fueling the league’s success.

This fight isn’t just about basketball—it’s about equity and respect for women workers everywhere. The WNBPA’s campaign echoes the broader labor movement’s call for fair wages, safe workplaces, and a real voice on the job.

Their message is simple and universal: when workers create value, they deserve their share.

Recent Organizing Wins Show Power in Every Sector

Across the country, workers are proving that organizing works—and that solidarity can transform industries once considered out of reach. From bank tellers and nuclear facility contractors to federal employees and tech staff, recent victories show a labor movement gaining momentum and confidence.



Photo courtesy of the Wells Fargo Workers United Facebook page

BANKING ON A UNION FUTURE

For decades, the banking industry was considered nearly impossible to organize. But that's changing fast. Frontline workers at Wells Fargo branches across several states have voted to join the Communications Workers of America (CWA) — marking a historic step toward unionizing one of the nation's largest financial institutions.

Citing short-staffing, unrealistic sales goals, and unsafe dual job roles, workers organized branch by branch, proving that persistence and community can overcome deep corporate resistance. As one CWA organizer put it, "This isn't just about Wells Fargo — it's about changing what's possible for white-collar workers everywhere."

FEDERAL WORKERS STAND STRONG DURING THE SHUTDOWN

During the ongoing federal government shutdown, the American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE) scored an important win for public-sector workers. A

federal judge issued an injunction blocking the administration from firing "excepted" federal workers forced to report during the shutdown — a ruling that protects thousands of essential employees from retaliation.

The decision underscored how unions aren't just organizing new workers — they're defending existing members through the courts and in the public arena. At a time when political brinkmanship has left federal workers in limbo, AFGE's action provided both relief and a reminder: the law is on the side of those who stand together.

QUIET VICTORIES ACROSS THE MAP

While big names like Amazon and Starbucks grab headlines, a quieter revolution is underway. The NLRB reports that unions are now winning nearly 80% of all elections, representing close to 100,000 newly organized workers in a single year — the highest number since 2009.

RECENT VICTORIES INCLUDE:

- More than 1,100 planners, designers, and field techs at Southern California Edison have won their union election, voting to join ESC Local 20 IFPTE!
- Dozens of smaller campaigns are documented in the AFL-CIO's "Worker Wins" series, highlighting retail, service, and healthcare workers who are uniting for fair pay and respect on the job.

Each small win adds up. Together, they're building the foundation for a stronger, more inclusive labor movement.



More than 1,100 planners, designers, and field techs at Southern California Edison have won their union election, voting to join ESC Local 20 IFPTE! Photo Credit: IFPTE Local 20

WHY WORKERS ARE ORGANIZING NOW

What's driving this surge? A mix of economic pressure and renewed confidence. Workers are fed up with short staffing, unpredictable schedules, and stagnant wages — especially in industries that thrived during the pandemic while workers bore the risk.

At the same time, public support for unions remains sky-high — nearly 70% of Americans say they approve of organized labor, and support among young workers is even stronger. Organizing campaigns are also more strategic, using digital tools, peer-to-peer networks, and member-driven messaging to build solidarity.

WHAT IT MEANS FOR THE FUTURE

These victories are reshaping the map of organized labor. The success of banking and tech workers shows that union power isn't limited to factories or shipyards — it's expanding into new frontiers of the modern economy.

Still, the fight is far from over. Employer opposition remains fierce, anti-union legislation is reemerging, and many newly organized groups are still working to win their first contracts. But momentum is building — and workers are refusing to back down.

As the saying goes: When we fight, we win.



Kaiser Workers Resume Negotiations in California After Walkout



UNAC/UHCP members created a sea of blue at Kaiser National bargaining. Photo credit: UNACUHCP.org

Kaiser Permanente and the coalition representing more than 75,000 California healthcare workers are back at the bargaining table, restarting negotiations after a five-day walkout that drew national attention to staffing and wage concerns in the state's healthcare system.

The union coalition, comprising nurses, medical technicians, support staff, and other frontline workers, has emphasized the need for competitive wages, increased staffing levels, and enhanced retention efforts. Union leaders say current shortages have strained hospital operations, affecting both workers and patient care.

"We stood strong for five days and made sure the world heard us," United Nurses Associations of California/Union of Health Care Professionals (UNAC/UHCP) President Charmaine Morales said in a post-strike statement. "This strike wasn't just about numbers on a contract—it was about the right to provide safe care to every patient who walks through those doors."

UNAC/UHCP is the largest of the unions in the Alliance of Health Care Unions which represents members at Kaiser.

Kaiser officials have acknowledged workforce challenges and say the organization is committed to reaching an agreement that supports employees while ensuring high-quality care for patients across its facilities. The return to negotiations follows what labor leaders described as the largest healthcare worker strike in U.S. history.

While discussions have resumed, no final agreement has been reached. Both sides have signaled a shared interest in securing a contract that bolsters staffing, stabilizes the workforce, and maintains continuity of care. Operations at Kaiser hospitals and clinics remain ongoing as talks continue.

UNIONS IN THE ALLIANCE OF HEALTH CARE UNIONS MEMBER LOCALS ARE:

- SEIU-United Healthcare Workers West (SEIU-UHW) — represents

tens of thousands of frontline health-care workers at Kaiser sites in California.

- International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers Local 20 (IFPTE Local 20) — representing technical and scientific professionals (lab scientists, therapists, etc) in Northern California.
- Office and Professional Employees International Union Local 30 (OPEIU Local 30) — administrative, scheduling, patient services support workers in the coalition.
- Service Employees International Union Local 121RN (SEIU Local 121RN) — a registered-nurse local in the Inland Empire area of Southern California affiliated with the coalition.
- United Food and Commercial Workers Local 135 (UFCW Local 135) — one of several UFCW locals included in broader coalitions with Kaiser workers.

Musicians Back in the Pit: Strike Averted in New York

New York's live music scene has breathed a collective sigh of relief at the end of October after the American Federation of Musicians Local 802 (AFM Local 802) reached a tentative agreement with the Broadway League to avert a strike that threatened to shutter nearly two dozen Broadway productions. The deal comes after the union's previous contract expired and several weeks of tense negotiations, with musicians standing firm on demands for fair wages, stable health care and job protections.

"This three-year agreement provides meaningful wage and health benefit increases that will preserve crucial access to health-care for our musicians while maintaining the strong contract protections that empower musicians to build a steady career on Broadway," said Union President Bob Suttman.

Earlier, when the strike authorization vote was announced, Suttman stated: "On the heels of the most successful season in history, the Broadway League wants the working musicians and artists who fueled that very success to accept wage cuts, threats to healthcare benefits, and potential job losses...The musicians are ready to leverage every ounce of their collective power."

The key wins in the deal include appreciable wage increases, improved health-fund contributions, and protections guarding job security for instrumentalists who bring Broadway's shows alive night after night.

AFL-CIO Sets the Standard for Worker Protections in the Age of AI

As artificial intelligence (AI) reshapes industries across the country, the AFL-CIO is making sure workers—not corporations—set the terms of this transformation. *In its new report, Artificial Intelligence: Principles to Protect Workers*, the labor federation lays out a clear roadmap to ensure technology serves people, not profits. One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBA) which included a proposed 10-year moratorium on state-level artificial intelligence (AI) regulation. This specific AI provision was removed from the bill by a 99-1 vote in the U.S. Senate on July 1, 2025.

The provision, sometimes referred to in shorthand as "OBBA AI," would have:

- Prevented states and local governments from enforcing most AI-specific laws for at least five years.
- Tied a state's compliance with the ban to its receipt of federal broadband funding.

The removal of the AI provision means that states and local governments retain their authority to enact and enforce their own AI regulations.

PUTTING WORKERS AT THE CENTER OF CHANGE

AI is already being used to hire, monitor, evaluate, and even fire workers. Too often, these systems are introduced without worker input or oversight. The AFL-CIO's report warns that without strong guardrails, AI could deepen inequality, weaken collective bargaining, and strip workers of dignity and control on the job.

Nearly 80% of workers whose jobs are most exposed to AI earn less than \$38,000 a year—disproportionately women and people of color. But with the right policies and worker voice, AI can also improve safety, efficiency, and quality of life on the job. The key is making sure workers have a seat at the table.

THE AFL-CIO'S CORE PRINCIPLES

The Federation's new framework sets out six clear principles for the fair and equitable use of AI in the workplace:

- 1. Worker Voice and Governance:** Workers and unions must be involved in decisions about how AI is designed, deployed, and managed.
- 2. Transparency and Accountability:** Workers have the right to know when

AI is being used to make employment decisions—and how those decisions are made.

- 3. Equity and Non-Discrimination:** AI must not reinforce existing biases or discrimination in hiring, pay, or promotions.
- 4. Job Quality and Training:** Technology should enhance, not replace, human work. Workers must have access to training, upskilling, and fair transitions.
- 5. Collective Bargaining Rights:** Unions must have the power to negotiate over the use of AI in the workplace.
- 6. Public Policy and Oversight:** Lawmakers must set clear standards for AI use that prioritize worker rights and protect state authority to regulate.

A CALL TO ACTION

For unions, these principles are more than policy—they're a bargaining tool. They offer a framework to negotiate fair use of technology, demand transparency, and protect good jobs as industries evolve.

For employers, the message is simple: adopting AI without worker input is a recipe for backlash. True innovation happens when technology strengthens, rather than undermines, the workforce.

For lawmakers, it's a reminder that technology policy **is** labor policy. The choices made today will determine whether AI drives shared prosperity or deepens inequality.

BUILDING THE FUTURE TOGETHER

The AFL-CIO's report makes one thing clear: the future of work must include workers. As President Liz Shuler put it, "AI should benefit everyone—not just tech billionaires and corporate shareholders."

Union members across every sector are urged to learn more about how AI is being introduced in their workplaces and to make sure worker voice is front and center.

Read the full report and learn how unions are leading the conversation on the future of technology at <https://aflcio.org/issues/future-work/ai>.

When it comes to AI, the labor movement isn't waiting for change—it's leading it.



MoCap workers celebrate their union victory

Game-Changers in front and Behind the Cameras

In a landmark moment for the video-game industry, 23 workers at 2K's Petaluma, California, motion-capture (MoCap) studio voted in November 2024 to join the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees (IATSE) — becoming the first motion-capture studio team in video games to unionize.

The campaign began in earnest last October, when the Petaluma MoCap unit filed for a union election under the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB). Their rationale was rooted in several longstanding concerns: stagnant wages, unclear job classifications, hiring tiers that undercut long-term career prospects, and the seismic implications of AI and automation in their craft.

When the vote was held, the outcome was decisive: 15 in favor and 6 against, roughly 71 percent of the workers voted in favor of the union. IATSE International President Matthew D. Loeb welcomed the win, noting it “is not just about one studio; it’s about the future of work in the video-game industry.”

FROM THE VOTE TO BARGAINING, FORGING THE FIRST CONTRACT

With the election behind them, the newly recognized unit entered negotiations with management at Take-Two/2K to craft its first collective bargaining agreement (CBA).

“This journey has been long and arduous,” said Stage Technician Connor Bredbeck. “We have shown resilience, determination, empathy, and solidarity in the face of callous resistance. We have proven our worth, and now it is time to see a return on our hard-earned successes.”

The Union says it expects the group to finalize its first Collective Bargaining Agreement by the end of 2025.

KEY BARGAINING PRIORITIES INCLUDE:

- job security and clearer promotion/hiring pathways

- wage floors and equity across job titles
- transparent workload and scheduling practices
- protections in the face of AI/automation risks
- enhanced voice and representation in day-to-day studio operations

“Today it is evident that the people at this studio truly want what is best not only for themselves, but what is best for their coworkers, future generations of workers, and the studio as a whole... the core driving force ... is empathy for one another,” said Matthew Peterson, Motion Capture Animator.



GAME

night

UNION-MADE

BOARD GAMES

- » Barrel of Monkeys (RWDSU/UFCW)
- » Battleship (RWDSU/UFCW)
- » Candy Land (RWDSU/UFCW)
- » Chutes and Ladders (RWDSU/UFCW)
- » Clue, (RWDSU/UFCW)
- » Connect 4 (RWDSU/UFCW)
- » The Game of Life (RWDSU/UFCW)
- » Hi Ho! Cherry-O (RWDSU/UFCW)
- » Monopoly (Classic) (RWDSU/UFCW)
- » Mouse Trap (RWDSU/UFCW)
- » Operation (RWDSU/UFCW)
- » Pictionary (RWDSU/UFCW)
- » Risk (RWDSU/UFCW)
- » Scrabble (RWDSU/UFCW)
- » Sorry! (RWDSU/UFCW)
- » Taboo (RWDSU/UFCW)

» Twister (RWDSU/UFCW)

» Yahtzee (RWDSU/UFCW)

CARD GAMES

- » Magic the Gathering (CWA)
- » Cards Against Humanity (CWA)

VIDEO GAMES

- » Call of Duty: Black Ops 6 (GWA-CWA)
- » The Elder Scrolls (series) (ZeniMax Workers United-CWA)
- » Fallout 76 (ZeniMax Workers United-CWA)
- » Indiana Jones and the Great Circle (ZeniMax Workers United-CWA)
- » Starfield: Shattered Space (expansion) (ZeniMax Workers United-CWA)
- » World of Warcraft: The War Within (ZeniMax Workers United-CWA)



» PGA Tour 2K25 (IATSE)

» WWE 2K25 (IATSE)

» NBA 2K26 (IATSE)

» Mafia: The Old Country (IATSE)

GAME RETAILERS

- » Noble Knight Games (CWA)
- » Mox Boarding House (CWA)

AFL-CIO NATIONAL BOYCOTTS

NOV-DEC 2025



RESTAURANTS

SUBMITTED BY UNITE HERE!

WASHINGTON, DC:

- » **STARR restaurants:** The Occidental, Osteria Mozza and Le Diplomate
- » **Knightsbridge Restaurant Group:** Modena, Bombay Club and Rasika

HOTELS

SUBMITTED BY UNITE HERE!

Please support the workers in these hotels by continuing to boycott the following properties:

ALASKA:

- » Hilton Anchorage
- » Marriott Anchorage Downtown
- » Homewood Suites by Hilton Anchorage
- » Hampton Inn Anchorage
- » Hilton Garden Inn

CALIFORNIA:

- » Hilton Long Beach
- » Hyatt Regency Sacramento
- » Hyatt Centric Fisherman's Wharf
- » La Meridien
- » Hilton Los Angeles Airport
- » Terranea Resort

- » Hyatt Regency Santa Clara
- » Hyatt Regency Sacramento
- » Four Seasons Beverly Hills
- » Hotel Bel Air
- » Langham Huntington

MARYLAND:

- » Merriweather Lakehouse Hotel

MASSACHUSETTS:

- » Boston Marriott Copley Place

FOOD

SUBMITTED BY

Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers International Union (BCTGM)

- » Mondelez International Snack Foods (those made in Mexico)

SUBMITTED BY UNITE HERE!

- » Catapult NW

COMMUNICATIONS

SUBMITTED BY

Communications Workers of America

- » T-Mobile

LEGAL

SUBMITTED BY

American Federation of State, County & Municipal Employees

- » Gleason, Dunn, Walsh & O'Shea
- » McDonald, Lamond, Canzoneri and Hickernell

OTHER

SUBMITTED BY Farm Labor Organizing Committee (FLOC)

- » Reynolds American, Inc., Vuse e-cigarettes

When some labor disputes with businesses cannot be resolved, the AFL-CIO supports its affiliates by endorsing their boycotts. A boycott is an act of solidarity by voluntarily abstaining from the purchase or use of a product or service.

POLICY GUIDELINE FOR ENDORSEMENT OF AFFILIATES' BOYCOTTS

The AFL-CIO Executive Council has developed policy guidelines that regulate how the federation endorses boycotts undertaken by its affiliates. To get AFL-CIO sanction, boycotts should be directed at primary employers.

THE GUIDELINES INCLUDE THESE PROVISIONS:

All requests to the national AFL-CIO for endorsement must be made by a national or international union.

Any affiliated union with a contract in force with the same primary employer will be contacted by the AFL-CIO to determine whether there is an objection to the federation's endorsement.

Affiliates will be asked to provide the AFL-CIO with background information on the dispute in a confidential information survey. Prior to endorsement of the boycott, the executive officers, or their designees, will meet with the national union's officers, or their designees, to discuss the union's strategic plan and timetable for the boycott, or other appropriate tactics, and to discuss the federation's role.

The national or international union initiating the boycott is primarily responsible for all boycott activities; the AFL-CIO will provide supplemental support.

Boycotts will be carried on the AFL-CIO national boycott list for a period of one year, and the endorsement will expire automatically at the end of that time. National and international unions may request one-year extensions of the listings for actions where an organizing or bargaining campaign is actively in place.

(These guidelines were adopted by the AFL-CIO Executive Council in April 2011.)

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EndNotes

By Rich Kline, *President, UL&STD*

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Resistance to the Trump administration is growing. Nationwide demonstrations on October 18 drew millions of American citizens to protest actions taken by the White House and its appointees.

The government shutdown has resulted from the refusal of the White House and Congressional Republicans to negotiate over the health benefits needed by 20 million Americans. So far, the Democrats in Congress have stood firm in protecting vulnerable people from losing their healthcare.

The number of successful organizing campaigns and strikes reflects this growing resistance. This issue of the *Label Letter*, as well as earlier editions this year, recount workers' achievements in unionizing and improving their wages and benefits.

These acts of resistance have prompted right-wingers' calls for restrictions on Free Speech and Assembly. They have enacted them, too. We see government agencies created to support workers and the public at large being destroyed through calculated moves, including underfunding, staff cuts, and the perversion of the agencies' legislated missions.

The Department of Labor, the National Labor Relations Board, the Department of Education, the Department of Health and Human Services, the EPA, and the Department of Justice come to mind immediately. The same twisted philosophy employed against these agencies is subverting the military, the FBI, and other protective services.

Meanwhile, the administration exults in the demonization of immigrants, the razing of the East Wing of the White House, and the construction of a gilt ballroom by and for billionaires.

The Labor Movement is determined to protect the social and economic improvements it helped to create. Now the goals of equality and fairness to all are threatened by a rogue administration devoted to toxic policies based on opposition to the rights we enjoy. Resisting this march toward authoritarianism is a duty.

John Lewis, the great civil rights leader and Congressman, wrote, "When you see something that is not right, you must say something. You must do something."

His words were never more apt.