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AFL-CIO NEWS

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The Secretary-Treasurer's Notes . . .

We've Made a Difference, Let's Hit the Gas



IFL Secretary Treasurer Peter Hird

Workers are gaining ground in every state throughout the country, including Iowa. We're not just talking about wages, contracts, and strike lines. Workers have changed the narrative of corporate America by exposing the greed that big business has built for themselves off the backs of their workers. You may read this and not see or feel these gains, but we are moving the ball down the field. Over 300,000 workers have gone on strike this year alone. Online forums like Reddit had less than 3000 subscribers in 2019; now they are over 32,000. 7-in-10 people approve of labor unions, and 75% of people support workers going on strike. Workers are empowered more than ever in our lifetime and



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it's because we fought for it.

Workers are empowered, so now what? In 2020, leading up to the election, Joe Biden said he would be "the most pro-union president". He has held that promise. If you recall in the 2020 election season, unions and worker rights were a major part of that discussion. Unions may as well have been on the ballot in places like Wisconsin, Michigan, and Pennsylvania. Workers here in Iowa pressed every person who was running for president on whether they stood with workers or not. We helped shape where we are today. On September 26th, 2023 President Biden joined UAW workers on the picket line in Michigan. It was a historic moment. Experts say it may have been the first time a sitting President appeared on a picket line. Numerous politicians have claimed to be worker friendly, only to stab unions in the back when the rubber met the road. In

1981, Ronald Reagan broke his promise to support PATCO air traffic controllers and fired 11,000 striking workers who wouldn't cross the picket line. People never forgot that. Public acts from Presidents can have a lasting impact. Reagan's action empowered employers everywhere to treat workers unfairly. Strikes dropped in the United States by 30% the next year and haven't returned since. President Biden has always had a great relationship with unions and has solidified it with appointing a union member, Marty Walsh of LiUNA, to lead the Department of Labor. Workers have had a seat at the table since President Biden's inauguration in 2021, and it was Union Made.

It is apparent Iowa doesn't have a pro-worker voice leading our state government. Since 2017, Iowa has seen cuts to all aspects of a worker's livelihood. Taking away public worker union rights, drastically lowering workers compensation, and cutting earned un-

employment benefits. This year's bill to roll back Child Labor protections really hit home with the labor movement. Lobby representatives from the restaurant, hotel, and construction industries sold the bill as giving kids opportunities. But the bill had far reaching changes that would allow 14 year-olds to work in mines, meatpacking plants, assembly lines, and many other dangerous occupations for expanded hours of work that are not allowed under the federal law. Labor leaders across Iowa took action at the Capitol with a rally. Some in their own communities held press conferences to let the public know about the bill. "Our Kids Are Not For Sale" was the warning to politicians. While the rollbacks on Child Labor were passed and signed by Governor Reynolds, the bill was improved in several ways from the original version, because you fought back.

Iowa has seen several strikes and contract wins this year from *continued on page 2*

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IFL Communications Director Lance Coles Retires

The staff, officers, and affiliates of the Iowa Federation of Labor all want to wish Lance Coles, IFL Communications Director, congratulations on his retirement this year in



Lance Coles

May. Lance served the Federation in that role since 2012.

Lance served on the IFL's News Board, Executive Board Member of the South Central Iowa Federation of Labor, President of the Iowa State Labor Press Association, Past President of the Des Moines Iowa Area Local APWU 44, Past Chairperson of the American Postal Workers

Union (APWU) President's Conference; Editor of the Iowa Postal Workers Union newspaper, board member of the APWU Postal Press Association, and on the Board of Directors for the First Class Credit Union. Lance recently retired from the U.S. Postal Service after working there for 34 years. Lance graduated from DMACC in the 1982 and

Iowa State in 1986 with a degree in Journalism and Mass Communications. He served in the United States Navy from 1972 to 1977.

Lance's contributions to the Iowa Federation of Labor have been invaluable, and we appreciate everything he's contributed to this state's labor movement.

Happy Retirement Lance!

Faith in Democracy

By Paula Martinez, President South Central Iowa Federation of Labor, AFL-CIO

On August 29, 2023, in Warren County, Iowa we showed that democracy does and can work for its citizens in a rural Iowa county. In late May, our 27-year auditor Traci VanderLinden, a Democrat, retired early from the office for personal reasons. The campaign of Kimberly Sheets as County Auditor was on a fast track beginning on June 6, 2023, after the Board of Supervisor appointed David Whipple interim Warren County Auditor. Mr. Whipple had no previous experience in government and came from a construction background. Mr. Whipple's social media history was pointed out by Simpson College Professor Kedron Bardwell which was centered around election-related conspiracy theories from the 2020 election where Mr. Whipple spread misinformation about the 2020 presidential election and Qanon theories. Mrs. Sheets has seven years' experience in the auditor's office and is knowledgeable of the operation of the office. The day after the Warren County Democrats filed the petition which consisted of over 3,400 signatures of eligible voters for a Special Election, Mr. Whipple

suspended Mrs. Sheets as deputy auditor with pay. This was fuel to the fire for the Democrats and others who felt that they, as tax paying citizens, should have the right to select its auditor for Warren Coun-

ty. Mrs. Sheets raised over \$35,000 for the special election, about three times more than Mr. Whipple. The local Democratic Party, nonparty individuals, and Union members volunteered to gather signatures, went door knocking, made phone calls, and sent text messages to thousands of voters up to and on election day. South Central Iowa Federation of Iowa contacted over 700 union members in a mail cam-



paigned to GOTV. By the end of the day on August 28th, 1,151 registered Democrats had already casted their ballots to 507 Republicans, 235 no-party voters, and 3 Libertarians. The results of the victory were Mrs. Sheets received 5,051 votes (66.5 percent) to 2,538 votes for Mr. Whipple (33.44 percent). This turnout was more than three times higher than the previous record for a school bond issue in 2022. Through the actions of ordinary citizens, people were allowed to choose their leadership. Exercising their right to vote is what democracy is and should be demonstrated in every election in the US.

We've Made a Difference, Let's Hit the Gas

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multiple unions. The year started off with an agreement between UAW Local 180 and the CNH plant in Burlington. It was a strike that lasted eight months and multiple proposals, but those eight months included incredible community support and support from local unions around the state. National contract fights came to Iowa as well. After the Teamsters ratified their historic contract with UPS in late July, Teamsters General President, Sean O'Brien said "We've changed the game..." Teamsters locals across the county and, including here in Iowa, started fighting for a new contract well before negotiations started. We saw parking lot rallies at multiple UPS locations throughout Iowa as Teamsters prepared their members and the public for the potential strike. The public was ready as

many called our Iowa Federation of Labor office to see how they could help the members. Union of Grinnell Student Dining Workers at Grinnell College, Teamsters at Amcor, Starbucks workers in Iowa City, and train workers fighting for safety on the job, had the general public on their side when they pushed back on their employers. Workers demanded more and brought their allies with them.

Working together is our path forward. That's what it is going to take because Labor must never relent. Whether in your workplace or at the ballot box, we must work to protect what we have and fight for what we've earned. The greed of big business does not end and neither will we. The labor movement is not just one group of unions, or a small group of radicals. It is the solidarity amongst all Brothers and Sisters of the working class.

YOUR VOTE IS YOUR VOICE. BE HEARD.
VOTE NOV. 7th



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The President's View . . .

What Does a Hollywood Strike Have to Do with My Workplace?



**IFL President
Charlie Wishman**

You may have noticed that there have been many strikes and tough contract negotiations over the past few years. Nationally, just in 2021 there was an increase in 27,000 people who went on strike from the previous year before in 2020. That amounted to 80,700 people in 2021 that went on strike. In 2022, the number increase by 50%, to 120,600 people on strike. This year, the battle continues with strikes happening everywhere from Hollywood to Michigan.

There are several reasons that people across all industries that have gone on strike in the past years, but most reasons both anecdotally and otherwise indicate that people were

not happy how they were treated (despite being called “essential”) throughout the pandemic, as well as the changing landscape of technology and how employers adapt to those changes in relation to how they affect workers.

The WGA (Writers Guild of America) strike, for example, embodied this perfectly. While the Writers Guild Strike in Hollywood may not seem like it has a lot to do with your workplace, it does. What began as a strike about fair pay for work done that is on streaming services; the biggest issue that became a sticking point in the strike was the use of what’s considered “artificial intelligence.”

With the explosion of streaming service programs in the past few years, likely exacerbated by the viewing habits of Americans changing during the pandemic to include more streaming, these writers weren’t making the same amount for the same work if it had appeared on network television. The writers won major concessions in their strike that helped to balance this pay disparity.

However, this was the first major labor dispute that took on artificial intelligence. In the final agreement, the union did a good job of protect-

ing their members, while recognizing that AI will have a role in their work.

Per the WGA:

- AI can’t write or rewrite literary material, and AI-generated ma-

- The Company must disclose to the writer if any materials given to the writer have been generated by AI or incorporate AI-generated material.

- The WGA reserves the right to



terial will not be considered source material under the MBA, meaning that AI-generated material can’t be used to undermine a writer’s credit or separated rights.

- A writer can choose to use AI when performing writing services, if the company consents and provided that the writer follows applicable company policies, but the company can’t require the writer to use AI software (e.g., ChatGPT) when performing writing services.

assert that exploitation of writers’ material to train AI is prohibited by MBA or other law.

Why does this matter to you? It’s because AI is going to affect your work in some way or another, and these are the first guardrails put up to balance this new technology. While you can’t stop the march of technology, you certainly can guide it to help for the betterment of society instead of leaving it unchecked and causing the downfall of it.

Ensuring a Secure Future for All Americans: The Strengthening Social Security Act

By Ken Sagar, President, Iowa Alliance for Retired Americans

For more than eight decades, Social Security has stood as a beacon of economic security for millions of Americans, providing guaranteed benefits to seniors, people with disabilities, and families of deceased workers. In today’s uncertain times, it’s more crucial than ever to strengthen this lifeline that supports one in every four households in the nation.

The Strengthening Social Security Act is a comprehensive initiative designed to enhance the program’s solvency and improve the benefits it offers. Here’s a glimpse into the key provisions that make this act a vital step towards securing the future of Social Security:

1. Increased Social Security Benefits:

The act proposes adjustments to the benefit formula, leading to an average increase of about \$65 per month or \$800 per year for beneficiaries. These additional funds can significantly improve the quality of life for those who rely on Social Security.

2. Accurate Cost-of-Living Ad-

justments (COLA):

One of the critical aspects of the act is the adoption of the Consumer Price Index for Elderly Consumers (CPI-E) to calculate COLA. This



change ensures that Social Security benefits keep pace with rising costs, particularly in areas crucial for older Americans, such as healthcare and housing.

3. Improved Support for Surviving Spouses:

Under the Strengthening Social

Security Act, surviving spouses are guaranteed 75% of the total household Social Security benefits received prior to their partner’s demise. This provision acknowledges

the importance of continued support for widows and widowers.

4. Strengthening the Social Security Trust Fund:

To sustain these enhancements and ensure the long-term solvency of Social Security, the act proposes raising and ultimately eliminating

the cap on earnings subject to Social Security contributions over a five-year period. This measure extends the life of the Social Security Trust Fund through 2041, providing financial stability for years to come.

Every American deserves a retirement free from financial stress, where they can enjoy their later years without the fear of falling into poverty. The Strengthening Social Security Act represents a bipartisan effort to fortify this essential safety net, reaffirming our nation’s commitment to its citizens’ well-being.

As responsible citizens, it is our duty to support this act and urge our representatives in Congress to stand behind this crucial legislation. By doing so, we can ensure that Social Security continues to be a bedrock of economic security for current and future generations.

Let us unite in advocating for a secure and dignified future for all Americans. Together, we can make a difference and strengthen the foundation upon which the dreams and aspirations of millions rest – the promise of a secure retirement through Social Security.

Let us unite in advocating for a secure and dignified future for all Americans. Together, we can make a difference and strengthen the foundation upon which the dreams and aspirations of millions rest – the promise of a secure retirement through Social Security.

Area Labor Federation 2023

CANDIDATE	OFFICE SEEKING	DISTRICT	ENDORING BODY
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Great River Area Labor Federation

Dirk Hamel	Dubuque School Board	At-Large	Dubuque Federation of Labor
Lisa Wittman	Dubuque School Board	At-Large	Dubuque Federation of Labor
Sarah Jacobitz-Kizzier	Dubuque School Board	At-Large	Dubuque Federation of Labor
Kate Parks	Dubuque School Board	At-Large	Dubuque Federation of Labor
Vote Yes	Dubuque School Bond Referendum	At-Large	Dubuque Federation of Labor
Erin Bannerman	Bettendorf / School Board	At Large	Quad City Federation of Labor
Joanna Doerder	Bettendorf / School Board	At Large	Quad City Federation of Labor
Rebecca Eastman	Bettendorf / School Board	At Large	Quad City Federation of Labor
Gregory "Greg" Jager	Bettendorf City Council	3rd Ward Alderperson	Quad City Federation of Labor
Connie King	Davenport / School Bd	At Large	Quad City Federation of Labor
Dan Gosa	Davenport / School Bd	At Large	Quad City Federation of Labor
Karen Kline-Jerome	Davenport / School Bd	At Large	Quad City Federation of Labor
Linda Hayes	Davenport / School Bd	At Large	Quad City Federation of Labor
W. Kent Barnds	Davenport / School Bd	At Large	Quad City Federation of Labor
Ben Jobgen	Davenport/Scott	6th Ward Alderperson	Quad City Federation of Labor
James Woods	Davenport/Scott	8th Ward Alderperson	Quad City Federation of Labor
Jazmin Newton	Davenport/Scott	At Large Alderperson	Quad City Federation of Labor
Marion Meginnis	Davenport/Scott	3rd Ward Alderperson	Quad City Federation of Labor
Rick Dunn	Davenport/Scott	1st Ward Alderperson	Quad City Federation of Labor
Scott Ryder	Davenport/Scott	7th Ward Alderperson	Quad City Federation of Labor
Tim Dunn	Davenport/Scott	2nd Ward Alderperson	Quad City Federation of Labor
Tim Kelly	Davenport/Scott	5th Ward Alderperson	Quad City Federation of Labor
Molly Bergfeld	North Scott / School Bd	At Large	Quad City Federation of Labor
Stephanie Eckhardt	North Scott / School Bd	At Large	Quad City Federation of Labor
Christina McDonough	Princeton City Council	At Large	Quad City Federation of Labor
Anthony Heddlesten	Riverdale City Council	Mayor	Quad City Federation of Labor

Western Iowa Labor Federation

Scott Davis	Fort Dodge City Council	Ward 1	North Central Iowa Chapter
Jill Shudack	Council Bluffs City Council	At-Large	Southwest Iowa Chapter
Kimberly Kolakowski	Council Bluffs City Council	At-Large	Southwest Iowa Chapter
Tom Murphy	Sioux City City Council	At-Large	Northwest Iowa Chapter
Treylla Lee	Sioux City School Board	At-Large	Northwest Iowa Chapter
Margo Cortez	Sioux City School Board	At-Large	Northwest Iowa Chapter
Earl Miller	Sioux City School Board	At-Large	Northwest Iowa Chapter
Lance Enmcke	Sioux City School Board	At-Large	Northwest Iowa Chapter
Semehar Ghebrekidan	Sioux City School Board	At-Large	Northwest Iowa Chapter



*Check out our endorsement website
for the most up to date endorsements:*

voteunioniowa.org/vote-2023

Iowa Election Endorsements

CANDIDATE	OFFICE SEEKING	DISTRICT	ENDORING BODY
Hawkeye Area Labor Council			
Aaron Hawbaker	Cedar Falls City Council	Ward 4	Black Hawk Union Council
Jeff Bergman	Evansdale City Council	Ward 1	Black Hawk Union Council
Quentin Hart	Waterloo Mayor	At-Large	Black Hawk Union Council
Dave Boesen	Waterloo City Council	Ward 2	Black Hawk Union Council
Jonathan Greider	Waterloo City Council	At-Large	Black Hawk Union Council
Jeff Orvis	Cedar Falls School Board	At-Large	Black Hawk Union Council
Nate Gruber	Cedar Falls School Board	At-Large	Black Hawk Union Council
Scott Olson	Cedar Rapids City Council	District 4	Hawkeye Labor Council
Ann Poe	Cedar Rapids City Council	At-Large	Hawkeye Labor Council
Pat Loeffler	Cedar Rapids City Council	At-Large	Hawkeye Labor Council
Amy Wichtendahl	Hiawatha City Council	At-Large	Hawkeye Labor Council
David Tominsky	Cedar Rapids School Board	District 1	Hawkeye Labor Council
Dexter Mershbrock	Cedar Rapids School Board	District 4	Hawkeye Labor Council
Jennifer Neumann	Cedar Rapids School Board	At-Large	Hawkeye Labor Council
Cindy Garlock	Cedar Rapids School Board	At-Large	Hawkeye Labor Council
Vote Yes	Cedar Rapids School Bond Referendum	At-Large	Hawkeye Labor Council
Brittania Morey	Linn-Mar School Board	At-Large	Hawkeye Labor Council
Meghann Foster	Corallville Mayor	At-Large	Iowa City Federation of Labor
Royce Peterson	Corallville City Council	At-Large	Iowa City Federation of Labor
Pauline Taylor	Iowa City City Council	District A	Iowa City Federation of Labor
Andrew Dunn	Iowa City City Council	District C	Iowa City Federation of Labor
Josh Moe	Iowa City City Council	At-Large	Iowa City Federation of Labor
Mazahir Salih	Iowa City City Council	At-Large	Iowa City Federation of Labor
Molly Abraham	Iowa City School Board	At-Large	Iowa City Federation of Labor
Charlie Eastham	Iowa City School Board	At-Large	Iowa City Federation of Labor
Mitch Lingo	Iowa City School Board	At-Large	Iowa City Federation of Labor
Lisa Williams	Iowa City School Board	At-Large	Iowa City Federation of Labor
Katherine Koehler	Mason City School Board	At-Large	North Iowa Nine
Madison Nelson	Mason City School Board	At-Large	North Iowa Nine
Jennifer Dorsey-Lee	Mason City School Board	At-Large	North Iowa Nine
Megan Markos	Mason City School Board	At-Large	North Iowa Nine
South Central Iowa Federation of Labor			
Julie Stewart	Altoona City Council	At-Large	South Central Iowa Federation of Labor
Jeff Perry	Ankeny City Council	At-Large	South Central Iowa Federation of Labor
Elijah Stines	Boone Mayor	At-Large	South Central Iowa Federation of Labor
Josh Mandelbaum	Des Moines Mayor	At-Large	South Central Iowa Federation of Labor
Rob Barron	Des Moines City Council	Ward 1	South Central Iowa Federation of Labor
Chelsea Lepley	Des Moines City Council	Ward 2	South Central Iowa Federation of Labor
Jason Benell	Des Moines City Council	Ward 4	South Central Iowa Federation of Labor
Carl Voss	Des Moines City Council	At-Large	South Central Iowa Federation of Labor
Bridget Carberry Montgomery	Urbandale City Council	At-Large	South Central Iowa Federation of Labor
Blake Rozendaal	Urbandale City Council	At-Large	South Central Iowa Federation of Labor
Shelly Northway	Ankeny School Board	At-Large	South Central Iowa Federation of Labor
Anna Campos	Des Moines School Board	District 3	South Central Iowa Federation of Labor
Jeremy Maske	I-35 School Board	At-Large	South Central Iowa Federation of Labor
Jason Arnold	Johnston School Board	At-Large	South Central Iowa Federation of Labor
Lya Williams	Johnston School Board	At-Large	South Central Iowa Federation of Labor

Newton and the Long Struggle for

By John McKerley

On August 1, 2023, over eighty members of UAW Local 997 in Newton, Iowa, went on strike against their employer, Thombert, Inc., a company which bills itself as “one of the world’s largest manufacturers of polyurethane wheels and tires.” As the UAW International later reported, the local had called the strike after ninety percent of its members had voted to reject the company’s latest contract offer. “They are fighting for fair wages and healthcare costs, a better work-life balance, and to maintain [their] current Accident and Sickness benefits.”

Now in its third month, the strike has attracted attention from across Iowa and around the world. In late

August, delegates to the Iowa Federation of Labor convention traveled from Des Moines to walk the picket line. Since then, UAW members from across the country have sent material support, and people from as far away as Sydney, Australia, have left messages of solidarity on the local’s Facebook page. But, while workers near and far have rallied to support Local 997’s members and their families, few know about the local’s long history and connection to an important but largely forgotten struggle that helped to shape modern US labor history.

The union that would become UAW Local 997 was founded in the late 1930s, during the depths of the Great Depression. At the time, the city’s biggest employer was the

Maytag Washing Machine Company. Like most other US employers, then as now, the company was vehemently anti-union, and the Maytag family used its wealth to extend its influence into almost every aspect of Newton life, from politics to public recreation.

As one Maytag worker, Edris ‘Soapy’ Owens, later told an interviewer, “Newton was a company town.” “[If you wanted to get a job at Maytag] you had to move to Newton and buy one of the Maytag homes or buy a Pontiac car off a guy here in Newton [who had a deal with Maytag] . . . You had to almost do that in order to keep your job. . . . The town was dominated by the Maytag family. . . . You look on every commission, every com-

mittee, every agency in this town [including the YMCA], and [you’d] find that Maytag [had] some of the top guys.”

During these years, however, Owens and other pro-union workers received a boost from the federal government by way of a new law aimed at fighting the Depression by building workers’ purchasing power, the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA). First enacted in 1935, the NLRA provided critical support and legitimacy to workers’ right to collective bargaining, especially among workers in the private sector. It also energized the new Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), a union federation focused on organizing workers across lines of skill within industries like auto, steel, meatpacking, and electrical appliance manufacturing.

Still, despite the law, most employers continued to bitterly resist unionization, and Maytag was no exception. Even with the help of the NLRA, Maytag workers had to wage a successful sit-down strike before the company was finally willing to recognize their union, the United Electrical, Radio, and Machine Workers of America Local 1116. But, only a few months later, they were already back out on strike, forced out by the company’s firing of union activists and attacks on their newly won seniority protections and grievance procedure.

These workplace struggles spilled out into the larger community. As Maytag workers recognized that US labor law was not enough to defend their rights at work, they also recognized that they remained vulnerable so long as Newton remained a company town. They hoped to solve this problem by remaking Newton into a “model CIO town.” As historian Rosemary Feurer has written, they turned from organizing Maytag to organizing workers at employers all across the city—“every grocery store, the Montgomery Ward and Woolworth stores, every garage, and several cafes.”

This turn to community-based unionism also meant building and nurturing relationships with a diverse range of allies. One of the most important was the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA). Like many small-town industrial employers in Iowa during this period, Maytag had recruited from the countryside, including the coal towns that still stretched across the region. Many of those coal towns had long been organized by the UMWA, and, to the frustration of employers like Maytag, miners and their children tended to bring their union values with them. In Newton, this meant not only that former UMWA members joined the union but that miners came to town and walked picket lines while Maytag workers were occupying the plant.

Maytag workers also turned to politics, especially at the local level.

University of Iowa Labor Center 2023/24 Courses

Our courses presented on The University of Iowa campus in Iowa City, in cooperation with the Iowa Federation of Labor, AFL-CIO

These courses feature instruction provided by Labor Center staff and university faculty as well as invited experts from the labor movement, the legal field, government agencies, and nonprofits.



Iowa Public Sector Union Conference

Sept. 8

Union Financial Officers’ School

Dec. 7-8

Collective Bargaining (private sector)

Jan. 29-31

Advanced Stewards’ School

Feb. 21-22

Iowa Workers’ Compensation

Mar. 25-26

72nd Labor Short Course

Apr. 29 - May 3

- Standard per-person registration fees are: 1-day schools=\$150, 2-day schools=\$300, 3-day schools=\$400, and 5-day schools=\$600.
- Lodging/meal/parking costs are not included in registration fees.
- English-Spanish interpretation is available for all programs with advance notice.



For more information or to register, call 319-335-4144, email labor-center@uiowa.edu, visit

https://bit.ly/LC_program_registration

or scan here:



For Community Unionism in Iowa

They put enough pressure on the city council to prevent passage of an anti-picketing ordinance (supported by the Chamber of Commerce), and they elected a union-endorsed candidate to the school board. As a sign of their newfound community strength, they were able to gather nearly six thousand people—in a town of only nine thousand—for Labor Day in September 1937.

Over the next several months, Maytag struck back. In May 1938, the company unilaterally cut wages by ten percent. When outraged workers responded with shopfloor actions, the company locked them out and turned to a friendly local judge to get an injunction against picketing. The union responded with an ingenious bit of deception: union members secretly joined a back-to-work procession, and, once inside the plant, they revealed themselves, took over, and began yet another sit-down strike.

Not surprisingly, the struggle soon got wrapped up in state and national politics. Although Democrats had made gains against the state's largely conservative, anti-union Republicans during the Depression, Democrats were split between pro-union and pro-business factions. While pro-union Democrats and members of an independent Farmer-Labor Party rallied to support the strikers, other Democrats claimed neutrality. The most important and influential of these figures was Iowa's Democratic governor Nelson G. Kraschel, a millionaire, farmer, and auctioneer.

On July 1, 1938, after significant lobbying from labor and its allies, Kraschel ordered the plant shut down and evacuated until a settlement could be reached. Taking this action as a victory, workers ended their sit-down strike and paraded out of the plant. The National Labor Relations Board (the federal body charged with administering the NLRA) had announced that it would investigate the matter, and the workers hoped that they would receive a fair hearing. Four days later, however, after what the union believed was significant pressure from the company, Kraschel reversed course, announcing that he would resist the labor board's investigation and pressure workers to accept the ten percent wage cut.

When workers resumed mass picketing, the governor declared martial law and set up his own arbitration board (under state rather than federal control). Local officials—back under the control of the company—began to arrest union members and to red-bait the local's UE-CIO organizer, William Sentner. Although the governor and attorney general worked to stop the arrests, the governor's arbitration board still pushed for workers to accept the wage cut. After Teamsters agreed to honor the picket lines and workers staged a mass rally on July 19, the governor again intervened

by sending in the National Guard to Newton to close the plant until a long-term solution could be found.

With the National Guard in control of the plant and the city, the labor board finally began its hearings into allegations of federal labor law violations. Over the course of several days, the hearings revealed



evidence that the company had likely used its influence with local attorneys and business leaders to interfere with workers' rights to organize and to bargain collectively. For example, as the Cedar Rapids Gazette reported, a local "real estate man" had donated an office to a supposedly independent group of anti-union workers. Likewise, a local bank vice president had loaned the group \$2000.

As the hearings became more and more embarrassing to Maytag, Governor Kraschel got involved again. He declared the hearings over on the grounds that they were inflaming local tensions and violating "states' rights." Although the labor board later resumed the hearings (in Des Moines rather than New-

ton), the Kraschel administration's willingness to intervene on the side of the company convinced Maytag workers that they needed to shift their strategy. After declaring that they had made their "stand firmly on the princip[le] that human rights take priority over property rights," they voted to return to work "under

the compulsion of military force."

Although the strike ended without the victory they had hoped for, Newton workers' dramatic stand became an important early test of the new NLRA and federal intervention in US labor relations. While the NLRA never proved sufficient to protect workers' rights to organize and bargain collectively—especially after the passage of the Taft-Hartley Act in 1947—it was stronger for the courage of workers like those in Newton, whose solidarity and demands for federal intervention revealed that claims to states' rights were more often than not a smokescreen for employers' influence over state politics.

Newton workers did not abandon their efforts to forge commu-

nity unionism in the city. After World War II, the members of UE Local 1116 reorganized as UAW Local 997, an amalgamated local with members at Maytag but also at a range of other Newton employers, including, over time, Thombert, Inc. In 1954, as a mark of their success and newfound strength, the membership initiated a program to fund the construction of a new union hall. Upon its completion, three years later, in 1957, the local boasted that it was the first such UAW hall in the nation to be built "on the basis of donations from the membership."

Much like other unions in cities and towns of all sizes across Iowa, the members of Local 997 continued to seek ways to turn their local community into a model union town, linked by ties of solidarity to other such places across the US and around the world. Even though the closing of Maytag and other industrial employers made this work increasingly difficult, the union's members passed on these traditions across the generations.

As Local 997 member Cary Rutherford recalled, she learned her union values from her father, a UAW member at another local shop, Winpower. "He taught me the value of a union," she said. "He taught me the strength of the people; that we needed to make our own way in life and that we needed to stand together. . . . You needed to be part of something bigger than yourself."

Now, as she works to take care of the union's strike pantry and run the local's elections, Rutherford, who is near retirement, looks toward the future with cautious optimism. "I worried that the idea that Newton was a union town was going to go away," she said. "But this place is still a union town. I have seen it. I worried that we would lose that. But we haven't. We haven't at all. I've seen it every day."

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November 7th

Hard Hats and Hardships: Economic Hurdles for Iowa's Construction Workers

By Sean Finn,
Common Good Iowa

In the heartland of America, where fields ("of opportunities" no longer) stretch as far as the eye can see, we often hear about how affordable the cost of living is compared to the rest of the U.S. But seldom is the question asked — affordable for who? One in seven Iowa families cannot meet a basic bare-bones budget without outside financial support. In this state of abundance, far too many are not "free to flourish."

Iowa's construction workforce, the backbone of countless projects and developments, is facing a daunting challenge. A challenge that impacts not only their lives but also the well-being of their families. The bleak truth is that 17% of construction workers in Iowa provide for families that are living below 200% of the federal poverty level

(FPL), and 5% — that's 1 in 20 — experience abject poverty. Their tireless efforts in building the bridges, schools, and roads that connect our state have yet to yield financial sta-

bility for their own households.

The median wage for construction laborers in Iowa hovers around \$18.48 per hour, a wage that might seem respectable at

first glance. However, it translates to an annual income of \$38,000, which barely allows many families to cover basic needs, let alone plan for the future. These are workers who put their blood and sweat into constructing our communities, yet their wages often fall short of providing financial security for their families.

To add to their challenges, wage theft and misclassification have become all too common in the construction industry. Thousands of construction workers in Iowa find themselves plummeting below the federal poverty line each year due to these pervasive issues. Wage theft doesn't just rob them of their hard-earned wages; it strips them of their dignity and disrupts their economic stability. It's an issue that's quietly eroding the financial foundations of these families.

A staggering 39% of families of construction workers have to rely on one or more safety net programs, at an annual cost of nearly \$28 billion nationwide. This stands in stark contrast to the 31% of all workers whose family members are part of such programs. The lack of health insurance compounds the problem further, with 31% of construction workers lacking this vital benefit, compared to just 10% in other industries.

On a national scale, a troubling 46.7% of construction trades workers are stuck in low-wage jobs. This includes a significant share of young workers, making up 24% of this struggling workforce. While youth usually expect their earnings to grow with experience, the reality for many is vastly different. This phenomenon particularly affects women, people of color, and those with limited education. It's a cycle that's hard to break, trapping workers in low-wage jobs for extended periods.

It's clear that construction workers in Iowa and across the nation face significant financial challenges. Yet, there's hope on the horizon. Federal investments are set to reshape the construction landscape in Iowa. The American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), and Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) promise historic funding levels. These investments will not only rejuvenate the state's infrastructure but also incorporate labor standards requirements and incentives, aiming to improve the lives of construction workers.

It's time for change. Iowa's construction workers, the unsung heroes of our communities, deserve better. A comprehensive overhaul of labor practices, better wages, protection from wage theft, and accessible safety net programs can make a world of difference. As we look ahead to a future of revitalized infrastructure, it's imperative that the workers who build our state receive the support and recognition they truly deserve.



DID YOU KNOW? ATTACKS ON IOWA WORKERS ARE ADDING UP

- UNION BUSTING**

2017, HF291 removed nearly all mandatory subjects of bargaining for public sector workers.

 - No guarantee an employer will bargain over anything but wages
 - Requires a union recertification election every contract
 - Removed dues deduction as an option
- WORK INJURY PROTECTIONS**

2017, HF518 made major changes to the workers' compensation law to the benefit of employers and insurance companies

This bill drastically lowered the amount received for shoulders and other injuries
- ROAD FUND SWAP & PLA BAN**

2017, HF203 & SF438 allows a workaround to bypass federal and local protections for workers.

Road fund swap allows local governments to swap federal money with the state to avoid paying prevailing wages and Made in the USA provisions
- UNEMPLOYMENT CUTS**

2017-23 saw several bills that benefit big employers by cutting earned benefits from workers who lose their job at no fault of their own

 - Cuts potential benefit weeks from 26 to 16
 - Cuts the number of weeks you can collect if your employer goes out of business
 - Broadly defines misconduct to make it easier to deny benefits.
- CHILD LABOR PROTECTION ROLLBACK**

Iowa 2023, what is considered the worst Child Labor rollback in the country was signed into law

 - 14-17yr old's can work in more dangerous jobs and work more hours and later at night beyond federal regulations
 - 16/17yr old's can work in dangerous jobs like demolition, roofing and in foundries
 - Allows 16/17yr old's to sell/serve alcohol

PUBLIC EDUCATION FUNDING
Since 2011 the Supplemental State Aid has been raised an average of only 2% per year.

VOTING RIGHTS CHANGES

2017 - HF 516 - Voter ID Requirements
2020 - HF 2643 - Bans elected county auditors from using their voter database to help fill in missing information from the absentee ballot request form.
2021 - SF 413 - ELECTIONS BILL #1
- Polls must close one hour earlier than current law for primary and general elections
- Restricts anyone from delivering another person's ballot to the election office other than a person who lives in the same household, immediate family member or the person's caretaker
- Reduces early voting period from 29 to 20 days and reduces the time to request an absentee ballot to 70 days before an election (was 120 days)
- Limits the county auditor's ability to set up satellite voting locations
- Lowers the number of hours an employer must give an employee to vote, from 5 down to 2
- Bans auditors from mailing out absentee ballot requests to voters, unless they specifically ask for one
- Removes registered voters from the active voting list if they did not vote in the last general election
2021 - SF 560 - ELECTIONS BILL #2
This additional election bill makes it against the law for an officer or agent of the registered voter's union to be a delivery agent to return that person's ballot.

2017-2023

HF 295 - BANNING LOCAL GOVERNMENT LAWS INCLUDING MINIMUM WAGE ORDINANCES
HF 295 limits the ability of local governments to set employment standards such as wage levels and leave standards. In particular, several Iowa counties voted to raise the minimum wage level in their jurisdictions, with some having taken effect or were about to take effect shortly after the passage of this legislation. This bill lowered the minimum wage for an estimated 85,000 workers living in these counties.

SF 357 FARM ELECTRICAL WORK CHANGES
This bill changed the law so that the electrical code is inapplicable for electrical work done on a farm by the owner, relatives and employees of the owner, or the operator or manager of the farm.

SF 376 ASBESTOS EXPOSURE CASES
This bill made it much more difficult for families to sue a responsible party if they or a family member has suffered due to asbestos exposure.

SF 507 - WORKERS' COMPENSATION CHANGES TO IDIOPATHIC FALLS
Made all unexplained medical falls from one surface onto the same surface non-compensable under the Worker's Compensation Statute.

HF 327 - FRANCHISE EMPLOYEE RIGHTS
Further defines the relationship between a franchisee and a franchisor so that no liability for worker's compensation, unemployment, or any other workplace liability would fall on the parent franchisee.

SF 2256 - INDEPENDENT TRUCKERS
The bill defines owner-operators as independent contractors including those that are under a lease-purchase agreement and leaves openings for potential worker misclassification.

SF 2330 - RELIEVES LIABILITY FOR BUSINESSES FROM THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC
This bill relieves COVID-19 related liability from property owners/lessors, healthcare providers and anyone that manufactures, labels, sells, distributes products in response to COVID-19. This bill is absolutely terrible for Iowans, the interests of business are put ahead of everyday working Iowans.

HF 283 - CRIMINALIZING DEFAUDING DRUG OR ALCOHOL TEST
Creates a criminal charge for a person who uses fake urine, manufactures/sells fake urine or if a person allows someone else to use their urine to defraud a drug test.

HF 558 - LOWERING THE MINIMUM AGE OF AMUSEMENT PARK RIDE OPERATORS
Lowers the minimum age for employees who operate amusement park rides from 18 years old to 16 years old and requires training on the ride.

HF 813 - EXPANDING IOWA'S CHARTER SCHOOL PROGRAM
Iowa has allowed the creation of charter schools since 2002, and this law expands charter schools to allow private organizations to create a charter school through the Department of Education. Although these schools would be a non-profit organization, this law allows for a charter school to be managed by for-profit companies.

HF 2198 - LOWERED CHILDCARE WORKING AGE & INCREASED CHILD CARE CENTER RATIOS
Lowers the minimum age for unsupervised workers in child care centers from 18 to 16 years of age. The bill also includes changing the minimum staff to child ratio to allow more children being cared for per staff person at a child care center.

HF 68 - PRIVATE SCHOOL VOUCHERS
Parents who do not send their child to public schools can put over \$7500 per year into an "educational savings account" to be used for private tuition in K-12.

SF 494 - SNAP ASSET TESTING
Creates an asset test to receive SNAP benefits and may kick thousands off of the food stamp. Note: According to Center on Budget and Policy Priorities site, the majority of working age SNAP participants work but are often in unstable jobs.

Visit VoteUnionIowa.org/vote-2023 to see endorsements, sign up to volunteer or find voting information.