

OPEIU CONNECT

Issue 565, Summer 2026



STANDING UP FOR OUR RIGHTS



Fighting for Our Democracy, On and Off the Job

By Tyler Turner
President

By the end of the OPEIU All Regions Educational Conference, held this spring in Washington, D.C., I was energized with a renewed sense of purpose and a clearer vision for building power in our union. I listened as our members shared stories of collective victories and the hope that comes from workers standing together. I heard their concerns about issues that go beyond the bargaining table and center on coalition building, community solidarity and protecting one another.

Meeting this moment, when the American labor movement is under attack from all sides, requires unprecedented organizing to grow our ranks and negotiating strong contracts that will stand the test of time. It does not end there, however. Our real power comes when we bring new voices into our movement. We must embrace the voices that challenge us, inspire us, push us to think differently and take us outside our comfort zones. That is how movements grow and how progress is made.

Our union is a democracy built on the foundation that every member counts and every voice matters. With this as our guiding principle, it is our charge to build worker power in everything we do.

Across the country, people are hungry for more than just an economy that works for them. They want a society that is fair, just and puts the needs of working people first. They want access to quality healthcare, affordable housing, education, retirement security and the fundamental right to have their voices heard through the democratic process. These are the basic expectations of people who work for a living, support their families and contribute to their communities. Yet day after day, we watch as this administration and its cronies chip away at the very foundations of that social contract. Institutions designed to protect workers, consumers and voters are being weakened. Safeguards that generations fought to establish and enshrine are being dismantled. The result is a growing realization

among working people that the rules are being rewritten to benefit the billionaire class while everyone else is left struggling to keep up.

The latest blow comes from the Supreme Court's decision in *Louisiana v. Callais*, part of the continued assault on the Voting Rights Act. The court ruled that Louisiana had engaged in unconstitutional racial gerrymandering when its new congressional map created a second majority Black district. At its core, this case is about representation and whether minority communities have a meaningful opportunity to elect leaders who represent their best interests and reflect their lived experiences. The consequences of this decision will have devastating effects not just for Black voters in Louisiana, but for fair representation for all voters of color. Decisions like this from a Supreme Court already perceived as illegitimate further erode confidence in the democratic system that many working people feel has stopped listening to them.

For our union, the issue of voter disenfranchisement is not separate from the issue of worker power. The same forces seeking to weaken the right to organize and collectively bargain often support efforts making it harder for people to take part in our democracy. When workers are denied a voice at work, they lose power in the workplace. When voters are denied a voice at the ballot box, they lose power in our democracy. In both cases, the result is the same. Decision-making becomes concentrated in the hands of a powerful few while ordinary people are left with less influence over the policies and institutions affecting them.

We know from history that progress rarely, if ever, comes from those holding power voluntarily giving it away. And if they think they

cannot win, they try to change the rules. The labor movement won the eight-hour workday, workplace safety protections, pensions and healthcare benefits because of the power of true working-class solidarity and because we put ourselves on the line to organize and demand our seat at the table. The struggle for voting rights was, and is, no different.

Every single expansion of our democracy in this country has required working people not to ask for our voices to be heard, but to make it impossible not to listen to our demands. That is why our work as union members does not end on the shop floor. It includes defending the democratic institutions that belong to every single person who works for a living in our country. It means rejecting efforts to dilute

Our union is a democracy built on the foundation that every member counts and every voice matters.

representation, suppress participation or create barriers preventing people from exercising their right to vote. It means recognizing that economic justice and democratic justice are inseparable.

As a union, we are built for these fights. Every new member we organize, every worker we empower and every voice we elevate strengthens our movement. When we bring more people into our union, we expand our power to demand a more equitable economy and a more representative democracy.

Make Your Plan to Vote!

Voters will head to the polls in just a few months to decide the path our country will take over the next two years. Once again, working people can and will be the difference in this election. It is up to us to ensure we elect leaders who will protect the interests of America's working families.

In the last issue of OPEIU Connect, we talked about the important stakes for this election. Congress took millions of dollars out of healthcare spending to fund a deadly Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) crackdown and tax cuts for millionaires and billionaires. They are openly planning to do this again, but we can put a stop to it by flipping just one chamber of Congress.

The stakes are too high to sit on the sideline! Now is the time to make an ironclad plan to vote and engage friends, family and fellow union members to do the same. Just like we increase our strength on the job through collective action, you can increase your power on Election Day by making sure those in your life have good voting plans.

In the months before Election Day, be sure to reach out to your local union for information on how to get involved in get-out-the-vote efforts in your region. Midterm elections typically see lower voter turnout than presidential cycles, so it is critical we help mobilize as many working people as possible.

Every vote counts. As crazy as it sounds, control of the Virginia House of Delegates was decided by drawing names out of a hat in 2017 after two candidates tied. The race decided the majority. Just one more vote would have changed the outcome of this election, with significant implications for the whole state.

That is why it is so important we make sure everyone's voice gets heard, especially as billionaires are actively working to silence working people. Check out the OPEIU Voting Plan Checklist to ensure you are ready to vote and have your voice heard in November.

OPEIU Voting Plan CHECKLIST

Get registered:

- ✓ **Confirm you are registered to vote at your current address!** Sadly, many states are deleting voter registrations without even notifying the voter, so it is important to be sure your registration is still on the books and updated. Check your registration on your state's website through tools offered by the U.S. Election Assistance Commission (eac.gov) or through the independent, nonpartisan League of Women Voters (vote411.org).
- ✓ **Make sure your friends and family are registered, too.** Even "super voters" can forget to update their registration after moving. Ask those you live with, your family, your co-workers and anyone else you talk to before your state's registration deadline.

Get ready:

- ✓ **Decide which voting option is best for you.** Do you want to vote early, by mail or in person on Election Day? Options and rules vary from state to state, so check your state's election rules. If you are voting by mail, be sure to request your ballot now and return it well in advance of the deadline to beat any delays.
- ✓ **Identify your polling location.** If you are voting in person, either early (in states that allow this) or on Election Day, be sure to look up your polling location and hours with your local election office.
- ✓ **Plan a time to vote,** if voting in person. Decide if you will be voting before or after work, how you will get to the polls, if you will need childcare and any other logistical considerations.
- ✓ **Research the candidates on your ballot,** especially in state and local races, which can have large impacts through the setting of local minimum wages or property taxes but get less attention and are often decided on smaller margins. The League of Women Voters has a good information guide (vote411.org) on the candidates and offices that will appear on your ballot.

Go vote!

- ✓ **Bring a friend or co-worker to the polls** with you to double your impact!

Check out pg. 10 to see what issues OPEIU members are prioritizing as they make a plan to vote this November.

INSIDE



On our cover: OPEIU members joined union members throughout the country May 1 to honor International Workers’ Day, demanding stronger union protections, improved labor standards and an end to the federal government’s assault on organized labor. Pictured on our cover are Local 8 (Region VI) members gathering in Cal Anderson Park to join the annual rally in Seattle. See pg. 12 cover story, “Members Hit the Streets for International Workers’ Day,” for more about the historic celebration.

OPEIU Members See Our Union as a Fighting Force to Cope with Affordability, Threats Posed by AI10

Plymouth Housing Workers Ratify Contract with Safe Staffing Guidelines14

Nearly 500 Nurses Overcome Bad-Faith Bargaining to Protect Staffing Policies, Win Pay Increases17

Nurses at Shands Hospital Ratify Contract with Historic Financial Package, While Doubling Union Membership19

SAVE ON **PET INSURANCE**

GET UP TO **90%** BACK ON ELIGIBLE VET BILLS

Pet health and peace of mind
Get exclusive savings on monthly premiums with Union Plus Pet Insurance, powered by Pets Best.

Learn more at **unionplus.org**

OPEIU CONNECT
Official Organ of
THE OFFICE AND PROFESSIONAL EMPLOYEES INTERNATIONAL UNION
affiliated with the AFL-CIO, CLC
opeiu.org

TYLER TURNER
President
 CALM ACPS

OPEIU CONNECT (ISSN 2771-6597) is published quarterly by the Office and Professional Employees International Union, 80 Eighth Avenue, Suite 201, New York, NY 10011. Periodical postage paid at New York and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to the Office and Professional Employees International Union, P.O. Box 1761, New York, NY 10113.

Reproduction by the labor press of any or all material herein contained is not only permitted but wholly desirable in the interest of workers’ education.

Subscription Price: \$1 a Year

Matching Management’s Energy Takes Trust, Preparation



By Shelby Thurman
Maintenance Technician, Steward
Chattanooga Coca-Cola Bottling Company
Local 179 (Region III)
Chattanooga, Tennessee

As one of 10 stewards at Chattanooga Coca-Cola Bottling Company, and the only woman among them, I have gained a unique perspective on the art and science of stewardship that has helped me advocate for my colleagues and make the plant a better place to work for everybody.

The first thing every new steward should do is begin to build trust with your co-workers. Building trust allows you to better advocate for your union siblings as your colleagues will feel more comfortable and confident when coming to you with issues. Trust can be the difference between getting to the full truth and getting half of it.

When it comes to dealing with management, trust can also make all the difference. The company tends to be assertive and aggressive during most grievance meetings, and I need to feel confident our case is solid before I match their energy.

A great piece of advice I have implemented in my day-to-day work as a steward—one that has contributed to building trust—is the 80/20 rule: let the other person do 80 percent of the talking. Not only does it allow your colleague to feel heard, but it gives you a fuller picture of the situation they are facing and helps you determine whether their problem is one that can be solved through the grievance process. If the employer’s actions run afoul of the contract, we can handle it immediately; if the employer’s behavior is permitted by the contract, we can try to solve the problem during the next round of collective bargaining negotiations.

Knowing your contract inside and out makes this distinction easier to discern. Before I started as a steward five years ago, I made sure to study our union contract in depth and joined more experienced stewards during grievance meetings to see how the language was interpreted and applied by our union and by management. This perspective, which I have since refined, will be helpful as we approach negotiations with an eye toward developing clear, unmistakable language that leaves less room for interpretation.

This understanding would not have been possible without the mentorship of more seasoned stewards who came before me. When I became a steward, I sought out any opportunity available to learn from people who had been doing it for much longer. That skill sharing has been invaluable, as I saved time, avoided mistakes and improved my own skills through the process. I encourage any new steward to find their mentor if they want to reduce the time it takes to become fully competent within the role.

Retiring Soon?

Keep connected to your union and discover ways to get involved. Scan the QR code to sign up for the OPEIU Retiree Action Team.



UK Delivers Major Reforms for Workers, Presents Roadmap for US

A recent victory by British unions could inform the fight for long overdue workers’ rights across the Atlantic.

In December, British labor unions scored a massive legislative victory when their parliament passed the Employment Rights Act, a sweeping reform to the United Kingdom’s labor laws. The bill reversed half-century-old anti-union statutes, expanded already robust labor protections and banned some exploitative labor practices.

The new law will make union organizing significantly easier by requiring employers to allow union organizers into the workplace. Now, workers in the U.K. will only need 10 percent of their co-workers to sign on to prompt a union election and will no longer have to deal with outdated regulations hindering their ability to strike. These provisions are vital. The U.K., like the United States, has also seen a marked decline in union membership, with membership today about half of what it was in 1979.

As far as other protections, unlike the U.S., employers in the U.K. were already required to provide a reasonable explanation if they wanted to fire a worker, but that was previously a right people earned only after two years at a job. With this new bill, the timeframe has been cut to six months. Employers will also be required to pay workers a fee if they cancel shifts at the last minute. These counterproposals to ‘at-will’ employment have already begun in the U.S. for some workers in some localities, such as fast-food workers in New York.

In addition, the reform expands parental leave, extends paid sick leave to all and guarantees unpaid bereavement leave. Significantly, for part-time workers, the law bans zero-hour contracts, which are contracts where the worker is not guaranteed a minimum number of hours. Neither paid leave nor a guaranteed minimum number of work hours in labor contracts are protected in the U.S.

“This is going to change working lives for the better. Every employee will now be able to enjoy the rights that only those working for good employers previously enjoyed,” said Christina McAnea, then-general secretary of UNISON, the U.K.’s largest union, in a press release. “Good employers won’t need to change the way they treat their staff. But bad employers are going to have to smarten up their act — and quickly.”

British workers did not win these gains because of the benevolence of their elected officials. They secured these gains because working people in the U.K. showed elected officials these protections were the bare minimum needed to earn their support.

By 2024, the Labour Party, one of the U.K.’s two major parties, had not held power since 2010, having consistently run campaigns centered around pro-worker pledges but failing to outline a clear plan for how to improve workers’ lives. The Conservative Party controlled the country in their wake, successfully halting any progress on labor rights and overseeing a decline of union influence in the country’s politics. Eager to reclaim power and begin advancing their agenda, the Labour Party went to labor unions, their traditional base of support, for help.

In partnership with unions, the Labour Party began drafting “Labour’s Plan to Make Work Pay,” a comprehensive policy program that became the Employment Rights Act. The report was published in April 2024 and became the backbone of a campaign that, three months later, carried the Labour Party to victory. From there, unions continued to remind elected officials of the promises they made to win elections and held them accountable at every step when they seemed poised to weaken the legislation, eventually getting the bill passed with most of its original provisions intact. The success of this campaign taught politicians it pays to have bold policies that concretely advance the rights of workers, and the best way to do so is to include labor unions in each step of the process.

As we congratulate our union siblings across the Atlantic, let us remember the only reason American workers do not enjoy these benefits is because politicians believe they can keep winning without delivering them. We must make clear that prioritizing the interests of workers is a requirement to earn our votes. Vague promises with distant timelines are not enough. The time is now for our version of what the British are calling a “New Deal for Working People.”

Help make change here at home: scan the QR code to tell your senators to support the Faster Labor Contracts Act.



Gender Wage Gap Worsens in 2025 Following Policy Changes

Equal Pay Day was established in 1996 as a holiday that would move each year to the date women have to work to, on top of the previous year, to earn as much as their male counterparts. As the wage gap gradually shrunk over the years, the date slowly moved closer to Jan. 1. But this year, the date was pushed to March 26, two weeks later than last year, as inequality between men’s and women’s salaries increased.

According to a new study from the Economic Policy Institute, women made 18.6 percent less than men on average in 2025, a backsliding from the historic low of 18 percent recorded in 2024. The data represents a concerning regression for women in the workplace and is driven, in part, by attacks on unions and the rollback of anti-discrimination regulations.

The trend follows data reported in the Fall 2025 issue of OPEIU Connect that found progress toward closing the wage gap had plateaued, and what seemed like progress was driven more by men’s wages dropping than women’s wages surging.

According to the new study, this wage gap impacts all women but is worse among high income brackets and education levels. Women with graduate degrees earn less than men who only hold bachelor’s degrees. The study’s authors suggest this is because minimum wages create a floor limiting inequality among low earners, leading them to propose raising the minimum wage as a way to promote increased equality among all wage-earners.

Black women suffer from the wage gap more than any other racial group, on average earning 68.3 percent of a white man’s salary in a similar position. That difference works out to an average of \$9.87 less per hour, or \$20,500 less per year.

Not only was the year bad for wage equality, but also for women’s employment rates. For Black women, employment rates fell by 1.4 percent, one of the sharpest one-year declines in decades. The study authors reported college-educated Black women were hit the hardest, partially driven by mass layoffs in the federal government, where Black women make up a significant percentage of the workforce.

The study proposes several policies to reverse the wage-gap trend. One is to make it easier for unions to grow by repealing so-called right-to-work laws, as the clearly delineated pay scales of most collectively bargained contracts reduce employers’ ability

to discriminate. It also advocates for guaranteeing paid family leave for all, as women’s careers are disproportionately impacted by family responsibilities.

One of the simplest solutions is requiring employers to publicize pay scales on job postings, which ensures some standardization of wages regardless of gender. This idea has already been implemented in some states and has reduced the wage gap in Colorado by 8.9 percent.

The blatant inequality in the wage gap is not only a moral stain on our country, but also illegal according to the Equal Pay Act of 1963. Concrete economic and pro-union policies are vital to rid us of wage inequality. Until full equality is achieved, we must show unrelenting solidarity by speaking openly about our salaries, demanding full pay transparency and defending co-workers receiving unfair wages.



OPEIU Vice President for Diversity and Local 174 President and Business Manager Lupe Valles, far left, leads a panel discussion at the National Latina Equal Pay Summit in 2023.

EVERY MEMBER COUNTS!

OPEIU Leaders and Activists Gather to Discuss Ways to Build Power, Best Represent All Members



More than 200 OPEIU members, local leaders and staff met in Washington, D.C., in late spring for OPEIU’s annual educational conference, themed Every Member Counts. The conference focused on how to build power in our local unions to take on the fights impacting all of our lives.

OPEIU’s increased focus on organizing new members, and its continued mission to engage and best represent every member, means building strength and solidarity across divides. With working people and the unions representing them facing so many challenges, we cannot afford to operate in silos. For this reason, a diversity of expertise and voices were brought in from across organizations and regions.

The opening panel focused on the labor movement’s role in meeting our current political moment. Panelists Tyler Turner, president of OPEIU; Sara Nelson, president of the Association of Flight Attendants-CWA; Chrissy Lynch, president of the Massachusetts AFL-CIO; Lisa Blake, president of Local 42 and an OPEIU vice president for diversity; Zach Barber, OPEIU’s political and legislative coordinator; and Shannon Lederer, director of immigration policy at the AFL-CIO, discussed the need to organize into a powerful force against corporate greed and exploitation. The panel, moderated by labor writer Hamilton Nolan, also emphasized the need to build solidarity within the labor movement and to expand our strength by standing shoulder to shoulder with workers around the world who do not have the many protections that come from being a union member.



Panelists explore how labor can meet the challenges of today’s economic and political environment. Left to right are moderator and labor writer Hamilton Nolan and panelists Sara Nelson, president of the Association of Flight Attendants-CWA; Tyler Turner, president of OPEIU; Chrissy Lynch, president of the Massachusetts AFL-CIO; Shannon Lederer, director of immigration policy at the AFL-CIO; Lisa Blake, president of Local 42 and an OPEIU vice president for diversity; and Zach Barber, OPEIU’s political and legislative coordinator.

Participants explored bargaining tactics to help secure good contracts in this tough economic environment, including strategies for incorporating language protecting the clients our members serve and the communities where they live and work. Participants then explored when and how to implement a strike threat, as well as innovative organizing techniques to employ amid today’s unprecedented attacks on working people.

Participants also heard from a panel of union leaders and activists on the ground in Minneapolis and other cities where there have been Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) crackdowns. One member reminded the room that the oppression immigrants face from ICE mirrors what the Black community has faced at the hands of police for decades, underscoring how our fates are intertwined and the increased need for solidarity in the fight for equality and justice.

A session with Lederer and Evelyn DeJesus, president of the Labor Council for Latin American Advancement (LCLAA) and executive vice president of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), developed themes from the immigration panel into practical ways to protect our communities in the workplace and through the contract.

AFL-CIO President Liz Shuler spoke about the movement’s efforts to address the threat of artificial intelligence, mirroring OPEIU’s efforts to prepare its members for the changing work world and develop contract language protecting us from replacement and surveillance on the job.

With the most important midterm election in a generation happening this November [see pg. 3 for more about the upcoming election], conference participants also mapped out plans to advance their member organizing goals and election outreach, building on community coalitions and supporting pro-worker legislation at the state and federal level.

“OPEIU is deeply committed to educating our members, activists, stewards and local leaders to build solidarity, fight strategically and win protections for everyone,” Turner said. “As part of these efforts, we have expanded our education department, brought in new voices and expertise to develop and coordinate these programs and will be offering additional trainings, workshops and educational resources.

“Our union, OPEIU, is simply you, your co-workers and the actions you take together,” Turner added. “It is up to all of us to step up and build the power to make the changes we want to see in the workplace and in the world.”



During a breakout session, participants discuss ways to build power by organizing new members in an economy favoring big business over working people and their families.



AFL-CIO President Liz Shuler discusses the labor movement’s efforts to ensure workers’ voices are included in discussions about the use of artificial intelligence.

OPEIU Members See Our Union as a Fighting Force to Cope with Affordability, Threats Posed by AI

OPEIU’s recent member-wide survey gives insight into the most important issues you are facing and how they will affect your choices this Election Day. It is also a call to action to get involved!

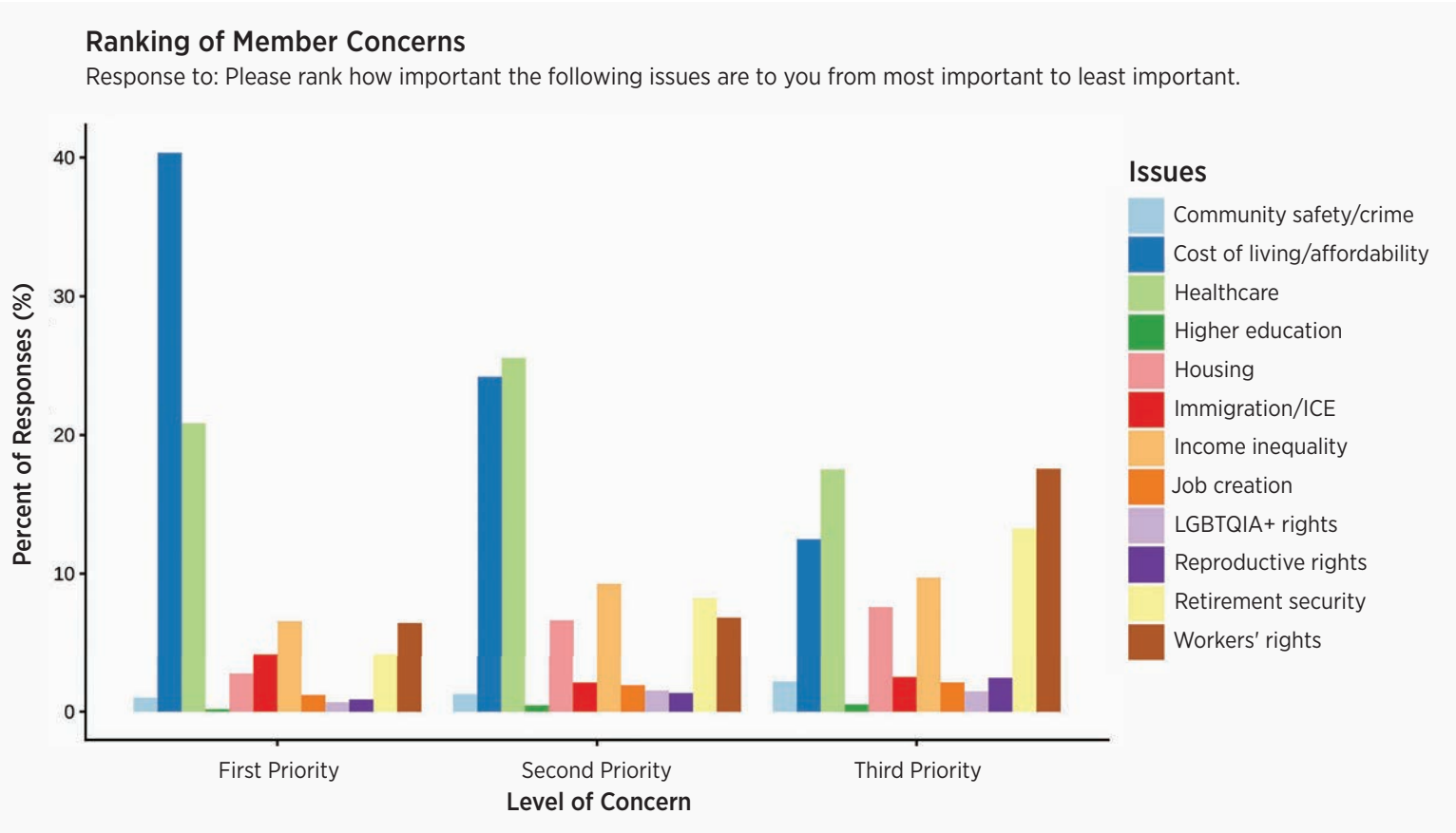
Earlier this year, OPEIU asked members for your opinions on issues related to politics, the economy and the role our union should play in combating major issues affecting your lives. More than 1,500 OPEIU members from 37 locals responded to the membership-wide survey, providing a representative array of information that will help you and your co-workers across locals around the country build power to improve your living and working conditions.

It is clear from the survey results that OPEIU members are not happy with the direction of our country. The cost of living, skyrocketing healthcare costs, income inequality, retirement security and workers’ rights were listed as the most pressing issues OPEIU members care about — and that will motivate you at the polls this November.

Our Top Concern: Affordability

Frustration with the economy topped the list of concerns. A member from Plymouth, Massachusetts, said their priority as part of the union was dealing with “increases in cost-of-living adjustments to keep up with housing prices and cost of living, including groceries and household staples.” Another member from Newhall, California, said “those at the top are making millions while those of us at the bottom struggle to make ends meet and feed and house our children.”

Your survey responses were clear: OPEIU and its members should play a bigger role in combating the political and economic ideologies and inequalities impacting your ability to thrive in the workplace. Many expressed dissatisfaction with the Trump administration’s immigration enforcement policies and want OPEIU to take a larger role in fighting for fairness and equality in the workplace and our communities. One member from Walnut Creek, California, said we should not only play a role in the fight for affordable housing, but also “resistance to rising fascism [and] advocating a vision for a better future.” Another member from Atlanta, Georgia, said “I’ve been pretty proud and supportive of the things I have seen OPEIU involved with since joining. I would love to see continued involvement in labor movement and workers’ right[s] support, anti-war, anti-ICE, anti-fascist, anti-racist cause[s], etc.”



The AI Threat

The issue of artificial intelligence is also on the minds of OPEIU members and is a troubling part of many of our daily lives. The survey revealed many of you have been asked or are required to use it in your workplace, with some managers using AI to assist with staff evaluations. Alarmingly, many of you reported facing AI surveillance in the workplace, pointing to a clear need for working people and their unions to push for strong contract language to safeguard jobs and prevent AI from making decisions that impact our employment.

One member from Alexandria, Virginia, recounted how troubling the threat of AI is and how important it is that working people be part of the conversation about how AI is used in the workplace. “AI is currently being used to support call handling. However, the AI tool known as Knowledge Buddy frequently provides incomplete or inaccurate information. In many cases, it directs representatives to documents that may not be applicable, may not exist for certain regions or may not be relevant to the situation ... When incorrect information from Knowledge Buddy is cited, the representative receives the performance impact, while the AI tool itself is not held accountable for errors.”

Who We Are: Diversity is Our Strength!

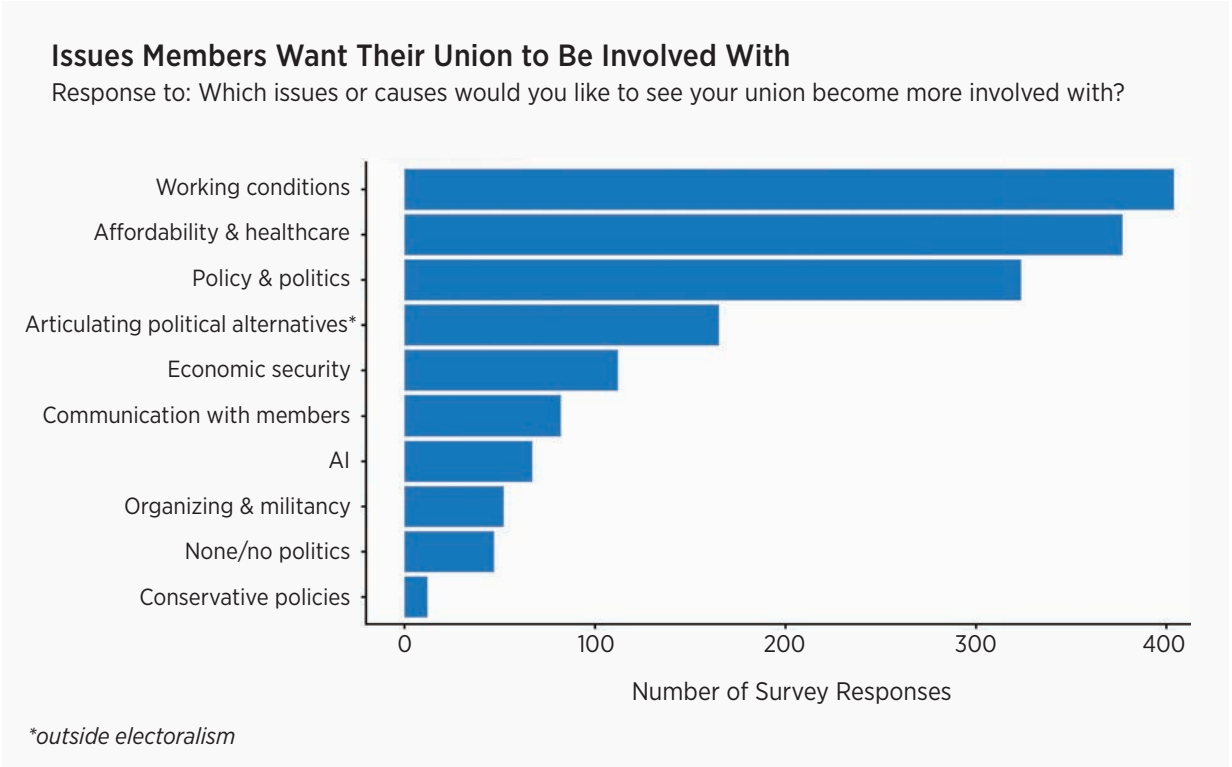
The survey results confirmed our long-held belief that our union’s strength comes from our diversity. Respondents mirrored the overall demographic makeup of our union: 69 percent of respondents identified as women and 32 percent identified as Black or Hispanic/Latino.

We found strong multigenerational engagement within our local unions, with some members having been part of OPEIU for more than 50 years. Nearly half of respondents have been OPEIU members for fewer than five years, indicating new organizing is bringing in activists who are eager to become more involved. A strong majority who answered the survey indicated you see a path to leadership within your local unions, signaling our sustained efforts to create new pipelines for union leaders is working.

Others provided more specific ways you wanted to be active, such as engaging in mobilizing around the election, becoming stewards, volunteering in your communities and helping to organize new workplaces. If you are not currently involved in your local union and feel there is an obstacle to getting involved, reach out to your local to discuss interest. Getting involved is the fastest way to strengthen your union and increase your power on and off the jobsite.

The Bottom Line

Above all, the survey results point to shared frustrations about cost of living, fairness in the workplace and fear regarding inequality in the political and economic environments. Most importantly, the results show OPEIU has a diverse membership that is energized, ready to organize, dedicated to making our workplaces and union stronger and equipped to meet these challenges. Many of you indicated you want a stronger voice in our union. We encourage you to get involved today! Only when you and your co-workers join together and take action — whether in the workplace, at the bargaining table or in the streets — can we build the power to win.



Your survey responses were clear: OPEIU and its members should play a bigger role in combating the political and economic ideologies and inequalities impacting your ability to thrive in the workplace.

Members Hit the Streets for International Workers’ Day

OPEIU members took to the streets across the country in historic numbers in honor of International Workers’ Day. Also known as May Day, the May 1 holiday commemorates the date in 1886 when hundreds of thousands of American workers declared a general strike to demand an eight-hour workday, a turning point in the labor movement that would 50 years later deliver overtime, minimum wage and child labor protections through the passage of the Fair Labor Standards Act.

That general strike became infamous after police fired into a crowd in Chicago’s Haymarket Square, killing eight and immediately making the strikers the face of the tremendous sacrifices workers had made to achieve the basics of a dignified life. Three years later, the International Socialist Congress declared May Day to be International Workers’ Day, which lives on as a yearly reminder of the threat of violence that undergirds our unequal economy and the power of united workers to overcome all challenges.

This year, OPEIU members joined their union siblings in more than a dozen cities, including Los Angeles, Minneapolis and Washington D.C., to demand stronger union protections, improved labor standards and an end to the federal government’s assault on organized labor. Workers also chanted for taxing the rich, carried anti-ICE signs and demonstrated workers are viewing international solidarity as vital to address the root causes of their struggles, and their issues go far beyond labor law.

For some cities, this was the first year their central labor council officially organized a May Day rally, an indication of the labor movement’s growing discontent with institutional politics and widespread grassroots eagerness to grow worker power. Working people from all industries and walks of life stood shoulder to shoulder in an inspiring display of the power workers hold if we remain unified.

OPEIU members will build on this day as they look forward to 2028, when union power will put our country on course to achieve meaningful progress for working people.



Local 12 (Region VII) members march in Minnesota’s 20th annual May Day Workers’ Rights Rally.



Tiffany Powell, Local 2 (Region II) third vice president and the union liaison to the Coalition of Kaiser Permanente Unions — of which OPEIU is a founding member — marches with the Coalition delegation in Los Angeles.



Local 29 (Region V) members participate in the San Francisco march.



Local 30 (Region V) Executive Director/Chief Financial Officer Marianne Giordano, Local 29 (Region V) President and Business Manager Kelly Gschwend and Hawai’i Nurses’ Association (HNA)/OPEIU Local 50 (Region VIII) President Rose Agas-Yuu, RN, march in Los Angeles. All are also vice presidents on the OPEIU Executive Board.



Local 153 (Region II) members participate in the New York City march.

Plymouth Housing Workers Ratify Contract with Safe Staffing Guidelines

About 250 Local 8 (Region VI) members at the Seattle-based supportive housing nonprofit Plymouth Housing ratified a new contract in a near unanimous vote, winning wage increases, new paid time off benefits and safer staffing levels. The new contract ensures the case managers, portfolio coordinators and maintenance workers who compose the bargaining unit will enjoy a safer workplace with fairer compensation for their invaluable work.

Plymouth Housing workers are responsible for running 17 buildings across the Seattle area, providing permanent housing bundled with services to formerly homeless people. In addition to all that is required to maintain the buildings and manage the organization’s operations, workers also provide mental health services, substance use treatment and community meals onsite.

“Especially in these times, it is very important to have the support of a union,” said Milvia Lopez de Gray, a housing case manager who served on the bargaining committee, in reference to the organization’s dependence on government funding. “[This contract] has changed a lot for me. The bargaining opened my mind to what a union is.”

This difficult setting elicited unique demands from workers focused on improving working conditions and the quality of services for the organization’s clients. Most important among them were creating standards around staff-to-tenant ratios, inspired by safe staffing standards unions have won in nurses’ contracts. The ratified contract creates an advisory worker committee to review staffing levels workers hope will lay the foundation for a rule-making body. They also created guidelines for appropriate staffing levels. The provisions, a first of their kind for supportive housing labor contracts, emerged as an acute issue after Plymouth Housing removed staff who helped maintain building safety from the buildings’ front desks.

“One of the biggest things I’m really proud of is immigration protection and establishing the housing staffing committee,” said Kayla Collins, a compliance coordinator who sat on the bargaining committee. “I’m really hoping other housing organizations struggling with staffing and being able to support residents can look to [our staffing committee] to continue to expand it.”

The contract also creates “traumatic event leave,” a common need for staff who work with residents who overdose, pass away or, occasionally, assault staff. If workers are involved in a traumatic event, they will now receive the rest of the day off and two paid days off they can take at any point during the following week.

Some of the workers also receive apartments in the buildings as part of their employment, meaning their termination would lead to their eviction. To avoid pushing workers into homelessness, those who live in the buildings will now receive a 30-day notice to find other housing even if their employment ends earlier.

Workers also achieved 3 percent across-the-board raises, a bilingual pay differential, improved health insurance and extra protections for immigrant workers.

Plymouth Housing workers are spread across the Seattle area. Some buildings did not previously have a strong union presence, so workers began by building cross-worksite solidarity. The first step was to get stewards into these sites, expanding the total number from three to seven. They then sent stewards into sites that did not have one to accompany members to meetings with supervisors as part of their Weingarten rights, gradually familiarizing workers with OPEIU and growing their collective power. To reinforce this strength, workers would speak openly and proudly about the union at work.

With this foundation, members showed up in force at an all-staff meeting management called before bargaining, with more than 100 workers wearing stickers that said, “we work, we decide.” When management falsely claimed workers had agreed to extend the contract throughout bargaining, thus barring them from striking, a member stood up and yelled “we didn’t agree to that.”

“[Our sticker campaign] showed management we were serious about things coming out of the gate and we were going to hang together,” said Bill French, a housing access navigator, steward and bargaining committee member. “Coming out strong and showing them that we weren’t going to back down when things got contentious were the two biggest concrete steps toward the victory.”



Plymouth Housing bargaining committee members are, left to right, Kayla Collins, Steffany Whitmore, Bill French, Phoebe Underwood and Barry Harkin. Not pictured are Milvia Lopez de Gray, Taylor Hoss, Robert Pope and Faduma Guyo.

Providence Regional Medical Workers Ratify Contract with Minimum 5 Percent Wage Increase

Local 8 (Region VI) members at Providence Regional Medical Center in Everett, Washington, voted to ratify a three-year collective bargaining agreement that guarantees at least a 5 percent wage increase. More than 1,200 workers at the hospital — including certified nursing assistants, food service staff, health unit coordinators, environmental service technicians, dietary assistants, senior lab technicians, engineers and patient transporters — will see across-the-board wage increases, among other contract wins.

The new agreement includes additional increases to pay for workers on weekend and night shifts, makes parking free — a longtime priority for workers there — and adds contract coverage for more than 90 patient sitters at the hospital. Notably, the contract included no worker concessions.

“Our bargaining team was able to get more money in the pockets of the people who keep this hospital running on a daily basis — our members,” said Shelly Dana, a private branch exchange (PBX) operator who served on the bargaining committee. (The

hospital’s PBX operators manage incoming, outgoing and internal calls to the hospital.) “No takeaways are a huge victory, and from part time to full time, everyone came out as a winner. We fought for every single member at that table.”

The contract includes a minimum 5 percent wage increase with some members on the lower end of the wage scale earning a 14 percent increase upon ratification. The agreement also introduces the right of employees to request reports be removed from their personnel files after one year for verbal discipline and after two years for written discipline.

“We gave our all. I just hope this brings us closer to what we deserve, because we’re here to care, and we all deserve that in return,” said Jacklyn Nardozzi, a senior operating room assistant who served on the bargaining committee.



Providence Regional Medical Center bargaining committee members are, left to right, back row, Jacklyn Nardozzi, Sherry Parmentier, Tara McIntosh, Angela Cooke, Scott Campbell, Keri Snyder, front row, Rick Thompson, Stacie Dodson, Violet McNeil, Shelly Dana and Liz Maass.

Planned Parenthood of Greater Ohio Ratifies Two First Contracts

Workers at Planned Parenthood of Greater Ohio ratified two separate first collective bargaining agreements with Local 98 (Region VII), covering approximately 100 clinical and 30 administrative staff, respectively, at the Ohio nonprofit.

Planned Parenthood staff won recognition of their respective units in January 2025 as federal funding cuts wracked the organization's finances across the state. In ratifying their union contracts, workers at the reproductive health organization secured job security language and other protections amid a turbulent time for the reproductive health sector. Other highlights in both contracts include guaranteed cost-of-living matching, an additional paid holiday, expanded paid parental leave and stable healthcare costs across the life of the four-year contract.

"We didn't expect a lot of wins on the economic front, but we really wanted to guarantee protections for our workers — things like discipline and discharge, remote work, things that will really impact their day-to-day work lives moving forward," said Nicole Rounick, a major gifts officer based in Cleveland who served on the bargaining committee for the administrative unit.

Clinical staff at the nonprofit include nursing staff, nurse practitioners and healthcare assistants. Administrative staff titles include fundraisers, educators and graphic designers. The contracts cover Planned Parenthood workers across northern Ohio.

"The organizing process and the contract as a whole brought a lot of us co-workers together who wouldn't necessarily have ever interacted," said Sarah Fernandez, a healthcare assistant based in Mansfield. "We're able to advocate so much better for our jobs and for our positions all across the state because of that."

The major difference between the two contracts is the administrative unit won protections for remote work, while clinical staff won protections against arbitrary changes to scheduling.

"I am a single mom," said Anne Morris, a public affairs coordinator for the advocacy team based in Akron. "Being able to have protections around remote work and having some sort of stability with my employment allows me to do all the things I need to do to raise my kid."

"I just think the fact we were able to get voluntarily recognized and then have our first contract in about a year is really impressive and speaks to the members who were willing to advocate and fight for this union every step of the way," Morris continued. "I'm really proud of all the people I've worked with and who really put their necks out there, especially when we first were unionizing and doing those efforts. I'm really proud of the folks I work with."

AFL-CIO Canvassers with Working America Ratify 5-Year Contract

OPEIU members at Working America ratified a five-year contract, earning pay increases and other protections for their valuable work persuading Americans to vote for pro-worker politicians. Working America is the political canvassing wing of the AFL-CIO, which focuses on engaging with nonunion workers across the country. The unit includes the canvassers and their trainers deployed across the country to support AFL-CIO-backed candidates on the ground.

These canvassers walk door-to-door during all seasons to tell voters about the benefits of unions and explain how federal legislation like the PRO Act is necessary to bring these benefits to more Americans.

The new agreement boosts minimum salaries for canvassers and guarantees annual raises. It also provides for more flexibility to workers before they face disciplinary action. With these wins, these OPEIU members will be better positioned to effectively advocate for candidates who are trying to grow union membership, particularly in states with low union density.

Local 29's Kelly Gschwend Sworn in as OPEIU Vice President



Local 29 President and Business Manager Kelly Gschwend is sworn in as vice president of Region V on the OPEIU Executive Board. She finishes the unexpired term of Tamara Rubyn, who retired from the board after serving for more than two decades.

Nearly 500 Nurses Overcome Bad-Faith Bargaining to Protect Staffing Policies, Win Pay Increases

After 18 months of bargaining, 480 registered nurses represented by Local 40 (Region VII) at McLaren Macomb Hospital in Mount Clemens, Michigan, ratified a new contract mere minutes before the hospital planned to bring in nonunion nurses to retaliate against their solidarity.

The new contract addresses the nurses' two biggest concerns — pay and staffing ratios — and comes after a hard-fought campaign involving pickets, an illegal lockout and dozens of unfair labor practices.

"In my many years of experience, I have never witnessed the hospital administration act in such a disruptive manner," said Maria Szejbach, a registered nurse and chief steward at McLaren Macomb who has participated in every negotiation there since 2000. "Despite the challenges, this toxic environment has only strengthened our resolve."

Bargaining had a rough start in 2024, when the hospital administration refused to negotiate over proposals that would improve patient experiences and tried to remove wins Local 40 had first secured in 2004. In July 2025, nurses eventually went on a three-day unfair labor practice (ULP) strike over retaliation against bargaining team members, denying members Weingarten rights and bargaining in bad faith, among other things.

When the nurses returned from their picket, the hospital locked them out for two days. When they eventually were allowed back in, management refused to bargain for a month and, when they did, regressed on their offers, delaying bargaining with the hopes of undermining the nurses' momentum.

The nurses were steadfast, asserting their voices throughout bargaining, rallying public support and eventually voting for an indefinite strike in January, which got them over the edge just minutes before management was planning to bring in nonunion agency nurses.

Transparency throughout bargaining was key to keeping the engagement high and ensured negotiations went in the direction nurses wanted. In the end, nurses were able to achieve massive gains in the areas most important to them. Some nurses are realizing pay increases of up to 23 percent over the course of the contract, which expires in October 2027, and everyone will receive immediate pay increases.

"Despite the obstacles we face, we are finding new ways to fight back and organize more effectively," said Terri Dagg-Barr, RN, a Local 40 vice president and a member of the bargaining team. "Our unity and determination signal to the hospital we are not just prepared for this fight — we are organized and unwavering in our commitment to protect our rights and our patients."

The nurses also protected and strengthened their unique pay penalty system, requiring the hospital to compensate nurses extra if their division is short staffed during their shift, removing a financial incentive for the hospital to understaff. A better ratio was agreed upon with stricter numbers, and nurses will continue to receive double their salary for understaffed shifts. They also won an expedited arbitration process, ensuring grievances related to understaffing are resolved and paid out quicker.



Local 40 nurses at McLaren Macomb Hospital in Mount Clemens, Michigan, conduct an unfair labor practice (ULP) strike in July 2025.

OPEIU Local Leaders Tell AFL-CIO Convention 'Protect Healthcare Workers Now!'



Hawai'i Nurses' Association (HNA)/OPEIU Local 50 (Region VIII) President Rose Agas-Yuu, RN, left, and Local 40 (Region VII) President Dina Carlisle, RN, both vice presidents on the OPEIU Executive Board, address the 30th AFL-CIO Constitutional Convention in June in Minneapolis on the courage of healthcare workers nationwide. The convention went on to pass a resolution affirming the need to strengthen laws protecting workers against occupational hazards and violence at work.

FUN WAYS TO SAVE



BIG
SAVINGS
AT BIG
PARKS



Theme parks, tours and attractions!

Union families save on admission to Walt Disney World®, Six Flags, Universal Studios and many more.



Learn more at
unionplus.org



Nurses at Shands Hospital Ratify Contract with Historic Financial Package, While Doubling Union Membership

Registered nurses represented by Local 713 (Region III) at UF Health Shands Hospital in Gainesville, Florida, ratified a new three-year contract in June that includes \$18.3 million in wage and other compensation improvements and \$3.4 million to ensure no health insurance premium increases in 2027.

The contract, bargained over five days, covers about 3,000 bedside RNs responsible for making Shands a top Florida hospital. The nurses prioritized demands that would enable them to live comfortably in the community they serve and have access to affordable healthcare equal to the quality of care they deliver.

“This agreement delivers meaningful improvements for the nurses we represent and builds on the strong foundation we have established over the years,” said Marsha Martin, RN, president of the Shands Nurses Union. “The ratification is a testament to what nurses can accomplish when they stand together.”

Due to Florida being a so-called right-to-work state, workers are not automatically members of the Shands Nurses Union, even if they are covered by the contract, requiring the nurses to constantly organize new workers and do so with more limited funds. Despite this, the Shands Nurses Union doubled its dues-paying members as they developed their collective power throughout bargaining, which led to them winning major concessions from the hospital.

Among these, nurses will receive a pay increase of \$1 to \$4 per hour and continued annual merit-based wage increases at an average of 3.8 percent. Nurses also achieved a wage reopener clause allowing for new negotiations in spring 2027.

“While our work is never finished, this contract positions us to achieve even more in the future,” Martin said. “As we continue to grow our membership and strengthen our union, we will be in an even better position to advocate for our profession, our patients and every nurse we represent.”

Local 2 Elects New Leadership as Longtime President Retires

Earlier this year, Local 2 (Region II) members elected a new slate of leaders, with Sarah Levesque at the helm as the new president and business manager and Michael Spiller as secretary-treasurer. The elections followed the retirement of Linda Bridges, former president and business manager, who will continue to serve as Region II vice president on the OPEIU Executive Board until the end of her term in 2027.

Levesque has served in positions ranging from secretary-treasurer to recording-secretary in her two decades at the local, while Spiller has served as first vice president and staff representative. Local 2 represents about 8,000 healthcare, utility and union workers across Maryland, Washington, D.C. and Virginia. As part of the election, members also voted for trustees, labor council members and other board members.

Bridges’ retirement marked the end of an era for Local 2, where she served on the local executive board for 40 years. Throughout this long career, she led successful strikes against Kaiser Permanente, achieved pro-worker legislation through her local labor council, maintained the local on strong financial footing and grew the overall membership over the last decade.



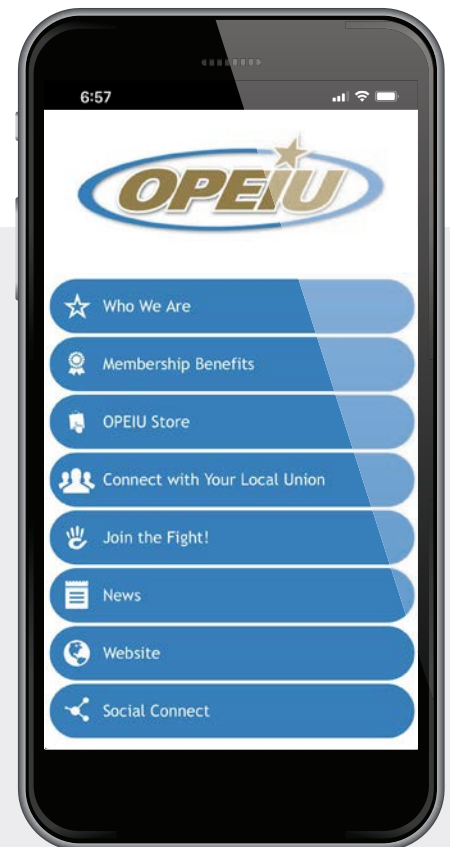
The newly elected Local 2 Executive Board.

OPEIU CONNECT

OFFICE AND PROFESSIONAL EMPLOYEES
INTERNATIONAL UNION, AFL-CIO, CLC

Get the OPEIU App Today

The OPEIU app is available for free download. It is a great way to stay connected to your union, learn more about your membership benefits, find links to OPEIU's social media networks and much more. Available for free download for iOS devices on the App Store and for Android devices on Google Play by searching **OPEIU**.



Follow us on Facebook, Instagram, Bluesky, LinkedIn and X: @opeiu

