NEWS FROM THE AFL-CIO, CTW, INTERNATIONAL & NATIONAL UNIONS

Workers blocked bridges, marched through terminals and protested at nine airports during a day of civil disobedience on Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, January 18. They included cleaners, baggage handlers, fuelers, wheelchair attendants and other low-wage workers determined to bring the nation’s attention to their demand for better wages, said the Service Employees International Union. The actions were the latest in the nationwide campaign in support of a $15 hourly minimum wage. Demonstrations were organized at Reagan National Airport serving Washington, D.C., Boston, New York, Newark, Philadelphia, Miami, Chicago, Portland and Seattle. “These men and women are calling for real change at all these airports in the hopeful and visionary spirit of Dr. Martin Luther King,” said Jaime Contreras, head of 32BJ Service Employees International Union for the Washington area. “We are protesting what we already know is a gross injustice and humiliating working conditions.” Most of the airport workers earn as little as $6.75 an hour and are forced to work two or three jobs to sustain their families. They work for companies that are contracted by the airlines and some workers alleged discrimination, harassment and hostile work environments in addition to low pay.

America’s unions intensified opposition to the Trans-Pacific Partnership trade deal now before Congress. On January 13, representatives from the AFL-CIO, United Auto Workers, United Steelworkers and International Association of Machinists testified before a mandated-hearing by the International Trade Commission on the economic impact of the pact. “To date, increased trade globalization of the corporate model has led to increasing trade deficits and a corresponding loss of jobs for America’s workers,” said Celeste Drake, a trade and globalization policy specialist for the AFL-CIO. “Our manufacturing sector has been hollowed out, losing about 5 million jobs and 60,000 factories since 2000.” USW President Leo Gerard echoed her comments as he warned steel production and auto manufacturing have moved overseas in part as a result of bad international trade deals. “The TPP will be a nail in the coffin for huge parts of the American industrial base,” he said. The proposed TPP trade deal includes the U.S. and the nations of Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore and Vietnam.

West Virginia Governor Earl Ray Tomblin vetoed both the right to work and prevailing wage bills passed earlier this year. In a letter to Republican state Senate President Bill Cole, Tomblin expressed his disapproval of the Workplace Freedom Act (SB 1). “I do not believe West Virginia

TRADING AWAY: PEOPLE’S LIVES & PLANET’S FUTURE

Protesting the TPP. Flickr.com photo used under Creative Commons from cool revolution.
needs a right-to-work law, a law that would lead to little if any economy growth and may lower the wages of West Virginia workers,” he wrote. Cole, in turn, issued a statement saying he was “not surprised,” but “disappointed” with Tomblin’s decision. Tomblin also sent a letter to Republican House Speaker Tim Armstead to veto the repeal of prevailing wage (HB 4005), to which Armstead replied that the governor’s decision wasn’t the response he had hoped for. Both the house and the Senate are expected to override both vetoes.

Congressional expansion of the H-2B visa program is only the latest example of America’s growing disdain for blue-collar workers, declared Sean McGarvey, president of the AFL-CIO Building & Construction Trades Department. McGarvey said the newly enacted federal budget will allow four times as many foreign migrant workers to get non-agricultural jobs in industries like construction and manufacturing via temporary H-2B visas. He pointed out that the U.S. job market, however, is so tight that a recent economic analysis reveals that six unemployed Americans are competing for every single job opening in construction. “Those foreign workers will quickly crowd out U.S. ones and throw even more Americans into the unemployment lines,” he charged. McGarvey warned that expanding the H-2B visa program will launch a race to the bottom on wages and benefits for U.S. workers, including union construction workers. “The expansion of the H-2B visa program is just the latest win for America’s economic elite. And as is too often the case, middle-class workers will pay the price for that victory,” he said.

The number of strikes and worker protests in China increased dramatically at the end of 2015 in response to the nation’s economic slowdown, reported China Labour Bulletin. According to the human rights organization, there were 2,774 incidents in 2015, double the 1,379 incidents for 2014. Manufacturing, construction and mining all saw a massive upsurge in disputes. The number of disputes heightened after the government devalued the yuan on August 11 and the subsequent stock market crash. But China Labour Bulletin asserted the economic downturn was only partially responsible for the increase in labor turmoil. More than two thirds of all the disputes recorded in 2015, for example, were related to the non-payment of wages. “The fundamental cause has been systematic failure of employers to respect the basic rights of employees, such as being paid on time and receiving their legally mandated benefits, and the failure of local government officials to enforce labor law,” it said.

IndustriALL Global Union condemned the Thai military government for suppressing a peaceful protest by union members in Bangkok January 6. The union members held a rally outside the Ministry of Labour in support of 500 locked-out workers at Japanese-owned auto-part supplier Sanko Gosei. Invoking new powers under the Public Assembly Act 2015, police and military units used force to break up the demonstrator, who planned to spend the night in front of the ministry. Two union leaders were later detained, questioned and intimidated by authorities. They had participated earlier in the day in mediation negotiations with Sanko Gosei and the Ministry of Labour. “We are gravely concerned that the government is using the Public Assembly Act to curb the legitimate rights of workers to gather peacefully,” said Jyrki Raina, general secretary of IndustriALL. “This goes against all norms and international standards.” More than 600 Sanko Gosei workers, who are all union members, were locked out after negotiations broke down over a new collective bargaining agreement and bonuses.
our results understate the impact of the weakening labor movement on the hollowing out of the U.S. middle class," the study said. The report cited a recent report by the Pew Research Center which showed that the share of adults in the middle class—defined as those households earning between 67 percent and 200 percent of median U.S. income—fell from 61 percent in 1971 to just 50 percent in 2014. “Making America a middle-class country once again will require policies that raise median earnings and incomes and that bring more workers and households into the middle class. Increasing union coverage is important for both, as well as for possibly increasing economic mobility,” the study concluded.

At a time when workers are expected to fund more of their retirement, only about half of full-time employees participate in a workplace retirement plan, according to a new report by the Pew Charitable Trusts. The study also found that retirement benefits varied considerably by state and industry. In 17 states, for example, less than half of workers participate in a retirement plan. These states include Florida, Nevada, Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, California, Louisiana, Arkansas, Georgia and Mississippi. People who live in the Midwest and New England have the most retirement plans available. Minnesota and Wisconsin are the two states with the highest retirement benefit participation where 61 percent of workers have joined their workplace retirement plans.

**President Obama proposed a new wage insurance plan to help temporarily cushion the financial blow to displaced middle-class workers, including those hurt by free trade, globalization and technological change. Under the plan, workers who lose their jobs and take new ones at lower salaries would receive supplemental payments. According to the administration, the wage insurance plan would replace half of a worker’s lost wages, up to $10,000 over two years, for those earning up to $50,000 a year. “Displaced workers making less than $50,000 who were with their prior employer for at least three years would be able to leverage these resources to help them get back on their feet and on the way to new careers, the White House said in a statement. The plan was included in the administration’s budget proposal which is expected to be rejected by the Republican-controlled Congress. President Obama has proposed wage insurance twice before, in a 2011 jobs bill and in his 2012 State of the Union address.**

**Canadian labour will be watching the new Liberal government closely to see how it will implement commitments around Employment Insurance, infrastructure and skills training, said the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC). CLC President Hassan Yussuff said the country needs a “clear plan” that provides workers with the skills and training to transition into the sectors of the economy with growing jobs. “We are playing catch-up but with a new federal government, we can move quickly to turn things around, diversify our economy and ensure a just transition for workers into good, green jobs,” Yussuff said. He noted Statistics Canada’s December 2015 Labour Force Survey results which pointed to a rocky year for jobs in 2015 and trends in the coming year which could get worse “without government action.”**

**REGIONAL & LOCAL LABOR NEWS**

A nearly month old strike at two Chicago area Coca-Cola production plants ended last month when workers approved a new three-year contract that includes annual wage hikes and better health benefits. The pact covers 319 production and warehouse workers and transport drivers at plants in Niles and Alsip who are represented by Teamsters Local 727. “From the very beginning, the hardworking men and women at Coca-Cola Refreshments wanted their voices heard, and by standing together they’ve achieved a strong contract that respects the work that they do,” John T. Coli, secretary-treasurer of Local 727, said in a news release. The workers walked off their jobs December 3 in the first strike at the plants since 1985 to protest the company’s unfair labor practices. The union had earlier filed charges with the National Labor Relations Board charging the soft drink...
giant was bargaining in bad faith. The new contract is retroactive to May 1 and expires April 30, 2018. Workers will receive a 3 percent wage increase the first year and a 2.5 percent increase in the second and third years. Coca-Cola also will establish a new 401(k) retirement plan and match 50 percent of worker contributions, up to 10 percent of their total income.

After 60 years in Brooklyn, N.Y., Cumberland Packing Corp., the family-owned company that created the sugar substitute Sweet’N Low, recently informed its 300 employees that manufacturing and packing work would end over the coming year. Work will be shifted to other parts of the country and only the headquarters would remain in the borough. Jahan Khan, an employee on the United Food and Commercial Workers Local 2013 bargaining committee, which had been in contract negotiations for several months, reported the closure was never mentioned “at any time at all with us.” Workers and elected officials protested the closing but the company cited New York’s high costs of labor and real estate for making the move. The union and company are reportedly discussing ways to help employees find new jobs. Some have been with the firm for decades.

IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR

Detroit teachers engaged in a “sickout” last month to protest unsafe, crumbling, vermin-infested and inadequately staffed buildings, and the failure of state lawmakers to agree on a plan to rescue a system teetering on the edge of insolvency. The Detroit Federation of Teachers did not authorize the action but leaders expressed sympathy for the teachers’ action. “We haven’t sanctioned the sickouts, but I want everyone to understand the frustration,” Ivy Bailey, interim president of the Detroit Federation of Teachers, told the news media. “I don’t support the method,” but she refused to condemn the teachers who had taken part, saying she understood their anger. “There are rats, there’s rodents, there’s dripping water, there’s holes,” she said. “This is unacceptable. This is black mold. Our children are in that building breathing this day in and day out. This is third world.” Gov. Rick Snyder and the Republican-led legislature have been in talks for a year to restructure the school system, but they have been unable to reach agreement on a plan. The school district is an independent entity with an elected board and was not a part of the city’s 2013-14 bankruptcy plan.

Public sector unions prepared for the worse as the Supreme Court heard oral arguments on “fair share” or “agency fee” payments by non-union members under a collective bargaining agreement. The case, Friedrichs v. California Teachers Association, hinges on whether agency fee dues are a violation of workers’ freedom of speech. A decision in favor of the plaintiffs would overturn a 1977 Supreme Court ruling (Abood v. Detroit Board of Education) that unanimously protected the right of public workers to form unions and required those employees who refused to join the union to pay a mandatory “fair share” of monthly dues to cover the union’s cost of bargaining on their behalf. “The court has already ruled that unions have an obligation to represent non-members and that is not likely to change. It also ruled that non-members have an obligation to contribute to the costs of representation and bargaining. If the court now rules in favor of the plaintiffs in Friedrichs vs. California Teachers Association, the justices would be overturning a nearly 40-year precedent,” said CTA President Joshua Pechthalt.

SIGNIFICANT LEGAL AND NLRB RULINGS

A U.S. appeals court recently ruled that the owner of the Trump Taj Mahal casino in Atlantic City, New Jersey, may break its agreement with union workers which potentially clears the way for the company to exit Chapter 11 bankruptcy. (Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump has said he no longer has a stake in the company he founded and which still bears his name.) The resort filed for bankruptcy in 2014 and convinced a U.S. bankruptcy judge that it needed to impose a new cost-cutting concessionary contract on unionized workers in order to secure a bail-out deal with billionaire Carl Icahn. Unite Here Local 54, which represents the workers, filed an appeal. “The Taj Mahal will never turn around and be successful without the full participation and involvement of its workers. That won’t happen while people have to worry about their future,” said Local 54 President Bob McDevitt. He said the union would evaluate its options, including possible legal steps. At the time of the bankruptcy, the resort employed about 3,000 people when the casino group filed for bankruptcy which includes 1,500 union workers.
WHY THE CADILLAC TAX NEEDS TO GO

The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act was a progressive step forward for working families. Thanks to the law, also known as Obamacare, more than 16 million Americans now have health coverage. And it includes desperately needed reforms to the insurance industry, including one that prevents companies from denying coverage to people with pre-existing conditions.

That’s why the IBEW – and most of the labor movement – supported the ACA and continues to defend against efforts to abolish it.

But there is a provision in the law that could end up undermining the whole purpose of the legislation. The so-called “Cadillac tax” imposes a levy on what the federal government deems are high-cost plans; in other words, plans that provide comprehensive medical coverage like those that serve many union members across the country.

As called for by ACA, an excise tax of 40 percent on health plans whose value is more than $10,200 for individual coverage and $27,500 for a family would go into effect in 2018.

In effect, the law punishes employers that did the right thing by providing excellent medical benefits, while hurting employees, many of who had foregone wage increases in lieu of better benefits.

Despite its name, the tax doesn’t just affect high-quality plans. Because it’s indexed to the consumer price index, an increasing number of plans will be subject to it year after year. In fact, more than 80 percent of plans will trigger the tax by 2023 according to a 2014 Towers Watson survey, with the total tax liability for companies reaching nearly $80 billion.

“This tax endangers and will deteriorate health benefits for American workers and their families,” said Matt Maders, President, U.S. Markets and Global Health Care Operations for Cigna. “It will hit a broad spectrum of plans, not just those with very rich benefits.”

The last thing our economy needs is a disincentive to private employers to provide health coverage. The goal of the ACA was to increase the number of Americans covered, not decrease it.

Supporters claim it will help fight health-care inflation. But as any employer or employee who sat at the bargaining table in the last decade knows, containing health costs has been an ongoing priority long before the ACA went into effect.

The tax essentially puts the full onus for containing health spending on middle-class families – most of whom have already seen cutbacks to their benefits.

The American Health Policy Institute estimated in a November 2014 study that employees could see up to a $6,150 reduction in their health care benefits and little or no increase in their pay.

While December’s Congressional budget deal delayed full implementation of the tax for an additional two years, already it’s causing bargaining headaches for many unions, as employers are increasingly demanding healthcare cutbacks in expectation of increased costs in the near future.

As U.S. News and World Report writer Dean Clancy wrote over the summer: “At first, most employers will shrink benefits just enough to avoid the tax. But when the tax becomes unavoidable, they’ll drop benefits altogether.”

There was no question that our health care system was broken previous to the passage of the ACA. But at least in one part of the economy, we had pioneered a private-sector model that showed that both labor and management could come together to provide good coverage to all employees.

Now that model is in danger thanks to one ill thought-out tax.

The good news is that a bipartisan coalition in Congress has come together to call for its repeal.

More than 300 members of Congress – Republicans and Democrats alike – have called for eliminating the tax.

But there are still many holdouts – including President Obama.

Taxing hard-earned health benefits has always been a bad idea. It was bad when then presidential candidate Barack Obama denounced Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) for supporting it back in 2008. At the time, Obama denounced it as “radical” and “not a good deal for the American people.” It remains a bad deal for working families today as we’re learning at bargaining tables across America.

While Congress’s two-year delay in the tax’s implementation is a step forward, what the American people really need is full repeal.
AIL had a major presence at the CLUW’s 18th Biennial Convention held recently in Sacramento, Calif. Susan Fuldauer, AIL VP of Public Relations (left), joins the winner of the AIL $100 Visa Gift card, Isabel Figueroa of AFSCME DC 37 Local 420 (center), along with Ruth Brantley, Secretary, AFSCME DC 37 Local 957.

AIL PR Rep Robin Andrade reports the Laura Fisher SGA office donated food and gift cards, and Francisco Perez and Albert Serur SGA offices donated food to assist the union families. Food was delivered by Andrade, PR Manager Rosanna Gill, and the Fisher Agency’s Ryan Hall and Brian Zuzick of the Fisher SGA office. In the photo are (left to right) Hall, Zuzick, Local 59 Secy-Treas. & Executive Officer George F. Belanger, Andrade, and Local 59 office manager Donna Saunders.

AIL PR Manager Cindy Cleary and PR Marketing Specialist Dee Hettinger attended the recently held Kansas AFL-CIO convention. Shown are (left to right) Cindy, Bruce Tunnell, Exec. Vice-President, Kansas AFL-CIO; Dee Hettinger.

The Teamsters National Hispanic Caucus recently held their 8th Annual Gala in New Jersey. AIL PR Rep Brenda Di Somma attended the event which honored Ron Herrera, Western Teamsters Reg. Int’l V.P. and Treasurer/Principal Officer, Local 396 & Executive Director, Teamster National Hispanic Caucus. Shown are (left to right) Herrera; Maria S. Perez, President, Teamster Hispanic Caucus, New Jersey Chapter & Teamster Local 97 Secretary-Treasurer; Di Somma; Alphonse Rispoli, Jr., Teamster Joint Council 73 President & Teamster Local 863 Secretary-Treasurer.
Syracuse Anti-TPP Rally
The Greater Syracuse Labor Council recently held a rally to oppose the pending Trans-Pacific Partnership trade pact, reports National Income Life PR Marketing Specialist Dave Scalisi. He is shown in the center holding the NILICO sign.

Lincolnshire IL., Anti-RTW Protest
AIL PR Rep Susan Gilbert meets with Citizens’ Action founder William McNary during a protest against a proposed Right to Work ordinance in Lincolnshire, IL.

Galveston (Tex.) Central Labor Council
PR Manager Christa Davis (L) and PR Marketing Specialist Lacy Martin attended the Galveston (TX) Central Labor Council Christmas party. AIL was a sponsor for the event.

AIL’s Sanchez Serves as LCLAA Delegate
Representing OPEIU 277, AIL PR Marketing Specialist Steve Sanchez served as a delegate to the Labor Council for Latin American Advancement regional conference held recently in Los Angeles. AIL was a supporter of the event and sponsored a drawing for a gift card. In the photo, PR Manager Carmella Swanson (left) and Sanchez (right) congratulate the raffle winner.

Fight for $15 in Tampa
Joining an estimated 270 cities across America, union workers and their supporters recently held a major rally and march in Tampa in support of a $15 minimum wage for low-wage workers. AIL’s PR Marketing Specialist Lisa Guay joined the demonstrators to show the company’s support. In the photo, Guay (center, standing) joins other marchers at the event.
YTD CONTRIBUTIONS

Listed below are some of the contributions made on behalf of AIL/NILICO, its State General Agents, and directed by the Labor Advisory Board. 2015 YTD contributions totaled more than $1.9 million.

- AFL-CIO MLK Civil Rights Conference
- Alberta Federation of Labour Convention
- Alliance For Retired Americans
- American Friends of Yitzhak Rabin Center
- American Sustainable Business Council
- APALA
- Broadbent Institute
- Brother Rice High School - Bill Hite Scholarship Fund
- Campaign For Migrant Worker Justice
- Canadian Federation of Nurses Union
- CBTU
- DC Labor FilmFest
- District 1199C Training and Upgrading Fund
- Economic Policy Institute
- Elderly Housing Development & Operations Corporation
- Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation
- Empire State College - Bahr Scholarship
- Gala Theatre
- Guide Dogs of America
- Interfaith Worker Justice
- IUPA
- James R. Hoffa Memorial Scholarship Fund
- Jewish Labor Committee
- Jobs With Justice Education Fund
- John H. Lyons Sr. Scholarship Foundation
- LAANE
- Labor of Love
- LCLAA
- LIUNA Charitable Foundation
- Manitoba Federation of Labour
- Metal Trades Department
- Midwest Academy
- Museum of the Moving Image
- New England Center For Homeless Veterans
- Newfoundland & Labrador Federation of Labour
- Next Up Young Worker Summit
- North America's Building Trades Unions
- Ontario Federation of Labour
- OPCMIA Scholarship Foundation
- Partnership For Working Families
- PEI Federation of Labour
- SAG-AFTRA
- Saskatchewan Federation of Labour
- Seafarers El Faro Assistance Fund
- Sheet Metal Workers International Association Scholarship Foundation
- Southwest Voter Registration Education Project
- The Edwin D. Hill Charitable Trust
- UFCW Leukemia
- UNIFOR Ontario Region Golf Classic
- Union Sportsmen's Alliance
- United Farm Workers
- Working America
- Workmen's Circle
LABOR ADVISORY BOARD

These outstanding union leaders are members of American Income Life & National Income Life Labor Advisory Board.

With their advice, American Income Life & National Income Life Insurance Company provides substantial financial assistance to labor and labor-related causes, and develops programs to best meet the needs of union members and their families.

Membership on the Labor Advisory Board constitutes neither an endorsement of AIL/NILICO nor its products. The only obligation of membership on the Board is to provide guidance on how AIL/NILICO might best serve the interests of their respective members and the labor movement.

Labor Advisory Board members recognize that AIL/NILICO is a fully organized, 100 percent union company that offers supplemental insurance plans primarily to union members. AIL is honored to be among those “All-Union Wall-to-Wall” companies cited by the AFL-CIO Union Label and Service Trades Department.
Raymond Hair
President
American Federation of Musicians

Mary Kay Henry
President
Service Employees International Union

William Hite
President
United Association of Journeymen & Apprentices of the Plumbing & Pipe Fitting Industry of US & Canada

James Hoffa
General President
International Brotherhood of Teamsters

Paul Hogrogian
National President
National Postal Mail Handlers Union

Ken Howard
President
Screen Actors Guild - American Federation of Television & Radio Artists

Loretta Johnson
Secretary-Treasurer
American Federation of Teachers

Newton B. Jones
International President
International Brotherhood of Boilermakers, Iron Ship Builders, Blacksmiths, Forgers & Helpers

Greg Junemann
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International Federation of Professional & Technical Engineers

D. Michael Langford
National President
Utility Workers Union of America, AFL-CIO

Matthew Loeb
International President
Association of Flight Attendants-CWA, AFL-CIO

Harry Lombardo
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Transport Workers Union of America, AFL-CIO

William Lucy
President Emeritus
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Mary McColl
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James “Bud” McCourt
General President
International Association of Heat & Frost Insulators & Allied Workers

Sean McGarvey
President
Building & Construction Trades Department, AFL-CIO

Terrence Melvin
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Coalition of Black Trade Unions

Sara Nelson
International President
Association of Flight Attendants-CWA, AFL-CIO

Oscar Owens
International Secretary-Treasurer
Amalgamated Transit Union

Anthony “Marc” Perrone
General President
United Food & Commercial Workers International Union

W. D. “Dan” Pickett
President Emeritus
Brotherhood of Railroad Signalmen

Laura Reyes
Secretary-Treasurer
International Union of Painters & Allied Trades, AFL-CIO

Paul Rinaldi
President
National Air Traffic Controllers Association

Clyde Rivers
President Emeritus
California School Employees Association

Robert Roach, Jr.
General Secretary-Treasurer (retired)
International Association of Machinists & Aerospace Workers

Cecil Roberts
President
United Mine Workers of America

Kinsey Robinson
International President
United Union of Roofers, Waterproofers & Allied Workers

Arturo Rodriguez
President
United Farm Workers of America

Milton Rosado
President
Labor Council For Latin American Advancement

Michael Sacco
President
International Union of Painters & Allied Trades, AFL-CIO

Kenneth E. Rigmaid
General President
International Union of Painters & Allied Trades, AFL-CIO

Elizabeth E. Shuler
Secretary-Treasurer
AFL-CIO

Bruce R. Smith
President
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DeMaurice Smith
Executive Director
National Football League Players Association

Lonnie Stephenson
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George Tedeschi
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Graphic Communications Conference/International Brotherhood of Teamsters

Richard Trumka
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Baldemar Velasquez
President
Farm Labor Organizing Committee

James Williams
General President
Emeritus
International Union of Painters & Allied Trades Chairman Emeritus

Diann Woodard
President
American Federation of State, County & Municipal Employees

James Hoffa
General President
International Brotherhood of Teamsters

George Tedeschi
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Graphic Communications Conference/International Brotherhood of Teamsters

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