



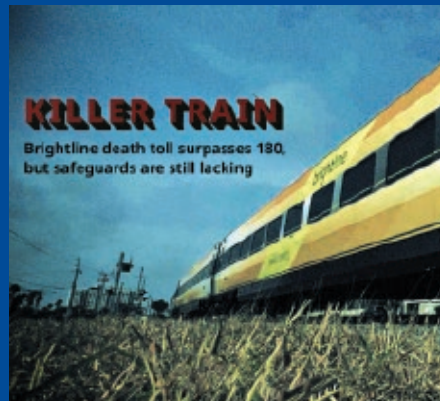
TWU Takes the Hill

TWU activists lobby Congress for overtime tax fix and other pro-worker legislation



AIR / 13

Air Nurses and Paramedics in Nevada and Northern California
Join the TWU



RAIL / 16

Brightline's terrible safety record highlighted in TWU TV commercials, flyers, and social media posts.



TRANSIT / 18

TWU International and Local 1 threaten a strike to win a fair contract from Akron Metro

TWU Makes Progress on the A.I. Front, but the Battle is Far From Over



Robots will not be driving your kids, or even your grandkids, to school under federal legislation that your Transport Workers Union of America helped craft. The proposed Build America Act – which sets the first-ever federal guardrails for autonomous vehicles in transit – also includes measures we believe will significantly help us in our high-stakes fight to protect transit Bus Operators from being recklessly replaced by technology for decades to come.

This is a great achievement, and I'm incredibly proud that we've made progress against artificial intelligence and autonomous vehicle technology. This tech threatens to eliminate scores of transportation jobs, perhaps most immediately taxi drivers and long-distance truckers. Our fight, the most important of our lifetime, is to protect the employment of all TWU members in the Air, Rail, and Transit divisions against this existential threat.

It won't be easy. Just look at how some states have shamelessly and rashly allowed Big Tech to flood city streets with robotaxis, even though the current state of this technology is demonstrably flawed. Waymo robotaxis have crashed into other vehicles and objects. They have hit pedestrians, including a child near an elementary school, stopped and clogged intersections, blocked fire stations, and failed to respond properly to hand signals from police during emergencies.

Too many elected officials eagerly jumped on the Big Tech bandwagon in exchange for Big Tech campaign donations that enable them to win re-election. In their self-focused, greed-poisoned minds, personal security trumps the livelihoods of everyday working men and women.

Introduced on May 18 in the House of Representatives, the Build America Act is essentially a five-year transportation plan loaded with funding streams, policy statements, and directives for federal agencies. It's a wonky nightmare, but it's critically important. The BBA flat-out requires that school buses in the future be operated by humans with a commercial driver's license. Legislators balked, however, at making the same explicit requirement for transit buses, partly because self-driving buses are already in service in Jacksonville, Florida. They operate on a fixed, 3.5-mile loop downtown.

Going forward, however, the proposed Act requires autonomous buses to pass a federal testing regimen and operate under a new set of federal rules, neither of which has been written. That process can take many years. A new committee would draft the new rules. The TWU smartly and strategically ensured that the committee will have multiple union representatives, including officials from firefighter and police unions, who have been strong supporters of keeping Bus Operators on board transit buses. One rule must codify the non-driving duties Bus Operators perform, including helping the disabled board and exit, and alerting first responders to emergencies. Even though the bill does not literally say "you must have a human driver," it effectively builds in a human operator requirement.

Representatives Sam Graves (R-MO) and Rick Larsen (D-WA) should be commended for introducing the Build America Act with worker protections. The House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee approved the Act on May 22, but the full House and Senate must pass it. We will be there, fighting for its passage, every step of the way.

This Act absolutely does not eliminate the need for TWU to work fiercely and aggressively to secure job-protecting language in all contracts. This is a battle on multiple fronts against Big Tech investors and corporate titans who have unlimited supplies of money to get what they want: the widespread deployment of artificial intelligence and autonomous vehicle technology in both the public and private sectors. This will allow these gluttonous, insatiable billionaires to further enrich themselves by eliminating the need to pay Americans wages they can live on and provide benefits, like healthcare, they need. These are loathsome, morally corrupt villains. It will take full engagement from all of us – national leadership, local officers, and members – to hold the line.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Samal". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "S".



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TWU Fighting For Workers On The State Level

*By International Secretary-Treasurer
Jerome Lafragola*



Our biannual Legislative and COPE Conference in Washington, D.C., was a huge success.

As you will read in this edition of the TWU Express, hundreds of TWU activists and officers converged on the nation's capital in May to advocate for federal laws, policies, and regulations that benefit our members across all three divisions: Air, Rail, and Transit. It was extremely well organized, tightly focused, and productive. The size and scope of this three-day event demonstrate the TWU's strong commitment to being heard at the federal level.

But the TWU does a lot of work closer to home. Our state conferences operate on the same premise as our staff, officers, and activists, who communicate with members of Congress: many elected officials, for the most part, do not know or fully understand the needs of working men and women. That's particularly true when it comes to job-specific issues. They need to be educated and engaged. We have to forge relationships with decision makers in state legislatures in addition to those in Washington, D.C. We need to make campaign contributions to our state-level friends so they can compete in elections against politicians who carry the water for powerful anti-union, anti-worker entities, including major corporations and so-called think tanks that want to dismantle organized labor.

What does that look like? In Florida, the TWU Florida State Conference successfully campaigned against the "Taxpayer Dollars Protect Workers Act," an insidiously named bill that sought to make it even harder to unionize in the notoriously anti-union state. The legislation would have prohibited businesses from receiving state tax credits or grants if they voluntarily recognized that their employees had unionized, rather than forcing an election and waging an anti-union campaign.

Our California State Conference is advocating for the passage of a ballot measure – the Connect Bay Area Act – that would authorize a new regional 1-cent sales tax to fund mass transit agencies, such as BART and Muni in San Francisco and adjacent counties. More transit funding, of course, means more service and job security for TWU members.

The TWU's Colorado State Conference supported a bill in the last legislative session to eliminate a requirement dating back to the 1940s that private-sector workers must win two separate elections before securing full collective bargaining rights. This is an unfair, anti-worker hurdle that exists only in Colorado. The state legislature passed the bill, but the governor vetoed it. We will continue fighting.

In Nevada, we supported a bill to extend the state's paid sick leave law to all workers, and in New York, the TWU is advocating for a law that would require the Metropolitan Transportation Authority to maintain two-person subway crews and to retain the Conductor's position. Another bill that was signed into law protects TWU-represented supervisors from unfair parking tickets issued while they are handling operational issues in bus lanes.

Just like contract negotiation, COPE is a mechanism through which we strive to improve your lives as members of our great union. I urge all of you to participate.

Rail Safety Act Finally Moves Forward

The TWU scored a major victory in May for members of our Rail Division, helping advance legislation to correct glaring safety defects revealed by the horrendous freight train derailment in East Palestine, Ohio, in February 2023.

The Railway Safety Act was incorporated into the Surface Transportation Safety Act of 2026, a sprawling bill that gives directions to federal regulatory agencies, sets government policy, and establishes funding priorities. The Railway Safety Act's major features include requiring at least two crew members on freight trains carrying hazardous materials and prohibiting freight companies from imposing unrealistic, and reckless, time limits on equipment inspections.

"This is a tremendous victory that shows just how few people remain in the railroads' pockets," TWU International President John Samuelsen said. "It's a massive win for workers and communities who, for years, have been calling out the railroads for their bad safety practices in the pursuit of bigger profits. The bill will ensure adequate staffing and make sure train inspectors have ample time to make sure trains are safe."

The legislation would also require railroad companies to inform states when hazardous materials are passing through their communities and to use defect-detection technology capable of stopping trains when problems are detected. In addition, it directs federal regulators to expand the list of hazardous chemicals subject to higher safety standards, including vinyl chloride, which the

Norfolk Southern train that derailed on Feb. 2, 2023, near the Ohio-Pennsylvania border was transporting.

In the East Palestine disaster, dozens of cars on the 150-car train derailed after a wheel bearing connecting a wheel to an axle overheated and failed. About 50 cars were affected. Some caught fire. Firefighters purposely burned five cars with vinyl chloride, fearing they otherwise might explode. Vinyl chloride is used to make polyvinyl chloride, or PVC, a common plastic. In total, more than one million pounds of hazardous chemicals were released into the soil, air, and water.

Area residents have reported respiratory problems, severe headaches, skin rashes, eye irritation, anxiety, and other health issues. Several lawsuits were filed last year against Norfolk Southern and federal and state agencies, including the Environmental Protection Agency and the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

One lawsuit alleges chemical exposure contributed or caused the deaths of seven people, including a one-week-old baby, a man who breathed fumes while cutting his lawn, and a 65-year-old man with a history of respiratory issues, the Allegheny Front, an outlet that covers environmental issues, reported.

In another positive development for TWU rail workers, the Federal Railroad Retirement Board ruled in May that TWU members at Brightline in Florida are covered by the RRB's retirement, sickness, and unemployment plans. Those plans are far more beneficial than the ones Brightline and the state of Florida offer.



TWU Activists Take the Hill

More than 150 TWU activists and officers lobbied on Capitol Hill on May 5 to build support for federal legislation that would benefit union members and their families – including a bill that would allow all overtime earners to pay less in federal income taxes.

Teams of TWU members and officers from locals across the country swarmed through the House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate office buildings for scheduled meetings as part of this year's three-day Legislative and COPE Conference. They were armed with talking points highlighting the merits of the "No



TWU International President John Samuelson giving opening remarks at the Legislative and COPE Conference in Washington, D.C.

Tax on Overtime for All Workers Act." The legislation would extend eligibility for a new federal tax exemption pertaining to overtime income to an additional 3 million workers, including more than 100,000 TWU members.

"This is a top priority for us," TWU International President John Samuelson said. "We are laser-focused on the economic security of our members, and this legislation would save working families thousands of dollars a year."

The One Big Beautiful Bill that Congress passed last year included a provision exempting hourly workers from paying federal income taxes on a portion of their overtime earnings: up

to \$12,500 for single filers and up to \$25,000 for married couples filing jointly. This could mean up to \$6,000 in savings. The portion of overtime earnings exempt from taxes is the premium: the "extra" half that is added to the base hourly rate. For someone with a base hourly rate of \$30, the premium for one hour OT would be \$15.

"It's extremely important that we talk to members of Congress and their staff, here in Washington and in their home districts."

—TWU International Executive Vice President Alex Garcia



International Executive Vice President Alex Garcia, Secretary-Treasurer Jerome Lafragola, and Administrative Vice President Mike Mayes joined the TWU contingent on Capitol Hill.



Safety and Job Security Top TWU Priorities

The Legislative and COPE (Committee on Political Education) Conference focused on specific priorities the TWU wants addressed in the federal Surface Transportation Reauthorization Act. The Reauthorization Act is a major piece of legislation that Congress periodically passes to fund highways, public transit, and rail programs. It includes directives to regulatory departments and amendments to existing laws. In addition to ensuring all hourly workers can take advantage of the overtime income-tax deduction, the TWU's priorities also include:

- Allowing transportation agencies to use federal funds for operational expenses so they can increase and improve service. Agencies currently can only use federal funds to purchase equipment and make

physical infrastructure upgrades.

- Establishing artificial intelligence guardrails to protect workers from being replaced by algorithms and robots, while also protecting riders from the dangers posed by automation.
- Raising safety standards for freight rail companies to prevent devastating accidents, such as the derailment of a Norfolk Southern train carrying dangerous chemicals in East Palestine, Ohio, in 2023.
- Protecting all workers from on-the-job assaults.

Congress passed a five-year Federal Aviation Administration Reauthorization Act in 2024. Advancing TWU Air Division goals was a focus of the TWU's 2024 Legislative/COPE Conference.

But the bill was poorly drafted. It relied on an outdated federal definition of overtime dating back to 1938. While most hourly workers qualify, the flawed language in the BBB excludes scores of workers in the airline, railroad, trucking, and delivery industries from eligibility for the benefit.

"It's extremely important that we talk to members of Congress and their staff, here in Washington and in their home districts," TWU International Executive Vice President Alex Garcia said. "This is why we need a strong COPE program with TWU members contributing and participating - so we can bring about changes that will improve their lives."



Government Affairs Director Zack Tatz

Congress members need to be educated and prodded, International Secretary-Treasurer Jerome Lafragola said.

"The only way you can get anyone to do anything in politics is to advocate on your behalf. Basically, you're educating elected officials on the issues that affect you and your daily work life and advocating for or against a certain action."

Before heading to the Hill, activists spent a full day attending workshops and informational presentations on all the TWU's top legislative priorities, as well as a discussion on labor and politics featuring President Samuels and Rep. Chris Deluzio of Pennsylvania.

Legislative and COPE Conference is a joint event of the TWU Government Affairs Department and COPE.



TWU visiting the office of Sen. Catherine Cortez Mastro of Nevada



TWU's Boston contingent brought TWU's issues to Sen. Ed Markey of Mass.

What is COPE?

Working Americans are under attack. COPE – the Committee on Political Education – is the TWU’s counter-offensive.

Corporate America, anti-union organizations posing as good-government “policy groups,” and transportation providers all spend big money to influence elected officials at the federal, state, and local levels.

These entities want elected officials and government administrators to enact anti-worker laws, policies, and regulations. They often seek to weaken or eliminate workers’ ability to secure and maintain fair wages, diminish retirement plans, and charge higher healthcare premiums. They want to replace workers with technology, such as self-driving vehicles, and cut corners on workplace safety to reduce their payroll and maximize profits.

Jobs in all TWU sectors – Air, Rail, and Transit/Universities/Utilities/Services – are being affected or are at risk. That’s why we have COPE.

Funded by members’ voluntary contributions, COPE attempts to level the playing field by supporting candidates who support the TWU at all levels of government, regardless of party affiliation. COPE also enables TWU activists to meet and educate elected officials on issues that transport workers care about. These TWU ambassadors then urge elected officials to support legislation that benefits our members and families – and reject bills that will harm us.

To join COPE and get more information, visit twu.org and click the Government Affairs tab.



COPE Director Andrew Rangolin



TWU's COPE Champions

COPE Director Andrew Rangolin and COPE Field Rep. Matt Hettich presented awards to select locals and individual members for their extraordinary support of the committee at the 2026 Legislative and COPE Conference.

Locals 234, 502, and 2054 were honored for having the highest percentage of members who contribute to COPE. Three TWU union members and three International staffers who give the most through voluntary paycheck deductions were also presented with awards.



Individual award winners Anthony Crapio, Local 2055 President; Bobby W. Berryhill, Local 208 Secretary-Treasurer; and Sam Wilkins, Local 556 Executive Board First Vice President, flanked by COPE Director Andrew Rangolin and COPE Field Rep. Matt Hettich.



International Air Division Staff Rep. Greg Cosey accepted the award on behalf of Local 502, headquartered in El Segundo, California.



The top COPE contributors from the International's staff who were honored: International Rep. Jose Galarza, second from left; International V.P. & Rep. Thom McDaniel, third from left; and International Air Division Chief of Staff John O'Donnell, not pictured. International Chief of Staff Gary Peterson accepted on O'Donnell's behalf



Local 2054 President Ed Flaherty. Local 2054 is based in Weymouth, Massachusetts.



Local 234 Business Agent Ryan Fairman accepted the award on behalf of the Philadelphia local.

The Comeback

Mixed Martial Arts Fighter Shares Domestic Violence Experience with Working Women's Committee

A lone. A failure. Helpless and hopeless. That's how Jamie Miller felt as she pushed the stroller containing her young daughter into a homeless shelter in Philadelphia in the summer of 2014.

Just a few months earlier, Miller ended a six-year relationship with a man who was emotionally and physically abusive. She stayed briefly with her daughter's babysitter before renting a room at a cheap motel. But the money, provided by relatives who lived in Ohio, soon ran out. Miller was evicted.

"I felt completely isolated and broken and defeated," Miller told dozens of TWU Working Women's Committee members during their March meeting at the Local 234 Union Hall in Philadelphia.

A featured speaker at the quarterly gathering, Miller said any woman potentially can become a victim of domestic violence. After all, she was a professional Mixed Martial Arts fighter who could physically dismantle most people. Her ex-partner, however, also was a professional fighter, and he was as physically imposing as he was manipulative and controlling, she said. He wore her down until she lacked all self-esteem. She gave up fighting, and her dream of winning a title someday.

But Miller found her footing at a shelter run by the non-profit Women Against Abuse. She felt safe there for the first time in a



Jamie Miller is now a professional speaker and advocate against domestic violence.



Miller and her daughter after a MMA fight.

long time. In addition to security guards to keep abusers at bay, the shelter offered a range of vital services, including day care and free legal assistance. Miller made a conscious decision not to let this low point in her life define her.

"This was my chance to take my life back," Miller said. "It wasn't our fault we were in that position, but it was my duty to carry on. I could completely change the trajectory of our lives."

Miller revived her "hopes and aspirations." She returned to the gym. A year later she won her first professional title.

"Our hardships are designed to make us stronger," she told the committee members. "Each and every one of us has the ability to bounce back, but we have to be willing to work for it. Resilience isn't about how hard you get hit but how you chose to get up, stepping



Attendees of the WWC's March meeting.

COMMITTEE UPDATES

forward when every ounce of you wants to stay down and retreat.”

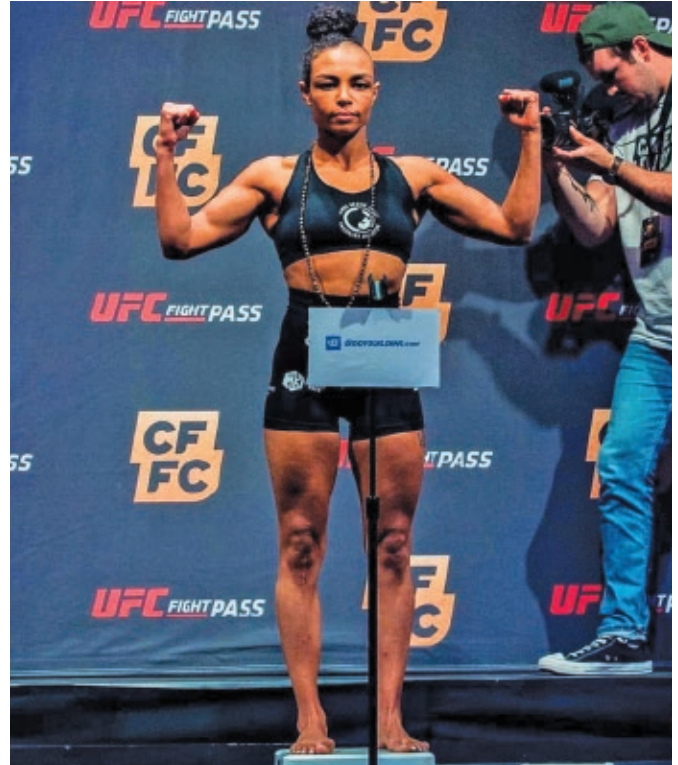
Miller retired with a 5-4 professional record. She moved forward with a focus on empowering women and helping victims of domestic violence. She established a self-defense program for women, opened a kickboxing and martial arts studio, served on the committee of the Philadelphia Mayor’s Office of Women’s engagement, and embarked on a professional speaking and consulting career.

Attendees at the WWC meeting in Philadelphia said they found Miller’s speech moving and inspiring. The night after the afternoon presentation, Trevlyn Mounsey, 42, an American Airlines Fleet Clerk from Atlanta, engaged in some intense self-reflection in her hotel room, she said. Mounsey, a Local 510 member, had just ended a toxic long-term relationship with a “controlling and narcissistic” partner, she said. Miller’s presentation gave her a lot to think about, including the need to build self-esteem and discard negativity in her life.

“It was very, very powerful,” she said. “It even made me cry.”



Trevlyn Mounsey from Local 510 found Miller’s presentation moving and inspiring



Jamie Miller weighing in before a match

Future Leaders Organizing Committee



TWU Local 502 and Local 575 hosted the Future Leaders Organizing Committee (FLOC) in El Segundo, CA, earlier this year. Participants received training on grievances procedures and strategies.



Union Pressure Helps Spur New Effort to Reduce Toxic Plane Fumes

There may be a breakthrough in the quest to curb troubling and dangerous incidents of toxic engine fumes polluting the air inside commercial planes.

Allegiant Airlines, along with Honeywell and Airbus, has designed a new device, dubbed the “Ecology Bottle,” to collect and contain leaking engine oil before it becomes gaseous and enters Airbus passenger cabins. As of mid-May, Allegiant had equipped 40 Airbus planes with strategically placed containers.

“Fume events and toxic cabin air have been a serious safety concern for far too long,” TWU Local 577 President Christa Gifford said. “This is a major breakthrough that should dramatically reduce fume events onboard and go a long way towards protecting the health and safety of Flight Attendants, crews, and passengers.”

The development is the direct result of the steady pressure TWU International and Local 577 put on Allegiant to take corrective action, Gifford said.

The air that passengers, Flight Attendants, and Pilots breathe when on board is drawn in by the aircraft’s engines and put through a series of processes, including compression, before being circulated into the cabin. The air can become contaminated if engine oil, hydraulic fluid, deicing chemicals, or other substances leak into the ventilation system because of worn seals, mechanical malfunctions, or other equipment failures.

For years, TWU International and Locals 556, 577, and 579 have sounded the alarm about the dangers of toxic fume events, particularly on Airbus planes, that have made people sick and, in some instances, ended careers. Crew members have complained of headaches, dizziness, and nausea, and medical studies have linked fumes to neurological damage and other serious effects.

The airlines mostly ignored the issue – and in some instances even sought to discipline workers who spoke up. Airlines continue to deny that what they

PROACTIVE SOLUTION

A Solution to Toxic Fumes

Allegiant is leading an APU-driven SOF mitigation solution with a certified, field-ready engineering control. This moves the program from reactive odor troubleshooting to proactive source control, setting a new benchmark for APU-related odor events.

Certified Solution

Field-ready engineering control with OEM alignment

Proactive Approach

Shifts from reactive troubleshooting to source control

Industry Benchmark

Sets new standard for APU-related odor mitigation

call “in-cabin odor events” can cause long-term health effects. But there definitely has been a change in attitude in the executive offices, TWU International Vice President Thom McDaniel said.

“Now, for the most part, every carrier has acknowledged this is a problem, whether it’s their problem or not, and positive steps are being taken,” McDaniel said.

Such steps towards improving air quality for on-board crews are “a true testament to the power of TWU,” Local 577 Vice President Raychel Armstrong said.

Allegiant is now in the in-flight testing phase. Once completed successfully, the Ecology Bottle will be available to other airlines for purchase.

American Airlines is using other strategies to prevent cabin air contamination, including upgrading the seals on Airbus auxiliary power units. One experienced American mechanic described the Ecology Bottle as a “very good idea” that could reduce toxic-fume events – but cautioned it would not eliminate the problem entirely.



TWU Flight Attendants are hopeful the Ecology Bottle will reduce cabin air pollution, including Local 577 Secretary-Treasurer Chris Killian, President Christa Gifford, Recording Secretary Klarissa Principe, and Vice President Raychel Armstrong.

TWU to the Rescue!

Air Medics Join Transport Workers Union of America

Flight Nurses and Flight Paramedics who carry out dramatic high-risk rescues in Northern Nevada and California voted overwhelmingly to join the Transport Workers Union of America on April 22.

The air ambulance crews – who respond by helicopter and small plane to medical emergencies in remote, hard-to-reach areas, including alpine ski trails and desert highways – said they decided to unionize to seek better pay, benefits, and respect from their employer, REMSA Health.

“These critical first responders no longer have to fight their callous and dismissive bean-counting bosses alone,” Transport Workers Union International President John Samuelsen said. “The 165,000-member-strong TWU will fully engage to help them secure a first contract that improves their lives and livelihoods.”

One Flight Nurse said the emergency responders saw unionizing as the only way to get management to listen to them.

“We have been ignored when it comes to any executive-level decision making on things that directly affect us and the patients that we care for,” the Nurse said. “We have had zero say.”

The Flight Nurses and Flight Paramedics are in REMSA Health’s Care Flight division. They have grown increasingly frustrated that their compensation and benefits do not reflect the level of responsibility, risk, and experience required for the job. In many cases, their benefits even fall short of what other employees in the same organization receive, despite air medics’ roles requiring far more education, experience, training, and certifications. Flight crews also operate in one of the highest-acuity environments in healthcare, managing critically ill and injured patients while performing complex medical procedures like intubation in the confined, high-risk setting of an aircraft – thousands of feet above the ground.

TWU International Organizing Director Angelo Cucuzza said REMSA Health wasted time and money on a campaign to dissuade workers from joining the TWU.



REMSA Health Air Nurses and Paramedics celebrate after an overwhelming majority voted to join the Transport Workers Union. Also pictured, TWU International Organizing Director Angelo Cucuzza and Organizer Klarissa Principe (front right) and Chris Avila of Local 555, Chair of the TWU California State Conference.

“REMSA’s union busting actions failed miserably during this campaign,” Cucuzza said. “I hope, for their sake, the consultants they hired were on a contingency basis. The rehashed garbage they put out brought more workers to the TWU’s side, proving once again the boss is usually the best union organizer.”

The new TWU workgroup operates out of four bases: mountain helicopter outposts in Truckee and Beckworth, California; a helicopter base in Carson City, Nevada; and a multi-purpose base in Reno, Nevada, that has a helicopter, a fixed-wing airplane and a ground ambulance. The pilots are represented by another union.

Flight Nurses and Paramedics respond to medical emergencies such as car accidents, skiing accidents, injured hikers and snowboarders, and even avalanches. They are summoned as part of the 911 system when a ground ambulance can’t get to a scene quickly, or at all. The air medics also do critical care transports, taking patients from small rural hospitals to large trauma centers in major cities like San Francisco.





Local Air Division presidents met in Tucson, Arizona, for TWU International Air Division conference.

TUCSON SUMMIT: TWU Air Division Prepares for the Future

Dozens of Air Division local presidents and officers convened in Tucson, Arizona, on April 14 for a daylong TWU International conference focused on the broad range of expertise and resources available to help local leaders serve their members.

The Air Division Presidents Meeting featured presentations by International staff and officers on topics such as training and education, confronting advancing technology, organizing new workers into the TWU, using media to advance union goals, improving workplace safety, and building political power. Speakers also outlined the benefits of participating in the International's committees: the Veterans Committee, Future Leaders Organizing Committee, the Committee on Political Education (COPE), and the Working Women's Committee.

"You are part of a very big family," Air Division Director Andre Sutton said. "You never have to fight alone. We're here to lend you a helping hand and give you the support you need."

International Administrative Vice President Mike Mayes, representing the International Administrative Committee, attended the meeting, which drew more than 40 local presidents, officers, and staff. The Air Division encompasses more than 80,000 workers with roles such as Airline Maintenance Technicians, Dispatchers, Fleet Service Clerks, Flight Attendants, and many others. The biggest challenge facing labor organizations across the country – artificial intelligence and increasing automation – was a major topic of discussion at the conference. International Chief of Staff Gary Peterson and Air Division Director Andre Sutton said crafting contract language to protect jobs and capture new work as technology advances must be a top priority for local presidents. Airlines, for example, have tested drones and AI systems for



**TWU Local 512 Secretary-Treasurer
Erick Burch at the podium**



**TWU International Chief of Staff
Gary Peterson**

exterior aircraft inspections, and are seeking government approval to deploy them. The technology not only identifies damage but also takes precise measurements and details the steps needed to make repairs. AI already is being used at some airports to guide commercial jets from the taxiway to the gates. The airlines' goal is to reduce headcounts and cut costs, Peterson said.

"If they can find a way to replace us, they will," Peterson said. "It's something we need to be laser-focused on."

The conference also was an opportunity for locals to share information. Local 512 Secretary-Treasurer Erick Burch spoke about the success of the Ground Action Safety Program in identifying hazards and preventing workers from being disciplined for mistakes. In 95% of cases in which workers self-report incidents, they receive refresher training or task-related counseling instead of punishment, Burch said.

Former Local 568 President Tom Lee Mourned and Saluted

Tom Lee, a beloved former President of TWU Local 568 in Miami, passed away in March after a courageous battle with cancer. Lee, 65, received a hero's send-off on his final journey to Virginia, where he was born and raised.

The American Airlines Miami Honor Guard Detail Unit, led by Local 568 Recording Secretary Larry Bushley, rendered Lee final honors with a military-style ceremony at Miami International Airport on March 30. Lee was then flown to Raleigh-Durham International Airport in North Carolina, where his coffin was also gently handled by fellow TWU members. At RDU, the airport fire department performed a water-cannon salute to the deceased union leader, who was then taken by hearse to Virginia for services and burial.

"It was a beautiful send-off and truly well-deserved," TWU International Executive Vice President Alex Garcia, also a former Local 568 President, said of the two-airport salute. "Tommy was one of the good guys. He genuinely cared about his co-workers, his union brothers and sisters, and he had a positive impact on many lives."

Lee began his career in 1987, opening the then-new Raleigh Durham (RDU) hub. He transferred to Miami International Airport in the early 1990s. He held numerous positions in Local 568 before



being elected twice to the presidency. He retired in 2017 shortly after his second presidential term ended. Lee also served on the TWU International Executive Board.

"He was a gentle giant, a people's president, and simply one of the best that TWU Local 568 ever had," Bushley said.



TWU Bashes Brightline

The TWU turned up the heat on the Brightline railroad in May, highlighting its terrible safety record and mismanagement under “filthy rich” investors located on the other side of the globe.

The attacks appeared in flyers the TWU handed out to passengers and in a television commercial broadcasted on a major Miami television station. They were a direct response to Brightline’s refusal to accept workers’ vote in January 2025 to join the Transport Workers Union and to its failure to seriously bargain a first contract for Onboard Attendants and Lead Attendants.

“Brightline is a horrific, anti-union company that needs to be exposed. They’re not going to mistreat our members and walk away unscathed.”

– TWU International President John Samuelson

“Brightline is a horrific, anti-union company that needs to be exposed,” TWU International President John Samuelson said. “They’re not going to mistreat our members and walk away unscathed.”

Rail Division Director John Feltz led a TWU contingent of officers and members on several flyer-distribution outings aboard



TWU leafleteers. Left to right: Rich Houde, Vice President, Local 2055; Jesus Guerrero, Maintenance V.P., Local 291; Jimmy Leary, V.P., Local 2054; Brian Corallo, V.P., Local 2001; Pat Howard, President, Local 2001; TWU International Rail Division Director John Feltz; Tony Crapio, President, Local 2055; and Brian DeLucia, TWU International Rep.



TWU flyer handed out to Brightline riders.

Brightline trains in May. Management was rattled and called security. The bosses also sent an email to workers, whom they disingenuously call “teammates,” falsely claiming a commitment to continuing negotiations “professionally and respectfully.”

Brightline operates on 235 miles of track between Miami and Orlando. The trains travel at high speeds through hundreds of cities and busy neighborhoods at street level. Since 2017, when Brightline first put test trains on the rails, more than 200 people have been struck and killed. Experts have said that additional fencing and more effective crossing gates along the route are needed.

Brightline is owned by a U.S. corporation with major investments by a fund owned by the government of Abu Dhabi, adjacent to Saudi Arabia.

Brightline’s anti-union track record is well documented. In 2024, they hired a notorious anti-worker law firm to wage a “union avoidance” campaign to dissuade Brightline workers from unionizing. That effort failed, and the workers’ decision in early 2025 was certified by the National Mediation Board. Brightline has also – repeatedly and unsuccessfully – challenged the NMB’s jurisdiction to silence workers and invalidate their union status.

A federal judge tossed out Brightline’s lawsuit in March, deciding its arguments weren’t even worthy of being put to a jury. Brightline then filed an appeal.

“Brightline should stop wasting big bucks on high-priced lawyers and realize that the TWU is here to stay,” Feltz said. “They need to invest in their workers instead of losing court cases.”

Newly Graduated Amtrak Apprentice Dies

Kevin Perry, a member of TWU Local 2003's historic Carman apprentice class at Amtrak's Beech Grove maintenance facility in Indiana, passed away on February 19, 2026.

After graduating from Warren Central High School, Perry, 53, held several jobs before joining Amtrak as a Coach Cleaner in 2019. He completed the apprenticeship program last year, achieving his goal of becoming a qualified Journeyman Carman. This was the first such apprenticeship class in 31 years, and the culmination of years of advocacy by TWU to have Amtrak revive the program and expand opportunities for members.

"Kevin was always happy, but he was proud that he was able to come to Amtrak as a Coach Cleaner, go through this apprenticeship, and learn valuable skills to be a Carman," Local 2003 President Danny Groves said. "He was a friend and active member, and in my eyes, irreplaceable to Local 2003."



Kevin Perry

Perry was born on July 1, 1972, in Indianapolis, Indiana, to parents Ada and William Perry. In his obituary, family members described Perry as a proud member of the Church of Christ at Trader's Point who enjoyed participating in church events. He was selfless, warm, and generous, and made friends with everyone he met, they recalled. Perry was also committed to serving others through his faith in God, and family members recalled that he was proud to participate in his church's mentoring program.

Perry was also passionate about traveling, exploring new places, and finding the best pastry and coffee shops in every city he visited. He delighted in sharing his confectionery finds with family, friends, and colleagues. He loved nature and hiking, discovering hidden canyons, waterways, and the occasional Dambo Troll sculpture.

Perry is survived by his mother, Ada Perry; his siblings Teresa Buchanan, William Perry, Ronald Perry, Shana Perry, Travail Perry, and Keith Perry; and by many cousins, nieces, and nephews.



Kevin Perry, far right in the front row, on graduation day.

Raises for Local 2013 Workers at SEPTA

Local 2013 commuter railroad workers at the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority ratified a new contract on April 4. The vote was unanimous.

Workers will receive two annual 3.5% raises, an increase in the night-shift premium from 15 cents to \$1, and an improved healthcare plan. They will also see a \$550 increase in dental coverage per dependent. New hires will receive dental and vision benefits after three months on the job, rather than 15 months.



Left to right, Local 2013 Vice President Mike LaSalle, Local 2013 President Kevin Howell, SEPTA Labor Relations Director Andrew Montagna, Local 2013 Treasurer Steve Bamburak, and Shop Steward Joe Sansalone.

Local 252 President Debra Hagan Retires

A school bus executive on Long Island once called TWU Local 252 Bus Drivers “hamburger flippers” during contract negotiations in 2003, insinuating they were unworthy of higher pay and improved benefits. It was a big mistake.

TWU Local President Debra Hagan, then a union representative leading negotiations, stormed out of the room. Hours later, the union was on strike, and the yellow buses were idle on the first day of class. The company quickly caved, granting Local 252’s demands for Bus Drivers, Van Drivers and Matrons, employed by a private company in Suffolk County.

“Debra is no joke, and anyone who underestimated her at the bargaining table did so at their own peril,” TWU International President John Samuelsen said after Hagan announced her retirement earlier this year. “She never backed down from a fight and consistently brought back contracts that were better than the industry standard, and better than the contracts other unions around her had.”

TWU Local 252 has about 4,000 transit, paratransit, and school bus workers in Nassau and Suffolk Counties, New York. Hagan, who was president for 12 years. But her activism spans decades with many successful battles, including:

- Leading a decertification campaign in 1996 against a Bus Drivers’ union that Hagan said was too complacent. Hagan, a school bus driver, was then instrumental in an organizing campaign resulting in the workers joining Local 252.
- Organizing the 2003 strike. The company agreed to pay workers for a minimum number of weeks. Workers secured raises, better benefits, and the company agreed to pay workers for a minimum number of weeks, even if severe weather or other developments temporarily closed schools. The company also established a 401(k)-retirement plan.
- Leading a nearly two-week strike in 2017. Workers received raises, better benefits, and work guarantees.
- Forcing a school district in 2018 to break its contract with a bus company that put in a low-ball bid for the work and then cut wages by \$3 an hour. Hagan convinced hundreds of School Bus Drivers to stay home for weeks rather than apply for jobs with the new company, which was then fired for being unable to provide the service. Another company was given the routes and workers received a 2% raise with all the benefits of their existing contract.



Above: Debra Hagan flanked by Shirley Duff, Working Women’s Committee Director, and Cassandra Gilbert, Committee Chair, in March 2026

Left: Longtime Local 252 President Debra Hagan



Hagan gives an interview during the 2017 school bus strike against the Bauman bus company on Long Island.

- Obtaining \$170,000 for 57 Local 252 members because their employer was overcharging them through paycheck deductions for healthcare.

“A lot of people in the school bus transportation industry are great workers, but a lot of them don’t have the knowledge or ability to fight for their own cause, so I’m a strong believer in unions fighting for them,” Hagan said.

Hagan was feted in Philadelphia at the TWU International Working Women’s Committee meeting in March for her many years of dedication to the group and its mission.

“Debra is a beacon of leadership, inspiring admiration in everyone around her,” WWC Chairwoman Cassandra Gilbert said. “She’s always been a powerful voice championing women’s rights, empowering us to stand tall and assert ourselves with unwavering confidence, both within the union and beyond.”

Hagan will continue to serve as an International Vice President.



Local 1 officers and members after packing a meeting of the Akron Metro board during which they demanded a fair contract.

Battle in Ohio

In June, Akron Metro's Bus Operators and other transit workers voted 294 to 2 to reject an "insulting and outrageous" three-year contract proposal that includes two years without raises. The proposal would also force TWU Local 1 families to pay \$2,000 more annually for healthcare.

The vote, tallied on Tuesday, June 9, brought TWU Local 1 closer to a possible bus strike that would idle buses that now carry 22,000 daily riders in Akron and surrounding communities.

A state arbitrator issued the non-binding contract proposal on June 5. The Akron Metro Board accepted it Monday night, June 8, with one dissenting vote.

"My members are irate and more united than ever," Local 1 President Wayne Cole said. "This proposal is insulting, outrageous, and 100% unacceptable. By endorsing this proposal, Akron Metro threw a whole lot of fuel onto the fire."

Local 1 represents 315 Bus Operators, Vehicle Service Operators, and Clerical Workers at the transit agency. Their contract with Akron Metro expired in 2024.

Here are the details of the proposed three-year agreement effective June 2024: no raises for 2024 and 2025, no retro pay; a 300% increase for family health insurance; a 4% raise for 2026. The one raise would almost entirely wiped out by higher insurance premiums. The typical Bus Operator with a family would pay \$2,075 more a year annually for healthcare.

With the higher insurance costs, the real wage increase for a Bus Operator with a family would be less than 1%. A proposed \$3,500 lump-sum payment is a one-time gimmick that does not increase workers' hourly rates, union officers said. Much of it would be gobbled up by taxes.

"The full force and capabilities of the International Transport Workers Union, with 165,000 members nationwide, are being deployed to defend our hardworking blue-collar members in Akron against this vicious attack on their livelihoods," TWU International President John Samuelson said. "It's unbelievable that the Democratic officials who control the Akron Metro Board and transit agency would declare war on working families like this. The party is looking to regain control of the U.S. House of Representatives and the Senate. Beating up on transit workers in Ohio is appalling on a human level but also is the equivalent of political malpractice."



TWU International Transit/Universities/Utilities & Services Director Willie Brown, International Organizing Director Angelo Cucuzza, and Assistant Organizing Director Sean Doyle in Akron, Ohio.

"The International has made a commitment to be there for our locals when they need us, and we meant it. Our brothers and sisters in Akron deserve respect and a fair contract. Enough is Enough."

—Curtis Tate, Int'l Administrative Vice President

Workers are incensed that they've gone three years without a raise while Akron-Metro CEO Dawn Distler not only received annual raises, but bonus payments totaling more than \$70,000.

International TUUS Division Director Willie Brown said the TWU would plan for a strike authorization vote. That would empower Local 1 leaders to call a walkout at a time of their choosing.

The International has been very active assisting Local 1, holding strike training sessions, attending membership meetings to give them updates, creating a webpage and running a media campaign including television and print newspaper ads blasting Akron Metro bosses for their mistreatment of workers. International President John Samuelson, Secretary-Treasurer Jerome Lafragola and others have made trips to Ohio to give advice and direction.



Hudson-Bergen Light Rail Mechanics Vote to Join the TWU

Mechanics and Field Inspectors at the Hudson-Bergen Light Rail in New Jersey voted overwhelmingly in April to join the Transport Workers Union of America, fulfilling the TWU's goal of wall-to-wall industrial trade union organizing. All workers at the privately-operated NJ Transit light rail system are now TWU members.

"April 9, 2026, was a historic day for Local 229," Local 229 President Wallace Williams said. "Organizing the Mechanics and Field Inspectors into our local had been attempted before during the light rail system's 26-year history, but it had never



Local 229 President Wallace Williams, right, with former President Andrew Zutic, who passed away in October. Wallace called the successful organizing drive "historic."

been accomplished. I'm proud because we are now fully united and stronger than ever."

TWU International President John Samuelsen hailed the successful organizing drive that brought in the new work group.

"The TWU knows that worker power comes from a unified front, all crafts and classes in one big union," Samuelsen said. "We now have a unified workforce at Hudson-Bergen Light Rail ready to fight more effectively. This vote now sets up bargaining for a first contract that will lead to better pay, quality of life, and working conditions for our members."

The Mechanics at the Hudson-Bergen Light Rail work for North Central Transit Services, a private operator that also employs TWU-represented Car Cleaners on the light rail line. Operators and Maintenance of Way workers at the light rail are also part of the TWU, though they work for ACI-Herzog.

"The successful election shows the power of the TWU in New Jersey," TWU Transit, Universities, Utilities, and Services Division Director Willie Brown said. "We now begin the work of securing a contract with a living wage and better working conditions for Mechanics and Field Inspectors, as well as reining in managers who bully workers."

With the April vote by Mechanics and Field Inspectors, Local 229's membership will grow by 30%.

"The TWU continues to be America's Fightback Union with our latest successful election," TWU Organizing Director Angelo Cucuzza said. "We will keep winning representation elections and contract fights across the country."



TUUS Director Willie Brown, right, with International Administrative Vice President Curtis Tate, said the next step is to negotiate a Mechanics' contract.

TWU Local 320 Secures Landmark Contract Extension for LA Bikeshare Workers

TWU Local 320 in Los Angeles secured a landmark, industry-leading contract extension featuring 13% raises over two years and a guaranteed 32-hour, 4-day work week.

"I could not be prouder of the work our union has done," Anne Marie Drolet, the Chief Shop Steward and Western Regional Representative, said. "Every single day, our members grow Metro Bike Share ridership and are helping to build a more bike-friendly LA for everyone."

The landmark agreement with Bicycle Transit Systems builds on the contract that began in 2023 and ran through December 2025. Under the extension, with raises in 2026 and 2027, workers will see their pay increase between 20% to 27% over the life of the agreement.

The extension also codifies the practice of a four-day, 32-hour work week for the system's Mechanics, Electronic Technicians, Rebalancers, and other system workers. In addition, it features a severance package with health insurance in the event of future layoffs.

"The hard work, dedication, and resilience of TWU Local 320 union members have proven over and over again to be unbreakable and unstoppable," Local 320 President Ed Aviles said. "They are committed to providing LA's Metro Bike Share program – and its riders – with the highest levels of service, quality, and safety. Members in LA and nationally continue to ensure that Transport Workers Union Local 320 maintains its integrity and strength as an unbreakable chain and unstoppable union."

TWU International President John Samuelson said Local 320 again "went to the mat" for its members.

"The TWU is America's largest bikeshare union for a reason," Samuelson said. "Local 320 delivers for bikeshare workers



LA Bikeshare workers. Chief Shop Steward and Local 320 Western Regional Rep. Anne Marie Drolet on the far left.



Local 320 President Ed Aviles

nationwide from New York to Los Angeles, and the TWU will continue to deliver."

The deal comes after TWU Local 320 members endured more than two years of uncertainty. During that time, LA Metro forwarded two contracts to a competing company to manage and provide equipment for the system before withdrawing them under pressure from the TWU. While Bicycle Transit Systems and TWU Local 320 negotiated the contract extension,

the LA Metro Board retains the authority to select a contractor to operate the city's bikeshare network. The TWU successfully fought a 2024 proposal to replace Bicycle Transit Systems with another company, which would have threatened bikeshare workers' industry-leading contract with BTS.

TWU Local 320 represents more than 2,000 bikeshare and scooter workers nationwide during the peak summer season. Local 320 represents workers in New York City, Boston, Washington DC, Chicago, San Francisco, Portland, and Los Angeles, and recently organized bikeshare workers in Pittsburgh.

Pittsburgh Bikeshare Workers Vote to Join the TWU, America's Largest Bikeshare Union

In March, Pittsburgh bikeshare workers with POGOH voted overwhelmingly to join the Transport Workers Union of America, the largest union of bikeshare workers nationwide. Workers unionized to obtain better wages and working conditions, including adequate heat and ventilation in the shop.



TWU Awards Scholarship Recipients

The Transport Workers Union awarded 32 college scholarships to children of members in a drawing at union headquarters in Washington, D.C., on May 7, 2026.

The winners are receiving a combined total of \$112,000 to help pay for their higher education, TWU Executive Vice President Alex Garcia announced.

"Special thanks to our scholarship sponsors and best wishes to all the winners," Garcia said.

Acrisure, M3 Technology, Pitta LLP, and Pitta Bishop & Del Giorno LLC are the scholarship sponsors.



The drawing was held at TWU headquarters in Washington, D.C.

"We look at this as a social contract," M3 President John Pescitilli, whose father was a SEIU member, said. "We see the children of Bus Operators, Mechanics and other workers going to Ivy League schools and becoming engineers and doctors, and that's what it's all about. It's all about, you know, moving to the next level and creating opportunities."



Executives from the scholarship sponsoring corporations Acrisure, M3 Technology, Pitta LLP, and Pitta Bishop & Del Giorno LLC

Vito Pitta, Managing Partner of Pitta LLP and Managing Member of Pitta Bishop & Del Giorno, said the firms were inspired by Martin Luther King and TWU founder Michael Quill. After Quill's death, King said, "When the totality of a man's life is consumed with enriching the lives of others, this is a man the ages will remember." I can think of no greater guidance to provide to these high school graduates than what was said of Michael Quill by one of the most influential civil rights leaders in history, and why the TWU has chosen to name the scholarship for him."

TWU INTERNATIONAL SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS

Michael J. Quill Scholarship Winners - \$4,800

(paid out \$1200 per year for four consecutive years)

NAME	MEMBER	LOCAL
Alyssa Ally	Muhammad Ally	100
Ashley Avalos Gonzalez	Henry Avalos	575
Karen Carrington	Tawana Hutchinson	100
Isabella Corcoran	Mario Basile	225
Marina Cosentino	Linda Cosentino	591
Emerson Crawford	Amy Dennis	556
Matthew Kong	Jason Kong	250A
Petra Kubiak	Amber Wood	556
Derek Nanke	Chris Nanke	223
Dev Patel	Manoj Patel	514
Keyshawn Profitt	Ralston Profitt	106
Jacob C. Swiader	Charles Swiader	2001
Brenden Vega	Pablo Vega	100
Nashy Washington	Otis Washington	100
Erin Zambrano	Edward Zambrano	591

Acrisure - \$2,500 (one-year scholarship)

NAME	MEMBER	LOCAL
Emily Douglas	Ronald Douglas	223
Aspen Fraidstern	Josh Fraidstern	100
Lilah Gallego	Carmen Baez	100

Acrisure - \$2,500 (one-year scholarship) continued

Jermell Green	Bridgette McCullough	555
Sage Johnson	Jamal Johnson	106
Christopher Koller	Emeric Koller	591
Chasye McBride	Julius McBride	100
Israel Porter	Charis Dorsey	555
Robert Roman	Francisca Biascochea	100
Yiran Shi	Shaojie Shi	100

M3 Technology - \$2,000 (one-year scholarship)

NAME	MEMBER	LOCAL
Brandon Laliberte	Brian Laliberte	548
Daniel Agranovskly	Dmitriy Agranovskly	100
Kiara Hernandez	Angel Hernandez	100
Presley Jones	Jason Jones	514
Alivia Califano	Daniel Califano	234

Pitta LLP - \$2,500 (one-year scholarship)

NAME	MEMBER	LOCAL
Elijah Oliphant	David Whittenburg	100

Pitta Bishop Del Giorno LLC - \$2,500 (one-year scholarship)

NAME	MEMBER	LOCAL
Sophia Kilbride	Clifford Kilbride	234

Women in Nontraditional Workplace Roles

Cassandra Griffin

From Ticket Agents who worked in the New York City Subway system in the 1930s to Aircraft Maintenance Technicians, Journeyman Carmen, Power Cable Maintainers, and more, the TWU has a long history of representing women who work in nontraditional workplace roles. In this issue of The Express, we are featuring Cassandra Griffin, Cable Car Conductor, and a member of Local 250A in San Francisco, California. Griffin has been a proud TWU member since 1998.

What is your job title and where do you work?

I am a Cable Car Conductor for the City and County of San Francisco, working on the world-famous San Francisco cable cars. I have proudly worked for the city since 1998. This year makes 28 years so, with that being said, I have spent many years serving both the residents and visitors of San Francisco, while helping preserve one of the city's most historic landmarks.

How long have you been a TWU member, and what is your role within the union?

I have been a proud member of the Transportation Workers Union since 1998. My role within the union is as a dedicated member who values the protection, support, and solidarity the union provides to working people every day.

What does the Transportation Workers Union mean to you, and how has it impacted your life?

The TWU represents stability, protection, unity, and opportunity. Being part of a union gave me job security and the ability to build a stable life while doing work I truly love. It also gave me the confidence to know that workers have representation and support in the workplace.

That means a lot to me, especially understanding the struggles many women faced before strong union protections existed. One of my biggest inspirations was Maya Angelou, who faced discrimination and rejection before eventually becoming San Francisco's first African American female streetcar Conductor. Her determination inspired me deeply. I admired the professionalism of the uniform, the pride that came with the position, and the doors that union careers can open for women.

Tell us about the job you perform and your responsibilities.

Being a San Francisco Cable Car Conductor is both physically and mentally demanding. Every day requires customer service skills, teamwork, safety awareness, and the ability to stay focused in a fast-paced environment. We work on steep hills, through traffic, and in all weather conditions while assisting passengers from all over the world.

My responsibilities include ensuring passenger safety, assisting with boarding and exiting, collecting fares, communicating with the Grip Operator, helping tourists navigate the city, and staying alert at all times. As Conductors, we are also representing an important part of San Francisco history and culture.

What made you decide to become a Cable Car Conductor?

What first attracted me to the profession was the professionalism and appearance of the cable car logo on the uniform. Seeing the pride associated with the role reminded me of Maya Angelou's story and her admiration for the uniform as well. I wanted to be part of something historic, respected, and meaningful.

Over the years, becoming a Cable Car Conductor has become



much more than just a job to me. It became part of my identity and something I truly love and take pride in every day.

When not working, what are your favorite activities?

Outside of work, I focus a lot on my health and wellness. As I continue getting older, staying healthy, eating right, and keeping myself physically fit have become very important priorities in my life. I believe taking care of yourself is essential so you can continue enjoying life and doing the work you love.

What challenges have you faced as a working woman?

One of the challenges of working in cable car transportation division is being in an environment that has traditionally been male dominated. At times, that can come with challenges as a woman. However, for the most part, I can honestly say that many of the men I've worked alongside throughout my career have looked out for me and treated me with respect and support.

What advice would you give to other women?

I would encourage women to never be afraid to step into careers that may traditionally be seen as "men's work." Believe in yourself, stay professional, work hard, and never allow fear to stop you from pursuing opportunities. Women are capable of succeeding in any field, and sometimes simply showing up and persevering can open doors for the next generation.



JetBlue Dispatchers with TWU International Organizing Director Angelo Cucuzza, second from right, and Special Projects Coordinator Alejandro Arroyo, far left.

Dispatchers Reject JetBlue's Empty Promises and Join the TWU

Air Dispatchers and dispatch-related workers at JetBlue Airways voted in February to join the Transport Workers Union of America, the latest group of JetBlue workers to join the country's largest airline workers' union.

The unionization vote came after years of broken promises from management, and was a forceful rejection of JetBlue's "at-will employment agreements" that apply to all non-union workers at the airline. Dispatch workers were recently told they would not get a raise in 2026, even though they are normally eligible for raises once every two years.

"JetBlue Dispatch workers sent a strong message to the bosses they are done with worthless at-will employment agreements that only serve management's interests," TWU International President John Samuelson said. "We are continuing our industrial organizing at JetBlue and will now fight for a first contract that delivers better pay and working conditions. JetBlue's employment agreements and phony values committees aren't worth the paper they're printed on."

In recent months, JetBlue management also changed working conditions, requiring all current System Controllers to obtain

Dispatcher licenses previously not required for their employment. All the Dispatch-related workers who voted to join the TWU work out of JetBlue headquarters in Long Island City, NY.

"JetBlue Dispatcher workers realized that JetBlue's 'at-will employment agreements' are nothing more than a facade to keep workers from making real economic gains," TWU Organizing Director Angelo Cucuzza said. "As their company-controlled 'values committee' disbands, a worker-elected Negotiating Team will be formed, and a demand for real negotiations will commence. JetBlue Dispatchers saw joining the TWU as the best path forward for navigating a rapidly changing airline industry."

The TWU also represents Flight Attendants and Flight Instructors at JetBlue. The NY-based Flight Dispatchers are the latest such work group to join the TWU. The TWU currently represents Flight Dispatchers at Air Wisconsin, Alaska-Hawaiian Airlines, Avelo Airlines, Breeze Airways, Envoy Airlines, Frontier Airlines, Horizon Airlines, Kalitta Airlines, Omni Airlines, PSA Airlines, Republic Airlines, Southwest Airlines, Sun Country Airlines and UPS Airlines.

TWU at MRO Americas

The TWU had several members compete – and win – at 2026 MRO Americas in Orlando, Florida, this year.

MRO America's is the world's largest premier trade show and conference for the commercial air transport, maintenance, repair, and overhaul industry. The TWU had two teams: American Airlines Base (blue shirts) and American Airlines Line (red line).

Base won in 4 individual competitions and placed 3rd overall.

Photo Right: Line Team and union reps, left to right: Alejandro Arroyo, Sean Doyle, Johnnie Benyard, Gary Schaible, Damian Navas Moreano, Al Padilla, Troy Rhoads, Eric Lopez-Isidro, Jason Ferguson, Edgar Danis-Montero, Meylin Concepcion, Brian Coyne, Gary Peterson, and Rollie Reaves



Base Team and union reps, left to right: Alejandro Arroyo, Jason Best, Sean Doyle, Gary Peterson, Luis Cervantes-Bustios, Brent Duvall, Scott Bell, Lisa Prince, Nick Wiseman, Sergio Lozada Chinae, Joe Brown, Marla Johnson, and Rollie Reaves



Florida Labor Campaign

South Florida AFL-CIO President Jeffery Mitchell, a former Local 291 president, kicked off the regional AFL-CIO's "Labor 2026 campaign" in Miami in May. He issued a warning to elected officials: transit workers, teachers, construction workers, and many other working people, are struggling with high rents and home prices, and they vote.

The TWU's Florida State Conference attended the breakfast meeting.

"Working people are being priced out of South Florida while the people who keep this community running are struggling just to stay here," Mitchell, currently a TWU International Staff Representative, said. "The Labor 2026 campaign is about making sure working people have a stronger voice at every level of government so we can fight for affordable housing, better wages, stronger unions, safer workplaces, and an economy that works for everybody — not just wealthy developers and corporations."



The TWU Florida State Conference, from left: Brian Albury, Local 555; Marc Levros, Local 291; AC Castillo, Local 568; Edgar Jimenez, Local 555; Joe De Valle, Local 291; James Birkins Jr, Local 291; Jeffery Mitchell, TWU TUUS International Rep., and Nukeumma Hyles, Local 570

Local 556 Advocates for Pro-Union Legislation in Colorado

TWU Local 556 members attended a Colorado Senate session on May 1 to support the Worker Protection Act (WPA). The WPA would help newly organized union members pass their first contract with employers.

Currently, Colorado law requires newly organized workers to vote on dues checkoffs before members can ratify their first contract. This superfluous requirement creates a costly barrier to members forming a new union and allows unscrupulous employers to further divide workers over the issue of union dues. The WPA would eliminate the separate dues vote and allow members a more streamlined contract ratification process.



TWU Local 556 members Michelle Abramovitch and Sarah Smith watched proceedings from the gallery as the Colorado Senate passed the Worker Protection Act (HB 26-1005).

The Colorado Senate passed the WPA on May 1 and it was then sent to Governor Jared Polis. The bill was reintroduced this year after Polis vetoed it during the previous legislative session.



Colorado union members packed the Colorado Senate gallery in support of the Worker Protection Act on May 1.

States Training Sessions

Training and Education Director Mitch Lieberman conducted training sessions for TWU officers in seven states from February to May. Here's a roundup of the training topics and the locals that participated.



LINTHICUM, MD – Multiple locals, Secretary-Treasurers training, April 19-24.



ATLANTA, GA

– Local 510, Shop Steward training, March 18

BOSTON, MA

– Local 507 in Boston celebrated the 80th anniversary of its founding.



FORT KNOX, TN

Local 527, grievances, March 25
swearing in, NYC, NY, March 31.



AROUND THE UNION



HOUSTON, TX – Locals 262 & 265, joint officers training, February 28, and March 1



HOUSTON, TX – Local 557 & 262 Secretary-Treasurer training, Feb. 9.



CHICAGO, IL – Local 571, contract negotiations, Feb. 16.



ORLANDO, FL
Local 510 grievances
and Shop Stewards'
swearing in, May 4

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COPE Director Andrew Rangolan
at arangolan@twu.org**

“TWU COPE makes our union stronger. It is our political voice. COPE allows us to support elected officials and candidates for office, regardless of party, who stand with us. As transportation changes through automation, new technology, outsourcing, and corporate cost-cutting, we need lawmakers who understand that progress should not come at the expense of our jobs, safety, or wages. COPE makes sure TWU members are heard when laws, policies, and regulations are written, and the future of our industry is being shaped. Anti-union interests spend big money to cut jobs, lower standards and reduce benefits. Contributing to COPE is how workers fight back together.”

– Armando Castillo Local 568



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