A LOOK INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Bail reform, farmworker rights and other laws launch in 2020 - p2

Was state Education Department veteran done in by bottle of olive oil? - p11

Bill in Congress Targets Intimidation of Unionizing Workers - p27
Bail reform, farmworker rights and other laws launch in 2020

Times Union - January 1, 2020

ALBANY, N.Y. (AP) — Farmworkers can unionize and the number of people held in jail awaiting trial is set to decrease under a host of new laws taking effect in 2020 in New York.

The newly Democratic-controlled Legislature passed over 900 bills this year — a marked increase from typical years. Democratic Gov. Andrew Cuomo has approved nearly 750 bills and vetoed 168 as of Monday.

The pile of new laws marks a victory for Democrats who had long lacked control of the Senate. Some bills taking effect in January include:

BAIL REFORM

New York's bail law eliminates pretrial detention and money bail for the vast majority of misdemeanor and nonviolent felony cases. The law also requires release for other felonies — second-degree burglary and second-degree robbery.

The law would still require cash bail for major drug trafficking offenses, sex offenses, criminal contempt in a domestic violence case, witness tampering or intimidation and certain offenses against children.

Cuomo estimates the new law will keep about 90% of defendants out of jail at least until their case gets resolved.

FARMWORKER RIGHTS

Another new law taking effect Jan. 1 gives farmworkers the right to organize, collect overtime and get a day off.

Under current law, farm laborers do not have the right to organize. The new law ensures that farmworkers earn overtime if they work more than 60 hours a week. They would also be guaranteed one day of rest each week.

Supporters — including many farm laborers, their advocates and groups including the Roman Catholic Church — say the workers deserve the same rights and benefits as others. Many farm owners had warned that the measure could dramatically increase farm labor costs.

MINIMUM WAGE

The minimum wage is rising to $15 an hour for all workers in New York City, as of Dec. 31.

Workers elsewhere in the state will make less: $13 in the city's near suburbs and $11.80 upstate.

In 2013, New York raised the minimum wage to $9 from $7.25 for nontipped workers.

A 2016 law called for the state to eventually raise its minimum wage to $15 but phased it in at different rates for New York City, the suburbs and upstate. The law also gave small New York City employers with 10 or fewer employees an extra year to make it to $15.

Cuomo's administration has until fall 2020 to decide when the minimum wage should reach $15 in Hudson Valley and upstate communities facing struggling economies.
ADOPTION CERTIFICATES

Adoptees can soon obtain a certified birth certificate under a new law effective Jan. 15.

Under the current law, adoptees must go before a judge to request access to their birth certificate. Advocates who have fought for 20 years for New York’s law say that access isn’t always guaranteed.

New York’s new law allows adult adoptees, their descendants or legal representative to obtain a certified copy of their original birth certificate.

The National Conference of State Legislatures says about half of states still require a court order. Some critics worry about privacy rights of birth parents.

TEENS PREREGISTERING TO VOTE

It's about to become easier for teens to get ready to vote once they're of age.

Starting Jan. 1, New York is allowing individuals 16 years or older to preregister to vote.

Once those individuals turn 18, the Board of Elections will automatically register them to vote.

PUBLIC CAMPAIGN FINANCE

Lawmakers missed a December deadline to block a politically appointed commission's plan to use public money to fund campaigns in New York.

The plan has drawn scrutiny from Republicans and Democrats alike who are expected to fine-tune the plan’s details next year. And lawmakers will have time to make changes. Commissioners delayed the program four years for state legislative races and six years for statewide races.

New Yorkers who give $250 or less would see their donations matched with public funds 6 to 1 for statewide office candidates such as governor. So a $100 donation would be worth $700 to a candidate.

Donations to local candidates would also be matched: 12 to 1 for the first $50, 9 to 1 for the next $100 and 8 to 1 for the final $100.

Candidates will face limits of $5,000 per donor for Assembly races and $10,000 for Senate races, down from roughly $9,000 and $19,000. New York’s campaign finance limits are the highest in the country, and federal presidential candidates can raise $5,600 from a single donor.

Voting rights groups have called New York’s plan a big step forward but said lawmakers should lower limits political contributions and ensure independent oversight of the system.

NEW TAX CREDITS

Starting Wednesday, businesses can receive a tax credit for providing child care facilities to employees.

Another new law allows tax credits for employees that hire certain people who are in recovery from substance use disorders. And New York television studios who hire women and minority television writers can also receive a tax credit in 2020.
FIREARMS LAWS

New York will soon criminalize weapons that are undetectable by an X-ray machine or metal detector.

The law taking effect Jan. 27 prohibits the manufacture, sale, transport and possession of undetectable firearms, rifles and shotguns as well as their major components.

Another new law will set statewide standards for gun buyback programs across New York.

Many municipalities and groups already host programs aimed at allowing people to get rid of unwanted or illegal guns. But supporters of the new law say the programs do not occur everywhere and lack consistent standards.
Employers can more easily restrict workers from wearing union buttons and other insignia under a National Labor Relations Board ruling released Dec. 23.

The NLRB held that Wal-Mart Stores, Inc. policies that say workers can only wear “small, non-distracting” insignia no larger than the size of employee name badges are lawful. That’s because the business’ goals in maintaining the practice—enhancing the customer shopping experience and protecting merchandise from theft—outweigh any potential harmful impacts on workers’ rights to organize and unionize, the board said. An identical policy applied to areas outside of the “selling floor”—where employees don’t encounter customers—is unlawful, the NLRB ruled in a 3-1 opinion dated Dec. 16.

The ruling is a loss for the union-affiliated Organization United for Respect at Walmart, or Our Walmart. It also marks a pro-business turn in the NLRB’s approach to cases concerning union buttons and other insignia. The board has generally analyzed those cases under precedent from the 1940’s that recognizes worker’s right to wear union insignia, and presumes that employers’ limitations are unlawful unless they demonstrate “special circumstances” justifying the restriction. That case is known as Republic Avaiation.

Borrowing from Boeing

The Republican majority in the Walmart case said the NLRB will begin looking at limits on union insignia on the job using the analysis for “facially neutral” workplace policies laid out in its 2017 Boeing decision. The Republic Avaiation analysis specifically concerns insignia, while the Boeing case laid out a broad framework for considering the legality of almost any employer “handbook” rules. “Necessarily, because the infringement on” union “rights is less severe, the employer’s legitimate justifications for maintaining the restriction do not need to be as compelling for its policy to pass legal muster, and justifications other than the recognized special circumstances may suffice,” the board majority wrote. “In such cases, we will apply the analytical framework in Boeing.”

The Boeing standard requires the board to weigh the nature and extent of the potential impact on union rights against the employer’s legitimate justifications in cases challenging “facially neutral” rules.

Democrat Lauren McFerran dissented from the decision, saying the Republican majority ignored the NLRB’s own as well as U.S. Supreme Court precedent. McFerran, whose term ended Dec. 16, also expressed concern that the board plans to expand the use of the Boeing framework to a wide range of unfair labor practice disputes. “Today, the majority brushes aside Republic Aviation and its progeny and applies the less demanding standard from its deeply flawed decision in Boeing Co. to find that the Respondent’s restriction of its employees’ Section 7 right to wear union insignia was lawful,” McFerran wrote. “I fear that today’s decision signals the majority’s intention to import the Boeing frame work—which is less protective of Section 7 rights—into other well-settled areas of Board law that currently require their own subject-matter specific analyses,” she wrote. “That surely would not be a welcome development for workers.”

Walmart settled a case with OUR Walmart in 2018 that required the company to drop some policies restricting union pins. The Supreme Court earlier this year rejected In-N-Out Burger Inc.’s petition to challenge an NLRB ruling that the company’s restrictions on union buttons were illegal. The board applied the Republic Aviation standard in that case.

Several recent decisions by the National Labor Relations Board would make it harder for workers to unionize. However, labor unions refused to take these decisions lying down.

In 2014, the NLRB ruled that employees at Purple Communications who have access to their employers’ email system for “work-related” purposes had a right to use those emails during non-work time. The board said that these communications were protected for Section 7 of the National Labor Relations Act. But the new NLRB, with members appointed by Pres. Donald Trump, overruled the previous decision in Caesars Entertainment d/b/a Rio All-Suites Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas stating that employers can restrict the ability of employees to use their work email outside of work time to discuss workplace issues.

The 2014 case was filed by the Communication Workers of America (CWA).

“Corporations have far too much power over working people’s lives.” stated CWA President Chris Shelton. “The National Labor Relations Board is supposed to safeguard workers’ freedom to join together and fight back against injustice at their workplaces and protect workers when their employers abuse their power. Pres. Trump’s NLRB has done just the opposite. With every decision, they make it harder for workers to speak out and easier for employers to silence them.”

The NLRB also ruled in the Apogee Retail LLC d/b/a Unique Thrift Store case that employers can stop workers from discussing ongoing investigations into illegal or unethical behavior like sexual harassment.

According to CWA, silencing workers who might be affected by the behavior in question allows employers to cover up allegations and prevents workers from sharing information they could connect their experiences.

“These decisions show why passing legislation like the Protecting the Right to Organize (PRO) Act to increase worker power is so important,” stated CWA Senior Director for Government Affairs and Policy Shane Larson. “The Trump administration has been working as fast as they can on corporate America’s wish list for silencing anyone who dares to challenge their absolute control over working people’s lives. They want us to sit down and shut up.”

In another case that might demonstrate the reason to pass PRO, the NLRB ruled in a case involving Valley Hospital Medical Center in Pomona, CA, that employers can stop collecting union dues from members’ paychecks once the collective bargaining agreement ends. This would allow employers to interfere with union members’ relationship with their collective bargaining representative and makes it harder for members to remain in good standing so that they can vote on union issues.

Some 1,200 full-time nurses at the medical center say their concerned about working conditions, the nurse-to-patient ratio and their health insurance plan.

But workers’ problems can also be found locally.

Chipotle Mexican Grill found themselves in the crosshairs of a regional NLRB office who said the employer violated workers’ legal rights to organize themselves.
The complaint, based on information attained by 32BJ SEIU, accuses supervisors at Chipotle engaging in abusive behavior in their anti-organizing efforts at two different locations (464 Park Avenue South and 117 East 14th Street). One story involved a female worker who was fired for complaining about her pay, hours and working conditions including asking for improvement in “scheduling practices.”

The NLRB alleges that Chipotle did this because of her efforts to assist the union in organizing fellow employees. 32BJ SEIU President Kyle Bragg agreed. “Chipotle’s patterns of illegal behavior in New York City is disappointing but will not deter workers from achieving their aim of joining the union,” stated Bragg. “Fast food workers, including those who work at Chipotle, have a right to organize a union. And they are going to get their union.”
Black History Month: Letitia "Tish" James
NYSUT News - January 3, 2020

Letitia “Tish” James is the 67th Attorney General of New York State. She became the first African-American, and the first woman, elected to the position in 2018 and the first African-American woman elected to statewide office in New York.

Prior to being elected attorney general, James served as the public advocate for the city of New York, the second highest elected official in New York City, where she became the first woman of color to hold citywide office.

She served as a New York City Council Member, representing the 35th Council District for a decade, head of the Brooklyn Regional Office of the New York Attorney General’s Office, and spent many years as a lawyer in the New York State Legislature. She began her career as a public defender at the Legal Aid Society.

James is a graduate of Lehman College/CUNY and Howard University School of Law.

For more on the important contributions of African-Americans, or to download a printable copy of the poster, visit nysut.org/publications. Limited print quantities are free for NYSUT members and leaders.
The general counsel of a U.S. labor agency has accused Chipotle Mexican Grill of violating U.S. labor law by allegedly firing an employee in New York in retaliation for complaining about workplace problems and trying to organize with a union.

The office of the general counsel of the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) filed the complaint on Dec. 12. The union involved, 32BJ, which is trying to organize workers at the Mexican fast-casual restaurant chain, received a copy of the complaint on Thursday.

Because Chipotle’s restaurants are all owned by the corporation as a single employer, it is an easier target for union organizers than fast-food giant McDonald’s, most of whose locations are owned and operated by franchisees.

Chipotle spokespeople did not provide an immediate response to requests for comment.

The NLRB’s general counsel, Peter Robb, alleged in the complaint that a manager at a restaurant in Manhattan in May threatened to fire employees if they engaged in union activities — even implying they might face physical violence — and promised promotions to other workers who provided information about the organizing.

The complaint, which was filed with the NLRB, also alleges similar manager intimidation at another Manhattan store. One employee who complained about scheduling and other problems was fired.

The complaint asks that Chipotle reimburse the fired employee for expenses incurred from work searches and for tax relief from any lump sum back pay awards. The complaint seeks no other remedy.

The NLRB’s general counsel operates independently from the Board and is responsible for investigating and prosecuting unfair labor practices. Robb, who has been general counsel since November 2017, was appointed by President Donald Trump.

The parent of 32BJ, the Service Employees International Union, is involved in the Fight for $15 and a Union, which has long sought to organize workers at McDonald’s.

That effort suffered a setback of sorts last week when the full NLRB board approved McDonald’s’ proposed settlement allowing the fast-food company to avoid a ruling on whether it is a “joint employer” of franchise workers and could be made to bargain with unions.

While Fight for $15 and a Union said it would appeal, the decision suggests it may be a long road for organizers if they are not able to target the parent corporation and must instead bargain with thousands of individual U.S. owners.

Chipotle must respond to the complaint by Dec. 26 and a hearing is set for March 2 in New York.
New fronts will open in the media union wars in 2020

Max Willens - DIGIDAY - January 2, 2020

In 2019, the organizing wave that began rising in 2018 crested, with employees at digital publishers including Quartz, BuzzFeed News, Wirecutter and The Ringer and legacy media companies such as Hearst and NBC News all organizing. Over the past five years, the ranks of the Writers Guild of America East, which counts employees from Vice, Refinery29 and Thrillist among its 5,000 members, have grown 40%.

Management efforts to beat back the organizing, which have ranged from skipping bargaining sessions to social media campaigns, have mostly flopped. And in 2020, a new front in this conflict will open up as freelancers look to get organized. In November, the Freelance Solidarity Project, a group of freelance media workers operating with the help of the National Writers Union, elected its first organizing committee. That 12-person committee will spend 2020 working on projects including drafting letters of agreement that standardize the working relationships that media companies have with freelancers, including not just pay rates but also provisions related to things like safety when reporting abroad.

The Project’s membership is small, but growing quickly. At the end of December 2019, the Project had already hit its membership growth target for 2020, said Emma Whitford, a member of the Freelance Solidarity Project’s organizing committee. The Project plans to continue adding writers to its ranks, but it will look to add other kinds of media workers as well, including photographers, videographers, graphic designers, illustrators.

“We’ve got this blank slate goal of setting industry-wide standards for freelancers,” Whitford said.

For now, the salaried and freelance media workers want to work together. Members from the Freelance Solidarity Project visited a solidarity meeting for Hearst Magazines’ organizing workers held in late December. One of the goals for the Project includes developing closer working relationships with larger media unions, such as the News Guild at WGA East.

But there’s a chance the freelancers’ and full-timers’ interests could slip out of alignment. At the end of 2019, freelancers raged at a provision in Assembly Bill 5, a California state law, that capped the number of articles any freelancer could produce for a given publication at 35 per year. That provision, much haggled over in the bill’s creation, was seen by some as a concession to media unions, which have long tried to limit media companies’ reliance on freelancers. In 2020, a separate bill governing freelancers is set to be introduced in New York State, with provisions that could exacerbate those tensions.

How freelancers and employees get along with one another as issues including freelancer labor and intellectual property rights become a legislative focus will be play a crucial role in how both unions relate to management. And historically, the relationship has not been good.

“The [News]Guild struggled for years over how to deal with freelance issues,” said former NewsGuild president Bernard Lunzer, who lost his seat this year after a three-term run. “You want people that want to get jobs to be able to get jobs. You don’t want freelance to be abused to the point where it degrades things.”

To some extent, the factors that kept freelancers and salaried workers separate in the past have disappeared. And even if a schism were to remain between freelancers and full-time employees, there is more pro-union energy coursing through the industry than ever, which should have significant effects on how media executives chart their courses next year.

“If I were an employer right now,” Lunzer said, “I’d be kind of panicked.”
Was state Education Department veteran done in by bottle of olive oil?

Rick Karlin - Times Union - January 7, 2020

The 87-year-old state Education Department (SED) employee was found unresponsive in his car at his home in September, just over a week after he had been placed on administrative leave by human resource officials at the agency. Less than two weeks later he was dead.

While the dismissal and subsequent death of the well-liked, five-decade state employee sparked outrage from many of his co-workers, family members and others say the back story is even more disturbing and bizarre than the initial complaint that he was the victim of possible ageism.

A number of his co-workers, who didn’t want to be named for fear of reprisal, said McCarthy was locked out of the SED building on Sept. 16 after someone told the agency’s human resources unit that they thought McCarthy may have been keeping a jar of urine on his desk.

That was later determined to be untrue, according to McCarthy's co-workers who spoke to the Times Union. However, they said the complaint sparked the immediate response in which McCarthy's swipe card was decommissioned and a guard at the entrance to the SED building sent him home.

Nothing like that had ever happened to McCarthy and some believe the shock took its toll. McCarthy was declared dead from a stroke 12 days after he was discovered unconscious in the driveway of his Scotia home.

“That rumor is completely untrue,” McCarthy’s niece, Katrina Richard, said, referring to the idea that he would have a jar of urine on his desk. “Why would he do that?” she asked. “He had a very clear head,” she added, explaining that McCarthy had all his faculties with no apparent health issues.

State Education Department officials declined to comment other than saying that McCarthy had not been subject to any official discipline.

“Out of respect for the privacy of SED employees and concerns regarding confidentiality, we cannot comment on personnel matters regarding employees or former employees of SED. However, SED followed well established and widely accepted procedures regarding the circumstances referenced in your inquiry. Mr. McCarthy was not, at any point, subject to discipline at SED,” the agency said in an email.

Rather than being officially disciplined, McCarthy was placed on administrative leave pending an investigation, in which one is instructed to stay home and call in every morning to see if he or she should come to work.

To some observers, the entire affair appears to be an example of what SED employees say is an over-zealous human resources department, which has for some time been a source of complaints in the sprawling agency.

A bachelor who lived alone with a pair of rescue cats, McCarthy fit the image of a state worker who lived largely for his job, which focused on helping newly trained teachers navigate the considerable bureaucracy involved in getting certified.

“He gave his whole career to that department. He worked holidays; he worked weekends,” said Richard, who lives in Connecticut.

Even at 87 he remained mentally sharp, said one co-worker who recalled how he was an enthusiastic walker and would often go outside without his coat, despite the cold weather.
“He dedicated his whole life to that office,” added his nephew Mike Kuzleky, a New York City resident.

“Mr. McCarthy was a wonderful man and an exemplary state employee! I am one of many he ‘saved’ with help getting certification,” Suzanne Pelcher wrote in an email to the Times Union. "May he Rest In Peace!"

Moreover, co-workers liked him for his willingness to help new people and his habit of regularly bringing in freshly baked bread for employees from Perecca’s bakery in Schenectady near his home.

He bought tomato pies and small rolls just about every day, said bakery operator Maria Papa, who knew McCarthy for years.

That all changed Sept. 16 when his entry badge was turned off and he couldn’t get in the SED building.

After learning that he was on administrative leave, he tried to contact his union rep, but couldn’t immediately reach her since the union, the Public Employees Federation, was in the middle of its annual convention that day a few blocks away at the Capital Center. “He had no one to turn to,” said Richard. “No one should be put under that duress.”

Eventually, the union rep did reach out to him.

But on Sept. 20, when he hadn’t been calling in, a union member called him and got no answer. Worried, she asked police to check on him, and they found McCarthy, stricken and unconscious in his car. He had suffered a stroke and he never regained consciousness, passing away at Ellis Hospital on Sept. 28.

By then, SED officials had figured out the jar on McCarthy’s desk contained olive oil, rather than urine, his co-workers said.

What worries so many of his co-workers was the rapidity with which he was placed on leave and with which HR staffers assumed the worst, before thoroughly investigating the contents of the jar.

When PEF asked about McCarthy's administrative leave, a representative of SED’s Bureau of Labor Relations wrote, “I can advise that this action was taken by the agency to address a situation where sanitation standards/protocol were potentially compromised.”

Notably, there were no indications that McCarthy had been the center of any sanitation or cleanliness concerns, said a co-worker.

“He came in showered and shaved,” she said. His desk, in a cubicle tucked in a corner, wasn’t known to be messy or untidy.

Observers have also raised other issues about the matter, including the timing of when McCarthy was notified that he was placed on leave.

McCarthy’s division Council Leader at PEF Annette Chambers, said the day McCarthy was placed on leave coincided with the annual PEF convention, according to union newsletter The Communicator.

“I understand that these things do happen; but why was it necessary for HR to put Charlie out on administrative leave?” Chambers wrote to Regents Chancellor Betty Rosa.
Chambers also asked Rosa, a former New York City school administrator, to look into SED’s Human Resources unit, which, she said “calls for termination of almost all of our members that are brought up on suspected charges, or they are put out on suspension without pay.”

Richard wonders if her uncle fell victim to a jealous co-worker or someone who wanted him out.

“I think someone wanted his job and he didn’t want to retire” said Richard.

Ultimately she said she hopes his death could lead to changes in how HR investigates employees at the department.

“If one good thing could come out of it, it would be that this thing doesn’t happen to anyone else,” she said.

PEF spokeswoman Jane Briggs in an email said that union officials recently met with SED management and were told that changes would be forthcoming.

“While we view this as hopeful, we are still waiting to see any concrete changes implemented. The incident involving Charlie was a tragedy,” Briggs said.

Plenty of co-workers remembered McCarthy after his death, said Papa who was at his funeral in Albany’s St. Mary’s Church, where he attended mass every day.

“At the service, it was packed with state employees,” Papa said.
In Albany, New Yorkers Have a Lot At Stake

Nick Reisman - Times Union - January 7, 2020

ALBANY - Governor Cuomo is delivering his State of the State address on Wednesday. But how does that affect your life? We spoke with New Yorkers to find out.

Sometimes it's easy to think state government doesn't have any impact on your life. Lydia Santiago of Brooklyn certainly thinks so.

"Nothing. Nothing at all," she said. "I'm getting out of here."

But what happens in the state Capitol building every year does indeed matter and can affect your life.

Every year lawmakers and Gov. Cuomo spend more than $150 billion of your money on schools and health care. Lawmakers consider tax hikes and minimum wage increases. They decide whether marijuana should be legalized, and how to punish people who commit crimes. We spoke with New Yorkers in recent weeks like Lexington Malcolm Fields of Albany about what he thinks state government needs to more of this year.

"I'd like to see something more directed towards the people. I always feel that's kind of dismissed, kind of gone over at times," he said.

And sometimes what happens in state government can affect where you work.

"I work in the farm distilling world and what state government does really impacts what goes on as well as the idea of changing the infrastructure and supporting mass transit," Sherwood Ludwig said.

And as Cuomo prepares his priorities for the 2020 legislative session, activists like Kassandra Frederique are preparing too. She says activists and lawmakers alike need to tell New Yorkers why state government matters.

"Albany is not a far away place," she said. "It impacts our everyday lives and I think it's really important for people to understand how central it is to the quality of life they have in New York."

Ultimately it's up you, the citizen, to stay involved, stay informed and, of course, show up to the polls.
Two correctional officers at the Mid-State Correctional Facility in Marcy were injured when an inmate attacked an officer who had ordered him off one of the facility phones.

According to the New York State Correctional Officers and Police Benevolent Association, the inmate became argumentative with the officer and abruptly turned and punched the officer in the face.

The officer was transferred to a local hospital for treatment and did not return to duty.

The other officer was treated for minor injuries.

The 26-year old inmate is serving a three year sentence for rape.

NYSCOPBA says staff assaults have increased for four consecutive years and exceeded 1,000 for the first time in 2019.

While inmate advocates continue to call for additional disciplinary reforms, staff are constantly at risk for unprovoked attacks. All of this will continue in 2020 until the administration recognizes that significant changes need to be made to protect staff.

That should be the number one priority in the coming year.” said Bryan Hluska, NYSCOPBA Central Region Vice President.
For decades now, too many of the benefits produced by our country have flowed to the 1%, at the expense of the rest of us.

One way to turn that tide is by supporting candidates who will end tax giveaways to corporations who ship jobs overseas — candidates who will un-rig our economy by making corporations and the wealthy pay their fair share in taxes.

But outside of Election Day, working people have other tremendous opportunities to use their collective power to help build an economy that works for everyone. "Minimum wages probably are the difference that are kicking up wage growth at the bottom to higher levels than other groups in America," he says. But without the upward pressure of rising minimum wages, Tedeschi estimates the bottom third would have received raises averaging just 3.3%.

Last year was a historic year for working people all over this country, as they banded together to demand a fair share of the profits they earn for their employers. The GM strike, the Chicago teacher strike and many other collective actions across the country showed that unions deliver for our members in the form of tangible benefits like increased pay, better benefits and long-term job security.

And those workers who aren’t fortunate enough to be covered by a collective bargaining agreement are recognizing this, leading to a surge in organizing campaigns in new and emerging sectors, and in legacy industries like journalism, where technology and the internet is causing massive layoffs and wreaking havoc for those who still have jobs.

In Oregon, a cannabis retail chain ratified a collective bargaining agreement with UFCW Local 555 two and a half weeks after opening. The agreement set fair wages for shop employees, provides health and pension benefits, and ensures holiday pay, paid time off, and workplace safety protections. These kinds of basic protections are critical in this emerging and growing industry to ensure workers have a safe, fair, and dignified workplace.

Drivers for Uber, Lyft, and other apps also won a historic pay floor in New York City. Too many of these drivers earned poverty-level wages, saw no benefits, and were subject to arbitrary app fees that cut into their earnings. In 2017, Uber added in-app tipping as an option nationwide in response to an Independent Drivers Guild campaign. And this year, drivers for Uber and other apps won a guarantee that they would be able to earn at least the New York City minimum wage while on the job, raising driver pay by over $9,600 per year.

Media members also saw long-overdue gains. The slow breakdown of the media industry is a tidy expression of the broader economy’s issues, as workers are seeing less and less while gains flow to those at the top, and thousands of jobs are cut or outsourced. This year, workers at BuzzFeed, the Dodo, Slate, Peacock Productions, VICE Media, Pitchfork and Ars Technica, Gimlet Media, WBUR, Gizmodo Media Group, The Morning Call, Quartz, Vox Media, KCRW, New York Media, Law360, and Onion Inc. all voted to unionize or reached collective bargaining agreements with their employers.

The gains that labor unions have seen, and the gains that working people have won, are all about building towards the future and building a new American economy: one that works for the people. We will continue to fight for this better future in 2020, and look forward to more and more working folks coming together and joining in union to realize their collective power in moving the workers’ agenda forward.
Minimum Wage Hikes Fuel Higher Pay Growth For Those At The Bottom

Scott Horsley - NPR - January 9, 2020

Kecia Jolley is getting a pay raise this week. But she's still making minimum wage.

Jolley works as a grocery store cashier in Missouri — one of nearly two dozen states that increased their minimum wages on Jan. 1. Economists say those mandatory wage hikes are an important factor boosting pay for workers at the bottom of the income ladder.

Jolley's Friday paycheck will be the first to reflect Missouri's 2020 minimum of $9.45 an hour, up from $8.60 last year.

"I think that I'll be better off," she says. "But I think that it's going to still be a struggle."

Jolley says her paycheck will still barely cover rent and utilities. She relies on food stamps and school lunches to help feed her three children — ages 6, 11 and 14. Jolley is grateful that a ballot measure passed by Missouri voters in 2018 calls for three additional increases in the minimum wage over the next three years. By 2023, the minimum will climb to $12 an hour.

"I would consider that at least a decent living wage," Jolley says. "Then people can pay their bills. They can possibly get a few things on their 'wants' list every month. Like, kids need new clothes. Or — I'm a girl. I ran out of mascara, like, a month ago. Luxury items such as new socks."

While the federal minimum wage hasn't changed in more than a decade — it's still $7.25 an hour — many cities and states have adopted higher thresholds. In Arizona, Colorado and Maine the minimum wage is already $12 an hour. Minimums are higher still in California, Massachusetts and Washington state.

"If you're a minimum wage worker in America right now, on average, you're actually probably getting paid closer to $12 an hour," says economist Ernie Tedeschi of Evercore ISI. "That's what I call the effective minimum wage."

Tedeschi says rising minimums at the state and local level are an important driver of wage gains at the bottom of the pay scale.

"Right now, the economy is doing something extraordinary," he says. "People at the bottom of the distribution have actually seen higher wage growth than people at the top and in the middle."

Crunching census data, Tedeschi finds workers in the bottom third of the income ladder have enjoyed pay raises of about 4.1% in each of the last two years, compared with 3.6% raises for the top third and 3.9% for all workers.

Minimum wages aren't the only factor. Low-wage workers also have more bargaining power, as employers scramble to fill job openings when unemployment is just 3.5%.

Right now, the economy is doing something extraordinary. People at the bottom of the distribution have actually seen higher wage growth than people at the top and in the middle.
The patchwork of minimum wages across the country creates a sort of natural experiment for economists trying to measure the effects on low-wage workers.

"No matter how you cut it, the low-wage workers are getting a larger wage boost in states that have raised their minimum wage," says senior economist Elise Gould of the left-leaning Economic Policy Institute.

Gould estimates the higher minimums that took effect this month boosted paychecks for 6.8 million workers across the country.

But others caution that the higher cost for employers may come with trade-offs.

"You're getting a raise if you keep your job and if your hours don't change," says economist David Neumark of the University of California at Irvine. "But there's plenty of evidence that there is some job loss from minimum wages and those workers are worse off."

Neumark acknowledges that job loss associated with minimum wage hikes may be less of a problem when unemployment is this low.

"Raising it in a very hot labor market is probably less damaging," Neumark says. More high school students and others "might be drawn in because wages are rising," he says. "And if a few of them have job opportunities foreclosed, it might not be so terrible."

Jolley hasn't seen any job cuts at the grocery store where she works. The cashier doubts she would be getting a raise were it not required by the higher minimum.

"We still need to keep pushing forward because, hopefully, people like me will be able to actually make it every month," she says.
Major union launches campaign to organize video game and tech workers

Sam Dean - LA Times - January 11, 2020

The last two years have witnessed a wave of walkouts, petitions and other workplace actions at video game and tech companies.

But despite this swell in labor activism, employees at no major video game studios and only a handful of tech offices have formally voted to form or join a union.

A new campaign launched Tuesday by one of the nation’s largest labor unions — and spearheaded by one of the leading video game industry activists in Southern California — aims to change that.

The Campaign to Organize Digital Employees (CODE for short) is a new project of the Communications Workers of America aimed specifically at unionizing video game and tech companies.

It grew out of conversations between the CWA and Game Workers Unite, a grass-roots organization that sprang up in 2018 to push for wall-to-wall unionization of the $43-billion video game industry, alongside conversations with organizers across the larger tech industry.

Separate from the new initiative, the Toronto chapter of GWU has also signed a formal partnership agreement with CWA to work on organizing in the area. (CWA is also the parent union of the NewsGuild, which represents workers at the L.A. Times and most major newspapers in the country.)

“We’ve been watching the amazing organizing of workers across the industry,” said Tom Smith, CWA’s lead organizer. “And workers themselves reached out to us while doing that amazing self-organizing, and said, ‘Can we do this in partnership with the CWA?’”

The union declined to specify how much money it was putting behind the new effort, but has put two organizers on payroll to lead the push with support from dozens of CWA staff members across the country.

One of the new staffers, Wes McEnany, comes from a more traditional labor organizing career with Boston-area unions and the labor-backed campaign for a $15 minimum wage. CWA also hired Emma Kinema, who co-founded Game Workers Unite and organized the Los Angeles and Orange County chapters of the group.

The dedicated staff and national ambition set the CODE project apart from other efforts to organize tech workers, such as the United Steelworkers-backed Pittsburgh Assn. of Tech Professionals, which successfully unionized Google subcontractors in September.

“In my experience self-organizing in the game industry, people are very bottlenecked by the lack of resources and lack of legal know-how and a lack of funding — it’s very tough,” Kinema said. “The decades of experience and resources that come from partnering with an organization like CWA can take it to the next level.”

Working conditions in the video game industry have brought the question of unionization to the forefront in recent years. At a 2019 video game developer conference, the industry’s practice of making employees work 100-hour weeks for months on end to finish a game in time for the preset delivery date, often without extra pay — a practice known as “crunch” — came under fire in discussions among workers, as did the rolling layoffs that come when companies staff up and shed jobs to fit cyclical production schedules.
And in the tech industry writ large, workplace actions have extended beyond concerns over bread-and-butter issues such as pay and severance to questions of ethics and culture. The worldwide Google walkouts, and the walkout at Los Angeles game studio Riot Games that followed, grew out of employee demands to end the practice of forcing workers into private arbitration instead of allowing them to sue over claims of sexual harassment and workplace discrimination.

Other actions, such as the walkout at online furniture seller Wayfair and a number of petitions filed by workers at Amazon, Microsoft and Salesforce, have pushed back against corporate decisions to work with Immigration and Customs Enforcement or the Department of Defense. And Irvine-based Activision Blizzard faced internal and external protests in late 2019 after it punished a professional gamer who made statements supporting the pro-democracy protests in Hong Kong.

The organizers behind the new effort see the push for better working conditions and corporate ethics as one and the same.

“I think it’s a false dichotomy to frame the activism of a lot of tech workers around the impact that the work they do has on society as something other than a fundamental working condition,” Smith said. “For a lot of folks, that’s what led them to do this work in the first place, and people are feeling a disconnect between their personal values and what they’re seeing every day in their working lives.”

In December, CWA filed official charges against Google with the National Labor Relations Board on behalf of five Google workers who were fired in what they say was retaliation for their organizing at the tech giant.

The new project charts a path away from organizing video game workers along the Hollywood craft union model. SAG-AFTRA has represented video game voice actors for years, and called a strike in 2017 over pay and royalty structures. But CWA largely follows the industrial union model, which organizes entire companies at once rather than splitting workers who perform different jobs into specialized unions.

Smith, for his part, said that CWA could accommodate craft-based organizing if that’s what video game or tech workers want, emphasizing that the workers will ultimately decide how to organize. But Kinema saw the decision to join CWA in starker terms.

“We believe workers are strongest when they’re together in one shop in one union, so the disciplines can’t be pitted against each other—none of that’s good for the workers,” Kinema said. “I think in games and tech the wall-to-wall industrial model is the best fit.”
NYC transit workers ratify new MTA contract by wide margin

Clayton Guse - New York Daily News - January 11, 2020

New York City’s transit workers on Thursday overwhelmingly approved a contract deal between their union and the MTA, ending a bitter negotiation between the two sides that dragged on for more than six months.

Roughly 15,300 of the 35,650 Transport Workers Union Local 100 members who were eligible to vote weighed in on the deal via mail-in ballots — and about 66% of them voted to ratify the contract, according to the American Arbitration Association, which tallied the vote.

“The MTA was determined to win huge concessions like doubling our paycheck deductions for healthcare, turning full-time jobs into part-time positions, and paying overtime after 40 hours instead of eight,” said Local 100 president Tony Utano. “We did more than just hold our ground. We moved forward.”

The four-year contract runs from May 15, 2019, when Local 100's previous contract with the MTA expired, through May 15, 2023.

The deal comes with a 2% raise for workers in 2019, which will be paid out retroactively. Local 100's members will get a 2.25% pay increase in 2020, a 2.5% bump in 2021 and a 2.75% raise in 2022.

By the time the contract expires, workers will be taking home 9.8% more than their current pay.

Bus drivers who operate long articulated buses will also get a $1 per-hour raise.

Health care premiums for workers will remain the same under the new arrangement, but they’ll be forced to pay higher co-pays for emergency room visits and non-generic prescription drugs. The deal encourages workers to use urgent care clinics instead of hospital emergency rooms.

Metropolitan Transportation Authority budget officials believe the health care changes will save the agency about $27 million each year.

The contract also allows workers to more easily swap shifts with one another, and comes with a memorandum of understanding that the two sides will work to increase worker availability by 1.5 days per year. MTA data shows that transit workers missed an average of 54 days in 2018, which includes vacation time, sick days, time off for workplace injuries and the time it takes transit supervisors to reinstate workers who return from leave.

The MTA hopes the increases in worker availability will reap another $17 million in annual savings.

The contract must still be approved by the MTA board at a meeting later this month.

Local 100 launched an aggressive campaign that vilified MTA leadership after the previous contract expired.

Union officials on several occasions last year used scrupulous “safety inspections” to slow down bus service across the city — and one Local 100 officer even threatened to “tar and feather” MTA chairman Pat Foye.

Foye didn’t fight clean during negotiations either. The chairman in October sent a fiery email to Utano, accusing the union boss of running a “Utano Specialty Drug Scam” following a meeting with Payer Matrix, a company that connects businesses to foundations set up by pharmaceutical companies to provide low-cost or free specialty drugs to patients who cannot afford them.
The MTA budgeted for just a 2% annual wage increase for workers over the next four years as a part of its 2020-2023 financial plan released in November. The agency’s budget prognosticators projected an annual operating deficit of at least $212 million in 2022, which could balloon to at least $426 million in 2023.

It remains unclear how the agency will balance its books in the coming years, as is required by state law.
About 200 United Steelworkers miners are back on the job at Idaho’s Lucky Friday mine after nearly three years on strike, putting an end to the longest-running continuous strike in the U.S.

The workers ratified a contract with Hecla Mining Co., the mine’s owner, on Jan. 6 after they narrowly rejected another deal in December due to reservations about the conditions of returning to work, according to USW spokesperson Tony Montana.

“Our members’ strength and determination to resist Hecla’s unfair demands has been rewarded with a contract that’ll set union members up for future success,” Montana said.

USW Local 5114 began the strike March 13, 2017, after the company attempted to unilaterally impose parts of a new contract on workers. The USW filed unfair labor practice charges with the National Labor Relations Board over the company’s actions and the two parties reached an informal settlement in the summer of 2018, agreeing to good faith negotiations.

In all, workers stayed off the job for about 1,029 days. That’s longer than any other ongoing strike, according to records from the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service, a federal agency that tracks work stoppages.

Work stoppages lasted an average of 41.1 days over the past decade, according to Bloomberg Law data. There were about 1,320 work stoppages from January 2010 through December 2019.

New Record Holder

The title of longest continuous U.S. work stoppage now passes to the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 3 in the New York City area. The union went on strike against Charter Communications-owned cable and internet provider Spectrum on March 28, 2017.

The union and company are involved in an entrenched dispute that hinges on an employee-initiated motion to dump the union. A decertification vote was taken last year and the results are pending before the NLRB.

The effort to decertify Spectrum’s union may ultimately be tossed out after NLRB Regional Director John J. Walsh Jr., said in August that a recording of the company interfering in the vote could “warrant setting aside the results of the election.”

Attorneys for the union and company requested expedited review of the vote count in October, but the board in Washington hasn’t issued a decision.
New York, NY – The last time trade unionists and nonunion workers teamed up in November to demand one of the largest construction management companies in the city cough up $70,000 in unpaid wages — the company coolly thumbed its nose at protesters and barred elected officials from entering its Seventh Avenue offices. But that wasn’t the end of it.

On January 8, trade unionists and nonunion workers with NICE — New Immigrant Community Empowerment — once again returned with their City Council allies to New Line Structures’ offices at 512 Seventh Avenue, eager to press the fight against wage theft and to highlight widespread worker exploitation across the construction industry.

This time, however, cops kept protesters far away from New Line’s high-rolling offices, relegating the vocal demonstrators to a specially prepared pen waiting for them across the street.

“New Line made $208 million last year,” City Council Member Francisco Moya [D-21st District] jeered. “Now we’re out here in the streets [fighting] over $57,000 — the average entry-level position for someone at New Line. Yet, our workers are begging to get paid to put food on the table.”

Six construction workers who were part of a group of more than 20 nonunion workers stiffed on a New Line job site in Hallets Point, Queens last year, have reportedly been paid since trade unionists and unorganized workers last showed up on the company’s doorstep on November 19.

“Not all the workers have been paid,” Council Member Carlos Menchaca [D-38th District] said at the January 8 rally. “Greedy developers have been taking advantage of our workers. It doesn’t matter what you look like because they’re going to take advantage of you.”

Rampant wage theft is just one of a myriad of worker abuses that trade unionists say results when greedy developers go “open shop” and seek to maximize profits by exploiting especially vulnerable nonunion labor.

Since 2014, NYC Comptroller Scott Stringer’s office has recovered more than $14.5 million for workers cheated on the job and assessed nearly $30 million in underpayment interest and penalties, debarring 58 contractors along the way.

“We’re going to keep coming out for every worker in our city to make sure that when you’re on a construction site you get training, you get apprenticeship and a chance to learn on the job,” Council Member Ben Kallos [D-5th District] said. “[And] that you have a shop steward to come to when [bosses] tell you to do something dangerous. That you have protections on the job; that you get paid — not a minimum wage, not just a living wage — but a prevailing wage.”

New Line Structures has not responded to LaborPress’ requests for comment. The company is involved in numerous high-profile projects throughout the city— highly contested “open shop” developments including CIM Group private-equity fund’s 21-story tower at 85 Jay St. in Brooklyn, another building dubbed “the Leaning Tower of New York” at W. 14th Street and Sixth Avenue in Manhattan and others. “We’re here for the safety of all the people in construction — not just for ourselves,” said Joe Scopo, lead organizer for District 16 of the Cement and Concrete Workers. “Nonunion workers, walk off the job [and] walk to a union hall!”
More than 90-percent of construction deaths occurring throughout the city have happened on nonunion job sites, according to the New York Committee for Occupational Safety and Health [NYCOSH].

This past summer, District 16 of the Cement and Concrete Workers called on the de Blasio administration to “step up” and confront the fallout from so-called “open shop development.”

The Mayor’s Office insists that it is promoting labor standards policies that “create fair workplaces” and help to “ensure all workers can realize their rights.”

NICE spokesperson Diana Moreno said that the only reason cheated Hallets Point workers have been able to recover part of the money owed them, is because they demanded it.

“[And] we will not stop until all of our members are paid,” Moreno said this week.

The Comptroller’s Office urges all workers who believe they have been ripped off on city-funded job sites to file a complaint with the agency at www.comptroller.nyc.gov/wages or call the Comptroller’s Labor Law hotline at (212) 669-4443. Inquiries can also be made via email to laborlaw@comptroller.nyc.gov or at the offices of the Comptroller located at One Centre Street, Room 651.
POUGHKEEPSIE – City of Poughkeepsie firefighters and several other first responders freed two laborers who were trapped when the trench they were working in collapsed.

Emergency personnel were dispatched to a group home at 14 Dwight Street around 2 p.m. on Friday for a report of two men trapped in a trench that was being dug in front of the residence.

Upon arrival, fire department officials activated the “Special Operations” unit, a joint rescue team consisting of members of the Poughkeepsie, Arlington, and LaGrange fire departments to assist with the rescue.

According to Mayor Rob Rolison who is on the scene, the employees were in a trench approximately 12-feet deep and were trapped up to their waists in dirt and clay.

Both men were conscious and speaking with the rescuers. The trench, dug by an excavator with DAKA Plumbing and Heating signage, had been digging the trench with no safety bracings to protect the workers, according to emergency personnel.

The firefighters worked to put together shoring to prevent further collapse before the men could be removed from the trench. Medics from Mobile Life Support Services were on the scene to provide medical assistance.
PORTLAND, Ore. -- The U.S. House has committed to voting on a comprehensive bill supporting union organizing before Presidents' Day.

The announcement comes after 68 representatives, including Suzanne Bonamici, D-Ore., sent a letter to the House leadership urging the lawmakers to bring the Protecting the Right to Organize (PRO) Act to the floor.

The bill contains a suite of reforms, including the elimination of right-to-work laws, rules prohibiting employers from delaying the negotiation of collective bargaining contracts and penalties for retaliating against union organizing.

"It's commonplace in private sector union organizing, in Oregon and across the country, that workers are intimidated, they're scared," says Graham Trainor, president of the Oregon AFL-CIO. "Employers use mandatory one-on-one meetings to intimidate workers from joining a union, and it really stacks the deck against the group of workers who want to see change."

The PRO Act has 218 cosponsors, with every Democratic Party House member in Oregon signing on except for Rep. Kurt Schrader.

While the bill's chances are good in the House, it's considered dead on arrival in the Senate. Trainor says it's still important for the House to vote on it.

"I recognize the political hurdles and challenges of today's bill and with today's Congress and administration, but that's not to say that this isn't a multi-year strategy," he states. "That's not to say that this shouldn't continue to be an issue that we press lawmakers to tackle in a really serious way over the coming years."

Trainor sees unions rising across the country, especially among young people. In 2017, more than three-quarters of new members were younger than 35.

And a 2018 poll by the Pew Research Center found nearly 70% of people ages 18 to 29 have a favorable view of unions.
By a nearly 2-1 margin, Transport Workers Union Local 100 members ratified their four-year contract providing 9.8 percent in raises and containing a productivity clause that could allow them to share in savings from a cut in absences.

The American Arbitration Association conducted the tabulation of the mail-in ballots, which came in 10,112 "Yes" and 5,176 "No." Ballots were mailed out to 35,650 eligible members and were returned by 15,319.

In 2017 the previous union contract was approved by a more-than 2-to-1 margin with also fewer than half the eligible members casting a ballot. That pact expired last May 15.

Utano Gratified

“I want to thank transit workers for their support and unity during this hard-fought contract campaign,” Transport Workers Union Local 100 President Tony Utano said in a statement. “We moved forward with compounded raises of nearly 10% over the life of the contract, improved dental, free express bus passes, and more. “

He credited “a unified workforce” for the union successfully resisting “huge concessions like doubling our paycheck deductions for healthcare, turning full-time jobs into part-time positions, and paying overtime after 40 hours instead of eight. We did more than just hold our ground.”

In October, when the union and the Metropolitan Transportation Authority seemed far apart, the TWU mustered a protest by 8,000 members and supporters outside the agency’s lower Manhattan headquarters.

Availability Deal

Initially, the agency, in hopes of reducing overtime, wanted to mandate that all union workers be available an average of three additional days a year. The contract calls for 1 ½ days of additional availability, with members sharing in any savings beyond the first additional day.

MTA Chairman Patrick Foye, who was the prime object of union derision at the October rally, called the contract a “win-win-win for our customers, taxpayers and hard-working employees.” He added that the terms would be submitted to the MTA board for final approval later this month.
Margaret Egan, an attorney with vast experience in criminal-justice issues, is the Board of Correction’s new Executive Director.

Ms. Egan, who began her tenure Jan. 6, succeeded Martha King, who left the board to complete her doctorate.

‘Support Reform’

She takes the helm at the BOC at a critical juncture as the city transforms its criminal-justice model by closing Rikers Island and building smaller jails in Brooklyn, Queens, Manhattan and The Bronx.

“I am privileged to lead this important institution at a critical moment of opportunity in New York City,” Ms. Egan said in statement. “I believe strongly in the Board’s mission, and I look forward to working closely with Board Members, Board staff, the Department of Correction, Correctional Health Services, and our community of stakeholders to ensure effective oversight and support reform.”

Ms. Egan, who served as a senior advisor to the Lippman Commission and coauthored a 2018 academic paper surveying culture change in city jails, was most recently Vice Chancellor for Human Resources and Director of Strategic Initiatives at City University of New York. Before that, in her capacity as Assistant Secretary for Public Safety to Governor Cuomo, she supervised agency operations and implementation of directives for the Department of Corrections and Community Supervision, the Division of Criminal Justice Service and the State Police.

Varied Background

Prior to those tenures, she held various executive public-safety posts in Cook County, Illinois, including the Sheriff’s Office, where she was Director of Public Policy and External Affairs for Sheriff Tom Dart. She also served in Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel’s administration.

“As we monitor the closing of Rikers Island and the beginning of a new era in corrections, the Board is thrilled that Margaret will lead the agency through this historic period,” said the BOC’s Interim Chair, Jackie Sherman. “Margaret’s unique perspective and extensive criminal justice leadership experience in Chicago and New York will serve the City exceptionally well in this important role.”

“As the City closes Rikers Island and moves to borough-based jails, we need strong independent oversight to ensure safe, fair, and humane conditions,” said Stanley Richards, the BOC’s Vice Chairman. “Margaret is that leader.”
NEW YORK, Jan. 14, 2020 — The Women’s National Basketball Association (WNBA) and the Women’s National Basketball Players Association (WNBPA) announced today that they have reached an agreement on a new Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA), pending ratification by the players and the league’s Board of Governors. The new eight-year CBA, which commences with the 2020 season and runs through 2027, provides the foundation to chart a new course for women’s professional basketball. The 2020 CBA features significant investments by the league and its teams aimed directly at increasing player salary and compensation, improvements to the overall player experience, resources specifically designed with the professional female athlete in mind, as well as a commitment to implement an integrated marketing plan league-wide.

Foremost among the deal terms is a 53 percent increase in total cash compensation, consisting of base salary, additional performance bonuses, prize pools for newly created in-season competitions, and league and team marketing deals. Under the new CBA, the league’s top players will be able to earn cash compensation in excess of $500,000, representing a more than tripling of the maximum compensation under the prior deal. Other top players will have an opportunity to earn between $200,000 and $300,000. And for the first time in WNBA history, the average cash compensation for players will exceed six figures, averaging nearly $130,000, resulting in an increase for all players from rookies to veterans.

Additional highlights include enhanced player experience with respect to travel and child care benefits, and expanded offseason career development opportunities. The landmark agreement also features a more liberal free agency system, and a more robust and equitable revenue-sharing model based on league revenue growth. Even at 87 he remained mentally sharp, said one co-worker who recalled how he was an enthusiastic walker and would often go outside without his coat, despite the cold weather.

“We approached these negotiations with a player-first agenda, and I am pleased that this agreement guarantees substantial increases in compensation and progressive benefits for the women of the WNBA,” said WNBA Commissioner Cathy Engelbert. “I want to thank the players, led by WNBPA President Nneka Ogwumike and the WNBA Executive Committee, as well as WNBA Executive Director Terri Jackson, for their hard work, innovative thinking and professionalism throughout the process. I also want to thank the league’s Labor Relations Committee and Board of Governors for their investment, commitment and leadership as we look forward to working together to make the WNBA a sustainable and thriving business for generations of women’s basketball players to come.”

“Cathy Engelbert, the first WNBA Commissioner, brought her perspective as a former women’s basketball student-athlete, her experience as a business professional and her passion for the game to these negotiations,” said WNBPA President Nneka Ogwumike. “We found common ground in areas that confirmed the league’s and the players’ intentions to not only make meaningful improvements in working conditions and overall professional experience, but also to improve the business with strategic planning and intentional marketing that will keep the WNBA front and center year-round.”

“With cautious optimism and trusting the league’s renewed commitment and investment, the players demonstrated a willingness to ‘lean in’ themselves and show an even greater commitment and investment in the W,” described WNBPA Executive Director Terri Jackson. “There are significant gains all across the board in this new agreement, and everything is in place for our players and the league to thrive.”
The following are the key elements in the new 2020 WNBA-WNBPA Collective Bargaining Agreement:

Additional cash compensation elements:
Minimum of $1.6 million in off-season league and team marketing agreements, that both recognize top performance and highlight the diversity of the league, and would create up to $300,000 in additional annual cash compensation for select players.
Minimum of $750,000 in prize money for special competitions beginning with the 2021 season.
New 50-50 revenue sharing beginning with the 2021 season, based on the league achieving revenue growth targets from broadcast agreements, marketing partnerships and licensing deals.
Increases in cash bonuses for performance awards (such as for WNBA MVP and Rookie of the Year), and newly created cash bonuses (such as for each player named to the WNBA All-Defensive First Team).

Quality of travel elements:
Premium Economy class status (such as Comfort/Economy Plus) for all players for regular-season air travel.
Individual hotel room accommodations for every player.
A collaborative effort to address travel concerns through the Player Advisory Panel.

Motherhood and family planning elements:
Players to receive full salary while on maternity leave.
A new annual childcare stipend of $5,000.
Two-bedroom apartments for players with children.
Workplace accommodations that provide a comfortable, safe and private place for nursing mothers.
New, progressive family planning benefits of up to a $60,000 reimbursement for veteran players for costs directly related to adoption, surrogacy, oocyte cryopreservation or fertility/infertility treatment.

Free agency elements:
Unrestricted free agency available to players one year earlier than under the prior agreement beginning with the free agency period leading up to the 2021 season. Specifically, players who complete the playing services called for in their contract and have five or more years of service will become unrestricted free agents (if they are not designated as a “Core” player).
Reduction in the number of times a player can receive the “Core” designation – from four to three beginning with the 2020 season, dropping to two beginning with the 2022 season.

Career development and other quality of life elements:
The WNBA will work with its affiliated leagues, teams and sponsors to provide off-season job opportunities designed to prepare players for their post-playing careers and will advance diversity in coaching initiatives for veteran players interested in coaching careers.
Enhanced mental health benefits and resources.
An augmented and holistic domestic/intimate partner violence program that includes education and counseling.
A joint Nutrition Council committed to identifying resources and address proper nutrition to optimize athletic performance.
Access to experts in women’s health and representation on league policy committees.

The WNBA also announced today the formation of a first-of-its-kind collective – WNBA Changemakers – which brings together values-driven businesses who lead the way in the advancement of women through sports. This new platform is designed to directly support the WNBA in its transformation across marketing, branding, and player and fan experience. With a fresh approach to sports sponsorship, Changemakers are deeply invested in driving positive change for the WNBA, women’s sports, and women in society. Inaugural Changemakers include AT&T, Deloitte and Nike.
FedEx workers hoping to unionize and get better pay and benefits have met with a well-financed barrage of opposition from the company, according to recordings obtained by the Guardian.

Workers who charge that their benefits are less than at rival UPS said the company has bombarded them with anti-union messages and forced them to attend anti-union meetings.

The Guardian obtained recordings of meetings that were mandatory and required workers to sign in, according to a FedEx employee, held at FedEx facilities in 2015 and 2016, where managers and union avoidance consultants lectured workers on unions as the Teamsters was attempting to organize FedEx drivers at several locations around the United States.

“It’s time to campaign. If you don’t want this third party coming in putting a wall between us, it’s time. Because when you campaign and tell them you don’t want them here, eventually it becomes loud and clear to them. You can do that,” said a FedEx human resources manager in a July 2016 captive audience meeting.

In the meetings, FedEx human resources managers often cited anecdotes to dismiss union organizing.

One, in the same July 2016 meeting, said: “Recently I had this question come up from an employee. Why is there a small group of employees at our company who seem to be very ungrateful at what the company has to offer them? Why do some employees give their allegiance to strangers and an organization like the Teamsters rather than this company that continues to provide for us, that has provided us with a long list of benefits and incredible pay, not to mention good equipment and facilities?

“I don’t have an answer, I don’t know. I feel your pain. I appreciate the company and what they offer. I have an attitude of gratitude.”

In another alleged anecdote, the same FedEx manager told workers a story about an unnamed 58-year-old employee for three years who supported unionizing because they wanted a better pension plan.

The manager told workers: “He’s getting closer to retirement. He tells the HR manager. The manager said: what have you done leading up in your career to prepare for retirement? You can’t hold FedEx Freight accountable for your own inability and failure to prepare for your retirement. He changed his whole attitude about it and started supporting the company because he took ownership of his own failure.”

In the meetings, FedEx managers and consultants claimed negotiations with labor unions are a gamble.

“It’s like going to Vegas and rolling the dice,” one said.

They also referred to union authorization cards as a “blank check”, and told workers “they need money, they’re running out of money. They want your money. They want our money.” In a video used by FedEx to deter unionization, the Teamsters union was characterized as a plot to undermine FedEx by UPS, where about 250,000 employees are represented by the Teamsters.
“A package lost by FedEx equals a package gained by UPS,” said a narrator in the video.

FedEx, the second largest logistics company in the US, spent $837,000 between 2014 and 2018 on union avoidance consultants, according to a recent report published by the Economic Policy Institute. The report found by examining publicly available forms filed by consultants with the Department of Labor, US employers spend around $340m annually on union avoidance consultants, with FedEx as one of the top spenders.

FedEx’s anti-union campaign between 2014 to 2018 was largely a success. In April 2019, the only FedEx Freight workers unionized in the US voted against an effort to decertify the Teamsters union at a warehouse in Stockton, California, but prior decertification efforts were successful in 2017 in Pennsylvania and North Carolina. The only other unionized FedEx employees are their pilots, who voted to form a union in 1993.

A FedEx location in New Jersey voted to unionize in 2014, only to voluntarily cede representation in 2017 after FedEx fought in court with the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) for years over which workers should be included in the bargaining unit. Several FedEx warehouses around the US voted against unionizing between 2014 and 2018, while other locations didn’t get that far in the union organizing process due to company pushback.

“They told me, ‘either you’re a team player, or you’re a problem and we will do everything to eliminate problems,’” said Greg Barfuss, a FedEx driver for seven years who was laid off in December 2015 after openly supporting unionization of his Gardena, California, based FedEx warehouse. “They first tried to intimidate me. When that didn’t work they fired me, and that scared other drivers from trying any more.”

He filed unfair labor practice charges with the NLRB, and a settlement was reached with FedEx in May 2016 for one of the charges.

FedEx rejected Barfuss’s claim that he was fired for union organizing and noted the NLRB did not rule in favor of Barfuss on the charge of being fired in retaliation for union activity. “To avoid the time and expense of litigation, FedEx Freight chose to resolve one of the claims and did so without payment of money or admission of liability,” a spokesperson for FedEx told the Guardian in an email.

As FedEx heavily opposed unionization efforts among its employees, the company aggressively lobbied in favor of the 2017 Trump tax cut bill, which decreased FedEx’s taxes from over $1.5bn in 2017 to zero in 2018.

Despite the significant tax savings, the New York Times reported in November 2019 that FedEx did not fulfill promises of using the tax windfall to reinvest in equipment and other assets, while spending about $3.6bn on stock buybacks in 2018 and 2019. FedEx’s CEO, Fred Smith, claimed the story was “distorted”, without citing specific examples, and challenged the New York Times publisher to a debate in response.

Workers at FedEx experienced cuts to bonuses in 2019 and a FedEx driver in Texas, who requested to remain anonymous for fear of retaliation, said this year workers essentially received a pay cut due to increases in healthcare costs.

“They decided for 2020 that if your spouse can get insurance at their employer and you keep them with Fedex’s insurer, they’re going to charge you $150 a month to keep your spouse on it. The pay raise amounted to $30 a week because we received $0.75 an hour raise so it doesn’t cover the spousal surcharge,” they said.

FedEx is also changing its pension plan in 2020, eliminating it for new hires who will be offered a 401k plan instead, while giving current employees the choice to keep their current plans or opt in to the 401k.
The FedEx driver explained the pension plan was one of the driving forces for union organizing at FedEx.

He said: “Our retirement is bad when you compare it to UPS. A UPS worker gets $100 a month for every year of service, somewhere around there. So 20 years in you’ll get a $2,000-per-month pension. I have 20 years here. If you project my pension, in another 10 years my projected income will be $300 a month with almost 30 years in. What am I going to do with $300 a month?”

A FedEx spokesperson said the company was changing retirement benefits program to ensure the benefits “remain competitive”.

The spokesperson added in an email to the Guardian: “While FedEx Freight respects the right of our team members to decide for themselves if they want to be part of a union, the law does not require us to remain neutral and protects our right to provide facts and opinions about unions so that our employees may make a fully informed decision.”
EPA Employees Begin Bargaining, Demand Bill Of Rights

WNY Labor Today - January 14, 2020

(WASHINGTON, D.C.) - The Republican Trump Administration has waged an all-out assault on Workers employed at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA): Silencing Researchers; Erasing years of scientific advancement; and cutting Agency Staffing to the lowest levels since 1985. Now Employees are joining together to articulate a bold new vision for the agency through a 10-point EPA Workers’ Bill of Rights, which is designed to embrace science, bolster working conditions, and deliver a fair contract for the nearly 8,000 EPA Workers represented by the American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE).

The Bill of Rights is at the heart of a new nationwide campaign that was launched by AFGE Council 238 in early January. The Protect EPA Campaign is designed to protect the EPA from the Trump Administration’s ongoing attacks on Workers, the environment, public health, and science itself.

“EPA Employees have committed our careers to protecting human health and the environment, working day-in and day-out to keep our air clean, ensure our water is safe to drink, and clean up our land so that we may live and work on it,” AFGE Local 1236 President Bethany Dreyfus said. “Yet time and time again, the administration has attempted to silence research and gut our Labor Rights. That’s why we’re not just standing up for a fair contract, we’re fighting to be able to do our jobs and protect public health - and we’ll keep fighting until our voices are truly heard.”

The launch of the campaign coincides with the resumption of contract negotiations between EPA Management and the AFGE, which forced the EPA to return to the table after filing Unfair Labor Practice (ULP) Charges and grievances over the agency’s decision to repudiate the Union’s previously negotiated contract and unilaterally impose its own rules on Workers.

The Union for Concerned Scientists has signed onto the Bill of Rights, giving EPA Workers a boost in their fight to be able to do their jobs and protect the public health without political interference.

U.S. Senators Ed Markey, Gary Peters, Chris Van Hollen and Tom Carper have signed on in support, as have a dozen House members.

EPA Employees nationwide are holding rallies, meeting with members of Congress, and encouraging everyone who supports the mission of the EPA to sign their petition.
ALBANY — The jobs of more than five members of a special unit at the state Board of Elections are being eliminated in a move that the Public Employees Federation said is a continuing trend to "erode" civil service positions in state government.

The employees, who have worked for the Board of Elections between eight and 22 years, learned last month that their positions will no longer be funded "because there's no work," according to one worker speaking on condition of anonymity. But people close to the matter said the Election Operations unit has overseen tasks that remain ongoing — including certification of voting machines, testing new voting machines used by counties, and processing petitions.

The unit's employees have also been considered autonomous from the board's remaining workforce, most of whom are in politically appointed jobs. The state is assisting the PEF members in finding similar jobs in state government, but the offerings may come with a nearly 50 percent reduction in salary.

"We are monitoring the situation to ensure our members are afforded their re-employment rights and are presented with the best possible career opportunities for them," said Jane Briggs, a spokeswoman for PEF. "However, we are very concerned that this situation is yet another example of the state’s trend to erode PEF work units while circumventing the civil service system — a trend we will continue to fight."

John Conklin, a spokesman for the state Board of Elections, said "as this is a personnel matter, I have no comment."

The employees have not been provided a specific date when their positions will be eliminated, but are entitled to 20 days notice once any decision is final. They are part of a unit in which eight of the 12 positions are civil service jobs. A person close to the matter, but not authorized to comment publicly, said the elimination of union positions that are being replaced with political appointed jobs began taking place more than two years ago.
New York, NY – “I don’t think there’s a single one of our colleagues who’s for this war.”

On January 9, an energized group of New Yorkers concerned that the Trump administration’s assassination of Iranian Major General Qassem Soleimani and a number of other Iranian officials earlier this month is being used to plunge the U.S. into all out war with Iran, rallied at Foley Square and other spots around the city in staunch opposition.

During last night’s latest Democratic Presidential Debate, the looming threat of war with Iran came up again when Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders and former Vice-President Joe Biden tangled over the last time the U.S. government concocted a scheme to get us into war in the Middle East — 2003’s invasion of Iraq.

“Joe and I listened to what [Vice-President] Dick Cheney and [President] George Bush and [Defense Secretary] Rumsfeld had to say,” Sanders said. “I thought they were lying. I didn’t believe them for a moment. I took to the floor. I did everything I could to prevent that war. Joe saw it differently.”

Sanders has already teamed up with California Congress Member Ro Khanna [D-17th District] to introduce new legislation barring Pentagon funding for war in Iran without congressional approval.

California Congress Member Barbara Lee [D-13th District] has also sponsored legislation to finally repeal the blank check Congress gave to all U.S. presidents to unilaterally plunge Americans into war around the globe — 2002’s Authorization for Use of Military Force — or AUMF.

“If Trump goes to war, he will be bombing innocent people using our healthcare dollars — it’s as simple as that,” UAW Local 2320 member Natalie James told LaborPress during last week’s anti-war rally in Foley Square. “Money that should be used to help everyday people survive in this country is instead being used for utter destruction and horrific acts abroad.”

Fellow UAW Local 2320 member and Brooklyn Legal Services staff attorney Nicole Salk expressed similar fears.

“I think this is a distraction from the impeachment,” Salk said. “I just think that it’s working people and poor people who will be sent to fight this war. Any money that’s spent on the war is taken from services, education and healthcare. And the people who go to war are poor and working people.

It’s not Trump’s kids who are going to be going. It’s our kids.”

The U.S. lost two more soldiers just last week, during active duty in Afghanistan. Another two service members were also wounded in the southern province of Kandahar. Nearly 7,000 U.S. service members have now been killed fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan. More than 50,000 have been wounded.

And the carnage doesn’t end there. As many as 100,000 U.S. veterans have died by suicide since September 11, 2001. According to veterans advocacy group Home Base — more than 20 U.S. service members commit suicide each day. Overall, the first two decades of America’s so-called “War On Terrorism” has cost the lives some 500,000 people around the world.
“Foreign intervention in the name of peace has been sold to Americans as a noble endeavor so we don’t ask who’s profiting from the destruction of cultures and human lives,” Iraqi war Zack Henson said at Foley Square. “This isn’t just about Trump, this isn’t just about Republicans. We cannot worry about an evil president with his finger on the button and not challenge the people who put it in front of him — we can’t pretend this isn’t a systemic problem.”

With the lives of working men and women in the balance, both James and Salk expressed their hope that the American Labor Movement will rise up and rally against more war.

“I think it should,” Salk said. “Our union has joined with other unions to be against the war; there are a lot of people who’ve been active in our union who are against war and against militarism. — it’s just not good for the country.”

“My hope is that the Labor Movement, such as it exists in this country, will be part of a broad movement that’s opposed to war and for necessary social spending for everyday people — working class people,” James said. “I know that in the past, labor sided with the Vietnam War, for instance, for too long — but I’m hoping that we can really become aligned with the Peace Movement instead.”

In his address to the Foley Square demonstrators, NYC Public Advocate Jumaane Williams underscored the reality of more war when he noted that if Donald Trump’s kids or the children of his allies had to fight and die — “they would never send this country to war.”

“[But] it is poor people — and black and brown people — who are looking for a better life — who are looking for housing — looking education — that go onto the Armed Services,” he said. “And [the elites] think they’re dispensable. But they’re not — and we’re going to stand up.”
CHARLESTON, W.Va. — The longstanding battle over right-to-work legislation in West Virginia resumes this week.

The state Supreme Court is scheduled at 10 a.m. Wednesday to hear oral arguments in an appeal of a circuit court decision in the case, Patrick Morrisey, Attorney General v. WV AFL-CIO and others.

Here’s a primer:

Who: Morrisey is the state’s attorney general. Lawyers for his office are representing the State of West Virginia, which was sued after the state Legislature passed the Workplace Freedom Act in 2016.

The West Virginia AFL-CIO and other unions have been fighting the law in court, saying it represents an illegal taking. They contend that the act would allow non-union employees of companies to gain the benefits of contract negotiation and other benefits without having to pay.

The state Supreme Court is hearing the case. That includes justices Beth Walker, Margaret Workman, Evan Jenkins and John Hutchison.

Tim Armstead, the current chief justice, is sitting this one out because he was speaker of the House of Delegates when the bill passed. Cabell Circuit Judge Gregory Howard will be in for Armstead. Judicial elections in West Virginia are nonpartisan, but Howard earlier served in the Legislature as a Republican.

What: This is the conclusive battle over union representation in West Virginia’s workplaces after years of skirmishes.

In 2016, the Legislature’s Republican majorities passed the “Workplace Freedom Act,” joining 27 other states that had passed right to work laws — and a watershed moment, considering longstanding union influence on West Virginia politics.

The law said a person may not be required to become a member of a labor organization or pay any dues or fees assessments.

It was vetoed by the-Gov. Earl Ray Tomblin, and the Legislature then overrode the veto. That prompted a challenge in court that has continued off and on until now.

“Now, it is time to bring this case to a final resolution and confirm that the Workplace Freedom Act stands on solid constitutional ground,” wrote lawyers representing the state in their petition to the Supreme Court.

When: The case goes back years.

West Virginia labor unions filed a complaint challenging the act four days before its July 1, 2016, effective date.

The unions asked for a preliminary injunction to stop it, and there was an August 10, 2016, hearing in the courtroom of Kanawha Circuit Judge Jennifer Bailey, who announced a preliminary injunction the same day.

From there, it was a long wait.
Judge Bailey issued a written order granting the preliminary injunction on Feb. 23, 2017.

A few months after that, the Supreme Court got involved for the first time, reversing the preliminary injunction. That was a different court that included Walker and Workman, along with then-Chief Justice Allen Loughry and justices Menis Ketchum and Robin Davis.

The majority opinion concluded the unions were unlikely to succeed long-term and scolded Bailey for taking so long.

“Because of the far-reaching effect of Senate Bill 1 and its potentially substantial impact upon public interests, in the future, we encourage the circuit court to act with greater celerity in bringing this case to a resolution.”

Still, it wasn’t until Feb. 27 of last year that Judge Bailey made a final ruling on right to work.

Although she denied some parts of the unions’ position, she upheld the key aspects, essentially striking down right to work.

“The new law will require unions and union officials to work, to supply their valuable expertise and to provide expensive services for nothing,” Bailey wrote in her 46-page ruling. “That is, in a word, arbitrary.”

The Supreme Court on March 29, 2019, stayed Bailey’s order until justices could hear the case.

That moment comes Wednesday.

Why: Unions including the AFL-CIO contend federal law already means workers don’t have to join. They’re arguing a slightly different point: that the law blocks their ability to be compensated for services such as contract negotiation if workers choose not to join.

“They have no quarrel with the ability of collective bargaining unit; that is within their right,” lawyers for the unions wrote.

“Rather, what the plaintiffs object to is the Act’s prohibition on the unions’ assessments for services provided to those non-members.”

Lawyers for the state counter that the labor organizations could offer their services only to members.

“And far from restricting employees’ right to choose to join or not joint a union,” those lawyers wrote, “the Act recognizes employees’ important interests in not being forced to associate with a union in the form of paying compulsory agency fees.”

How: Briefs and supporting documents have already been filed with the Supreme Court. So when oral arguments begin on Wednesday, justices will likely interrupt almost immediately to ask about the application of particular points of law.

Different questions might be on different Justices’ minds, so there’s no guarantee that the back-and-forth will be orderly.

The lawyers for the Attorney General suggest in their briefs that because the Supreme Court has already ruled against the unions once, that outcome is likely again here. Those lawyers say the evidence remains as it has been from the beginning.
“Even though nothing has changed in Respondents’ favor in the interim, the circuit court ignored this Court’s direction and repeated the flawed analysis from its preliminary-injunction order to permanently enjoin the act,” those lawyers wrote.

Lawyers for the unions say the Supreme Court, in its earlier injunction decision, had not heard a full argument of the case.

“The earlier decision did not have the complete record before the court, as the circuit court did when it ruled on the summary judgment motions,” lawyers for the unions wrote.

Those lawyers went on to write, “There was no discussion of the case law, no recognition that there are significant differences between the laws in most of those twenty-seven other states and West Virginia’s version, or that previous challenges to right to work laws have largely dealt with issues other than West Virginia’s prohibition on agency fees.”

For those who want to watch oral arguments, the Supreme Court streams here. There are no archived versions of the proceedings.
“If we don’t show up on the Census, it’s like Thanos snapped his fingers and we all just disappear,” said Lurie Daniel Favors, General Counsel for the Center for Law and Social Justice at Medgar Evers College, at a Jan. 14 press conference kicking into high gear a campaign to raise awareness of this year’s U.S. Census.

At New York University’s Kimmel Center for University Life, Mayor de Blasio, 2020 Census Director Julie Menin and Deputy Mayor for Strategic Policy Initiatives J. Phillip Thompson announced that the city would spend $8 million on a media campaign to educate people about the Census, which residents can begin submitting March 12. About $3 million of that funding will be used to advertise in community and ethnic publications and television to reach out to undercounted communities and immigrants.

Citizenship Question Out

The media campaign was part of a broader $40 million investment by the de Blasio administration to push back against fears created by a now-eliminated proposal to put a question on the survey asking participants’ citizenship status. In March 2018, the U.S. Commerce Department announced that it would restore the citizenship question, which had not been used since the 1950 Census. But last June, the U.S. Supreme Court decided against overturning three lower-court rulings that blocked the question from being included.

“This time we have to do something much harder because this time we have the Federal Government trying to stop us from getting the count right,” Mr. de Blasio said. “They created fear, they created confusion, they tried to convince people that the Census was somehow going to be a problem in their life.”

The U.S. Census Bureau estimated that restoring the question would have dissuaded about 9 million people across the country from participating in the count. The Census determines how $7 billion in Federal funding is allocated in the state, including for programs such as Medicaid, the Children’s Health Insurance Program and food stamps. It also governs how many seats a state receives in the U.S. House of Representatives, and experts believed that the change might have cost New York two seats.

Ms. Menin, who also serves as Executive Assistant Corporation Counsel for Strategic Advocacy at the Law Department, said that there was a “clear plan” by the Trump Administration to “weaponize the Census, to basically use what is a constitutional obligation to count us as a tool to harm us, and we’re not going to stand for that.”

Lower Here

Participation in the Census was already lower in New York than the national average: only 63 percent of New Yorkers answered Census questions in 2010, compared to 74 percent of people nationally.

“If there is an undercount in New York in this Census, who exactly is going to be undercounted? It’s going to be communities with a lot of immigrants, it’s going to be communities with a lot of brown people, it’s going to be communities with a lot of black people,” Mr. Thompson said. “Not everybody is going to be undercounted.”

Ms. Daniel Favors spoke of a long history of mistrust among blacks in regard to who is counted, including the fact that slaves were considered three-fifths of a person until the Thirteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution was enacted in 1865. “We have to be able to tap into that history, we have to be able to recognize that there are reasons why we are not showing up,” she said.
But she added that teaching people the importance of the Census was crucial as well. “This isn’t about doing just your civic duty, you need schools, you need Teachers who are properly trained, your roads need to be driveable, and your hospitals can’t be shutting down.”

Unions Back Push

Labor advocates, including the United Federation of Teachers, District Council 37 and Service Employees International Union’s Local 32BJ also came out to support the initiative.

The “NYC Census 2020” coalition partnered with the City University of New York, which serves predominantly low- and middle-income students of color, to train 200 students to educate their families and neighbors about the Census. The survey determines how much Federal funding schools and colleges will receive for programs and services such as the Pell Grant, Special Education and student wellness.

“It was inevitable that CUNY would play a major role in this historic Census mobilization effort. After all, CUNY is very much New York,” Executive Vice Chancellor José Luis Cruz said.
Celebrate the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. at these memorable events

Emily Davenport - AM NEW YORK - January 17, 2020

From concerts to days of service, several places throughout the city are holding events to honor the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Here’s a look at what’s happening throughout the city on Monday, Jan. 20 in celebration of Martin Luther King Jr. Day.

Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service – NYC Parks
Inwood Hill Park, Manhattan (at Henshaw Street and Dyckman Street); Forest Park, Queens (at Oak Ridge); Conference House Park, Staten Island (at the Conference House Park Visitor Center)
9 a.m. to 12 p.m. (9:30 a.m. start for Staten Island) on Monday
Give back to your local parks during this Martin Luther king Jr. Day. Those who stop by this event will learn how to identify and safely remove invasive plants from the parks in order to help create a healthier ecosystem.

34th Annual Brooklyn Tribute to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
Peter Jay Sharp Building, BAM Howard Gilman Opera House, 30 Lafayette Ave.
10:30 on Monday
This annual celebration of Martin Luther King Jr. brings together civic leaders and artists to honor his life. This year, the gathering will feature a performance from Son Little and Brooklyn Interdenominational Choir, as well as a talk from keynote speaker Nikole Hannah-Jones. Admission is free, but get there early as space fills up quickly.

MLK Day of Service
Central Queens YM & YWHA, 67-09 108th St., Forest Hills
10:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Monday
SkillsUSA will be honoring Dr. King by serving lunch to senior citizens at the Central Queens Y. Come down to truly embrace the spirit of Dr. King by giving back to this community.

Honoring Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.
Museum of the City of New York, 1220 Fifth Ave.
11 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Monday
Head over to the museum’s “Activist New York” exhibit to honor the legacy of Dr. King for storytime, followed by an art-making activity and a museum scavenger hunt. Entrance is free with purchase of a Museum ticket.

10th Annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Storytelling & Music Celebration
Grace Reformed Church of Flatbush, 1800 Bedford Avenue
11 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Monday
The Prospect Lefferts Gardens Neighborhood Association is hosting their annual storytelling event on Monday. Stop by to hear from author/illustrator Sharee Miller and author/activist Anastasia Higginbotham, who will both do readings, and enjoy arts & crafts, drumming workshops and more. Doors open at 10:30 a.m. and admission is free to the public!
Boys & Girls Club of Harlem Presents: MLK Celebration
Boys & Girls Club of Harlem, 521 West 145th Street
1 to 2:30 p.m. on Monday
Honor Dr. King’s legacy of service by strengthening your awareness of service in your community. At the Boys & Girls Club of Harlem’s MLK Celebration, they’ll be discussing steps that can be taken to improving the community through acts of service. Light snacks will available for participants.

Every Voice Choirs’ Community Concert for Dr. Martin Luther King Day 2020
Broadway Presbyterian Church 601 West 114th St.
1:30 to 2:30 p.m. on Monday
Every Voice Choirs is putting on a free concert in Manhattan for Martin Luther King Jr. Day. Their children’s choir will be joined by The Teachers College Community Choir to commemorate the memory of Dr. King.

MLK Now
The Riverside Church, 490 Riverside Dr.
2 to 6 p.m. on Monday
Black Out for human Rights is hosting their fifth annual MLK Now event at the Riverside Church. The event will feature live music, spoken word performances, conversations and more. Doors open at 12 p.m. and there is no assigned seating, so make sure you get there early!

Families Celebrate Africa: A Martin Luther King Day Event
Brooklyn Society for Ethical Culture, 53 Prospect Park West
3 to 5 p.m. on Monday
This annual family-friendly event celebrates Dr. King through African drawing and music, crafts and activities, stories, and so much more. Tickets are $20 in advance for children 2 to 12 ($25 at the door), and $10 for adults and teens accompanying a child. Children under 2 years old get in free.