

V.

POLITICAL LEADERSHIP

Elected officials should express public appreciation for organized labor and work as advocates for the rights of workers to collectively bargain. They should stand with workers and serve as a constant reminder within the legislative system that workers' rights matter.

This includes solidarity vocally and through actions such as proposing pro-labor policies. In addition, they can educate the community about pre-apprenticeship programs and other opportunities within skilled trades.

“THERE’S A DIRECT
RELATIONSHIP
BETWEEN THE
BALLOT BOX AND
THE BREAD BOX.”

Walter Reuther, UAW President
1946–1970



OVERVIEW

POSITION ON ORGANIZED LABOR [P. 118]

Elected leaders must heed workers’ calls for basic rights, such as fair wages, paid leave, retirement security, and protection from discrimination.

PRO-LABOR POLICY EFFORTS [P. 120]

Local officials have the power to pass pro-labor policies, such as those in the Municipal Solidarity Index. Even if politically or procedurally difficult, officials that propose these measures and advocate for their passage should earn credit for standing on the side of working families.

UNION MEMBER ELECTED OFFICIALS [P. 124]

Elected officials have the opportunity to serve as advocates and spokespeople for workers’ rights and values within their communities. Union members are, for obvious reasons, exceptionally well-equipped to take on this role.

Approval ratings for union members-turned-elected officials are high, as they know and understand everyday workers’ struggles and lived experiences. Fundamentally, union leaders understand the importance of fighting for communities as a whole – not just a select few at the top.

SKILLED TRADES TASK FORCE [P. 127]

Many trades deemed essential to society are experiencing surges in demand, even despite the adverse economic effects of the pandemic. Many Michiganders have certification in the skilled trades and are searching for employment in high-paying fields. Others, including our youth, are interested in the skilled trades but lack access to apprenticeships.

Meeting this growing demand can require creating a skilled trades task force. The task force should include a union representative versed in a variety of the skilled trades and representatives from nonprofits

who can provide further advice. The main goal of a skilled trades task force is to promote the skilled trades, facilitate job fairs, and help funnel people into successful careers.

SHORT-TERM RENTALS [P. 128]

Short-term rentals worsen the housing crisis by decreasing housing availability and increasing prices. Municipalities should take steps to regulate these harmful effects. Potential policy solutions include instituting a hard cap on short-term rentals and outright banning them in select zoning districts.

LEADERSHIP'S POSITION ON ORGANIZED LABOR

BY: JORDYN HOULE

When elected leaders acknowledge the importance of organized labor in advancing workers' rights, **they send a message to working families that they are fighting for them and their ability to live dignified lives.**

One way elected leaders can show support for organized labor is by signing an ordinance or declaration expressing their continued support for working families. They can also post their labor-related issue positions on their website, Facebook, or Twitter. By publicly declaring their solidarity with the labor movement, local leaders demonstrate that workers are valued in their communities and that their concerns will be considered when making policy decisions. This can take various forms depending on the level of government. School boards, for example, could express appreciation for workers by integrating labor history into local curricula.

Moreover, local elected leaders can support unions by recognizing workers who choose to go on strike.

Instead of trying to stop strikes that occur within their cities, municipal officials should listen to striking workers' concerns and implement policies to address them. When the United Auto Workers (UAW) went on strike against General Motors in September 2019, local officials across



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the state supported the workers' demands for job security, higher pay, and better healthcare benefits. Elected officials, many of whom were

union members, met with striking GM workers to listen to their concerns and express solidarity with their cause.¹⁶¹ Local leaders should acknowledge and support their constituents when they fight for the pay, benefits, and working conditions they deserve.

Finally, one of the most important ways local officials can publicly support unions is by **passing legislation that strengthens workers' rights in their cities.** For instance, municipal leaders can advocate for and adopt policies guaranteeing workers a fair wage, paid leave, retirement security, and protection from discrimination.¹⁶² These policies, alongside countless others, are integral to ensuring that working people across Michigan are able to provide for themselves and their families. By backing up their public support for the labor movement with concrete action, local governments can show workers that they are prioritized.





PRO-LABOR POLICY EFFORTS

BY: KEITH JOHNSTONE AND ELIAS KHOURY

Working-class people make up a majority of the state, but often more financed and organized interests conspire in our statewide offices to prevent truly pro-worker legislation from being passed. Allies and champions fighting for the rights of working people are one of the labor movement's best assets. Michigan AFL-CIO Advocates recognizes that these leaders are vital to our movement.

Politicians can show their support for working families in a plethora of ways. They can, for example, vote for or propose legislation that directly helps workers and their families. These pieces of legislation could be taken

from the Municipal Solidarity Index or developed in tandem with local unions. Even if such pro-labor policies do not pass, politicians communicate their values by proposing and voting for them. They also force their colleagues to take a stand. This helps the labor movement identify friends and foes so that they can re-elect the former and unseat the latter. Aside from advancing positive measures, politicians can also stop bad ones. Municipal officials, for example, can speak out against legislation that hurts working people by passing resolutions calling out the state legislature. Under the Snyder administration, dozens of laws were

passed that hurt working families. These laws included HB 4052, also known as "The Death Star Bill," which preempts local governments from enacting local minimum wage ordinances and other pro-worker policies.

Lastly, local governments, in particular, can take steps to honor organized labor. United in struggle, unionized workers have won critical demands for economic justice. These include, but are not limited to, overtime pay, the weekend, an end to child labor, and the minimum wage. In exchange for their sacrifices, workers deserve recognition.

PARKS

Municipalities can dedicate public greenspaces to the memory of employees who died on the job. Workers Memorial Park in Jackson, Michigan is an example of this. It also honors frontline workers who put their lives on the line during the COVID pandemic.¹⁶³

HOLIDAYS

Tributes can also come in the form of holidays. Governments at the state and local levels could, for example, pass resolutions declaring a Workers Memorial Day. The labor movement has long honored this holiday in memory of their fallen heroes. Workers Memorial Day is typically celebrated on April 28th – the day OSHA went into effect. Starting in 2021, the state of Michigan began following the labor movement's lead. Since then, Governor Gretchen Whitmer has issued official statements acknowledging April 28th as Workers Memorial Day, honoring "the workers who have died, suffered injury, or are disabled due to workplace accidents."

SCHOOL CURRICULA

School boards can use their authority to require the teaching of labor history. This is especially important in states like Michigan, which have rich labor histories. For example, the famous 1936-7 Flint sit-down strike saw the UAW go from a collection of isolated locals to a major industrial force. This

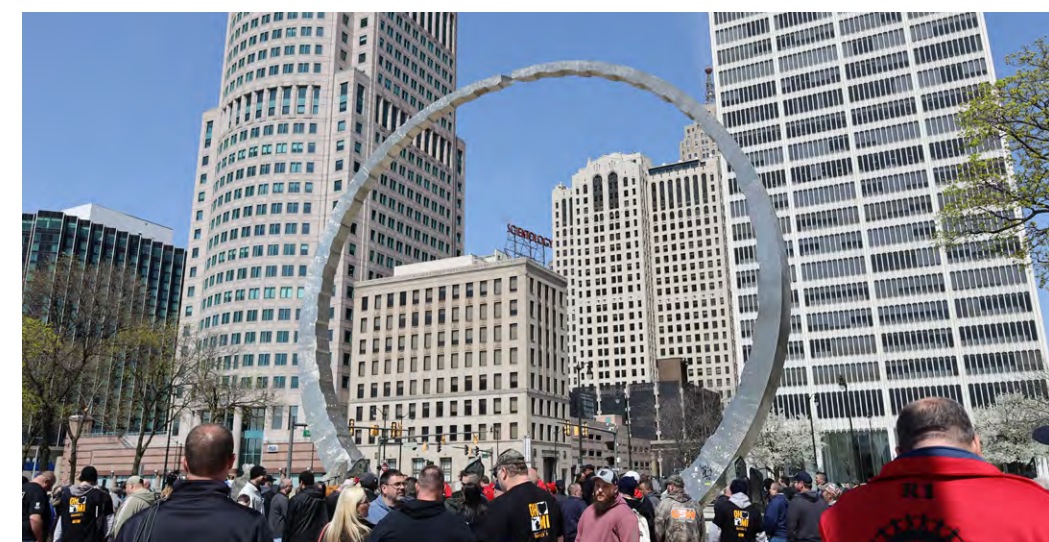
ALLIES AND CHAMPIONS FIGHTING FOR THE RIGHTS OF WORKING PEOPLE ARE ONE OF THE LABOR MOVEMENT'S BEST ASSETS.

led to widespread unionization of the American auto industry.¹⁶⁴ Students ought to learn about these successes so that, one day, they too can further the cause of workers' rights.

In addition to covering notable strikes and unionization drives, lessons in labor history might also cover the basics of collective bargaining. Whatever topics teachers choose, this would be a huge step in the right direction. Ensuring kids understand organized labor and its history will help them affect positive change when they eventually enter the workforce.

MONUMENTS

Further, states and municipalities can erect monuments honoring organized labor. A landmark known as Transcending in Detroit, Michigan's Hart Plaza is an example. The Michigan Labor History Society began the project in 2000 and completed it just three years later. Today, Transcending



stands 63 feet tall and serves as a tribute to the sacrifices and hard-fought gains of Michigan's labor movement. The monument was built thanks in no small part to generous financial contributions from groups like the AFL-CIO and UAW.¹⁶⁵

CONCLUSION

Local elected officials have the distinct opportunity to pass pro-worker policies in their local governments, especially in instances when the state is unwilling or unable to make important changes to help workers. If they can't pass them, they have the opportunity and responsibility to propose them and push the envelope for the sake of working people and their families. Even if a pro-worker bill is rejected during a council or board meeting, elected officials who support the measure deserve to be recognized by the AFL-CIO and affiliated labor organizations for their efforts. Organized labor deserves to be recognized too. To that end, government officials can erect parks and monuments to honor the sacrifices made by unions and their workers. Officials can also designate holidays to honor those sacrifices and ensure kids learn about them in school.

Success Story: Workers Memorial Park, Jackson MI

BY: ELIAS KHOURY

In his last act as mayor of Jackson, Derek Dobies knew he had to do something big. So he did what any union man would -- honored the workers who make his city run. In November 2021, Dobies dedicated a newly opened community park to the "frontline heroes who put in the extra hours."¹⁶⁶

Workers Memorial Park is fittingly located on Martin Luther King Jr. Drive. Of course, the late reverend believed strongly in organized labor's power to liberate people from injustice. Workers Memorial is, therefore, a tribute to the brave workers fighting to finish what King started. One day before his assassination, Dr. King delivered this quote at an address to striking AFSCME union workers in Memphis:

"You are demanding that this city will respect the dignity of labor. So often we overlook the work and the significance of those who are not in professional jobs, of those who are

not in the so-called big jobs. But let me say to you tonight that whenever you are engaged in work that serves humanity and is for the building of humanity, it has dignity and it has worth."

Dobies hopes others will follow his lead and dedicate public spaces to working people. "Now is the time to honor those who keep our economies running," he said. **"Workers have made so many sacrifices — especially**

during the pandemic. The least we can do is honor them. The next step is treating them with dignity and respect, paying them what they are owed, and improving conditions for all working people, no matter who they are or where they come from."



Former Mayor of Jackson Derek Dobies stands next to the Workers Memorial Park sign, November 30th, 2021.

UNION-MEMBER ELECTED OFFICIALS

BY: LINDSEY HAUGHTON

Many of our most courageous elected leaders have come from within the labor movement. Working-class people know how the rules of the game are rigged — and union members understand that better than anyone. Union members know what it takes to stand up to power and how to enact policies that promote fairness on and off the job. Because of their experience, government officials who are also union members often enjoy immense popular support.

The Michigan AFL-CIO is committed to supporting and electing union members at all levels of government across the country. At least 964 union members were elected in the 2018 midterm elections nationwide.¹⁶⁷

UNION MEMBERS ARE POPULAR

Approval ratings of labor unions among the general public have improved over the last 10 years to 68% in 2021.¹⁶⁸ This is partly because union members tend to look like their communities. Just under half of all union members are women, and 65.4% are people of color.¹⁶⁹ Government is rather unrepresentative by comparison. White men are just 37% of Michigan's population but comprise 65% of Michigan's elected officials.¹⁷⁰ Moreover, though 13% of Michiganders are women of color, only

3% of Michigan's elected officials are.¹⁷¹

Many working people and union members lack the financial resources, flexibility, and time to run for office. This makes it even more critical for local governments to ensure union members are represented in local politics. No one understands everyday life better than workers. It is not enough to hope union leaders will decide to run for office. Local governments must set, and follow through on, well-defined goals to elect and appoint union leaders.

ALL ISSUES ARE WORKERS' ISSUES

Union members are particularly qualified to assist with many problems facing a community, including unfair labor practices, low wages, workplace safety problems, discrimination, and more.

Union elected or appointed officials would also bring union values to cities. Unions promote democracy and respect within the workplace. They practice solidarity and fight for what they believe is right. Union members are willing to fight for someone they don't know, whether standing in a picket line for hours in the hot sun or advocating for legislation and policies that support working people and amp-

NO ONE CAN REPRESENT WORKING PEOPLE BETTER THAN THEMSELVES.

lify their voices.

School boards would greatly benefit from the insights and perspective of working parents, who may have less time to participate in school board meetings or PTA but care deeply about their children's education. School board members with a union background, especially former teachers, can understand the needs of working parents, students, and teachers alike.

CONCLUSION

Our political and economic systems must address the complex issues impacting workers. Working people living under rules written exclusively by wealthier people is unacceptable. No one can represent working people better than themselves.

Local governments will receive points for this category based on whether or not they have any active or former union members as elected officials and whether they have gender and racial representation among their elected officials that are, at minimum, representative of their constituents.





SKILLED TRADES TASK FORCE

BY: MAHNOOR IMRAN

THE VALUE OF SKILLED TRADES

Many people believe the misconception that a 4-year college degree is the only way to attain a stable career and steady income. However, skilled trades careers in many fields provide workers with stable jobs they can raise their families on.

Given the demand for skilled trades workers nationwide and in Michigan, local governments would greatly benefit by connecting workers to sustainable, life-long careers. With emerging automation technologies and retiring baby boomers, there has been a steady decline in the number of people with the skills to fill these careers. In Michigan, employers will need to fill an estimated 545,000 skilled trade jobs by 2026.¹⁷² Unfortunately, the path to job training can be fraught with obstacles and difficult to navigate. In 2019, Governor Whitmer established the Going Pro campaign designed to elevate the perception of skilled trade jobs and help people invigorate their talents in that realm.¹⁷³ Governor Whitmer also signed an executive order creating the Michigan Workforce Development Board, whose goal is to ensure that Michiganders can acquire the necessary skills and credentials to secure jobs as the state recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic.¹⁷⁴

DETROIT SKILLED TRADES TASK FORCE

One effective way local governments can open the doors for more people to enter the skilled trades is to build a robust task force comprised of union representatives. These representatives will provide critical information about the different types of trades, apprenticeship readiness programs, apprenticeship application process, and career opportunities that exist for people at all points in their occupational journeys. Detroit launched a skilled trades task force that meets every month. In these meetings, union representatives coalesce to discuss vocational opportunities and facilitate a dialogue with the community about career progression. This meeting is led by the City Council President and features union representatives who specialize in a variety of trades, including, but not limited to, bricklaying, plumbing, pipefitting, electrical work, craftwork, ironwork, carpentry, and construction work. During these meetings, many community members often take the time to promote organizations that help with employment opportunities and share educational resources. The skilled

trades task force community provides networking opportunities, helps people seek guidance in their field of interest, and assists people with navigating application processes and employment opportunities.

CONCLUSION

Elected officials have an obligation to ensure the economic welfare of their constituents. Municipal governments are uniquely positioned to communicate with their communities about available training opportunities and job opportunities within the skilled trades. In doing so, local governments can help provide avenues to in-demand careers so that workers can support themselves and their loved ones.



SHORT-TERM RENTALS

BY: ELIAS KHOURY

BACKGROUND

Airbnb and Vrbo may seem innocent enough, but they can seriously damage local economies. These short-term rentals decrease the availability of long-term units and often elevate housing prices to unsustainable levels. In most communities, the rate at which Airbnbs are created outpaces the rate at which new housing is constructed. Often Airbnbs take up older, affordable single-family homes. Simultaneously, newly constructed housing units are often just luxury apartments.

Suddenly, it's a challenge for families to afford housing. This forces working-class people to live far from where they work, costing them precious time and money spent on transportation. Firefighters, teachers, and the like should be able to live in the cities they serve. The impact of Airbnbs on hotel workers is particularly severe. Short-term rentals compete with hotels for visitors and often win. This can push the latter into financial insolvency, potentially leading to job loss among hotel workers. Luckily, their deleterious effects can be kept at

bay via sound, practical policy.

RELEVANT LEGISLATION

State legislators, however, are working overtime to stop this from happening. Years ago, the Michigan House of Representatives passed legislation to preempt the regulation of Airbnbs by local governments. The bill would ban municipalities from adopting or enforcing any zoning code that would "have the effect of prohibiting short-term rentals."¹⁷⁵ State Representative Sarah Lightner defended this on the grounds that it supposedly protects "the private

property rights of Michigan citizens."¹⁷⁶ That, however, could not be further from the truth. Airbnbs have been shown to exacerbate the ongoing crisis of affordable housing. They make it harder for the average person to own property. Immunizing short-term rental units from regulation does not protect property rights. Instead, it leads to the concentration of property rights in fewer and fewer wealthier hands. This is anathema to the democratic and egalitarian principles that the labor movement holds so dear. Guided by the informed choices of their citizens, municipalities should have the right to regulate Airbnbs as they see fit. And communities across Michigan have done so with great success.

SAMPLE POLICIES

Mackinaw City, for example, places considerable limitations on short-term rentals and bans Airbnbs from select zoning districts. City officials were responding to "detrimental effects" such as "a reduction in affordable housing stock" and "loss of... parking spaces."¹⁷⁷

Similarly, in 2020, New Buffalo enacted a temporary moratorium on Airbnbs. At the time, the Lake Michigan town - whose population is under 2,000 - had already licensed 150 short-term rentals. New Buffalo imposed the moratorium in hopes of increasing housing affordability to keep people safe during the pandemic.¹⁷⁸

SHORT-TERM RENTALS, WHILE PERHAPS CONVENIENT FOR VISITORS, CAN SERIOUSLY HARM LOCAL COMMUNITIES.

CONCLUSION

Short-term rentals, while perhaps convenient for visitors, can seriously harm local communities. By reducing the availability of long-term units and putting upward pressure on rent, they exacerbate the affordable housing crisis. But good policies, such as those constraining short-term rentals to certain areas, can help combat these effects.



POLITICAL LEADERSHIP SCORING CRITERIA

Position on Organized Labor	Points	Points Available
Majority of elected officials regularly put forth press releases, social media posts, or other statements supporting workers, organizing efforts in their jurisdiction, and other pro-labor stances.	0	1
Majority of elected officials are willing to take meetings and work with unions and workers.	0	2
Majority of the elected officials regularly attend strikes, pickets, or other worker actions in their jurisdiction when invited.	0	2
SCORE	0 out of 5	5

Pro-Labor Policy Efforts	Points	Points Available
Passes pro-labor legislation at a public meeting beyond those included in the Municipal Solidarity Index.	0	1
Publishes statements which condemn policies at other levels of government that hurt workers.	0	1
Passes policy that directly challenge unjust state law.	0	1
Litigates in defense of good labor policy, or against unjust state laws or actions in court — including as amicus curiae.	0	1
Creates a workers memorial park or celebrates Workers Memorial Day.	0	1
SCORE	0 out of 5	5

Union Member Elected Officials	Points	Points Available
Has elected member that is a current or former union member.	0	3
Women and people of color are represented in proportion with population of district.	0	2
SCORE	0 out of 5	5

BONUS: Skilled Trades Task Force	Points	Points Available
Holds meetings at regular intervals with the participation of the local Building Trades Councils. Contain some union representatives who deal in a variety of the skilled trades and representatives from nonprofits such as the United Way. Provides informational material about relevant opportunities (e.g. flyers, pamphlets, opportunities, resources, etc.). Meetings allow time for other community organizations to showcase their services and provide informational material regarding their educational and employment-related programs (e.g. those assisting with mathematics to help people qualify for apprenticeship opportunities, those who can help people locate their GEDs if obtained in the past, etc.)	0	2
Helps coordinate programs such as job fairs, orientations, and experiences that provide the community members with exposure to careers. Appoints at least one youth representative who can provide information about relevant opportunities for students to engage with vocational training and gain early exposure to the skilled trades.	0	1
SCORE	0 out of 3	3

BONUS: Short-Term Rentals	Points	Points Available
Bans short-term rentals in multiple zoning districts.	0	1
Places a hard cap on the number of short-term rentals allowed in jurisdiction.	0	1
SCORE	0 out of 2	2

FINAL SCORE	0 out of 15	15
FINAL SCORE WITH BONUS	0 out of 20	20

Required documentation includes copies of relevant city code and/or copies of press statements, resolutions, or social media posts. For more information about city selection, criteria, or the MSI scoring system, visit advocates.miaflcio.org. All cities rated were provided their scorecard in advance of publication and given the opportunity to submit revisions. For feedback regarding a particular city's scorecard, please email advocates@miaflcio.org.



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