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Working People Bring a Wave of Change on Labor Day

Editor's note: The following op-ed was written by AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka. The SIU is an AFL-CIO affiliate; SIU President Michael Sacco is the longest-serving member on the federation's executive council.

Every Labor Day there's a quick nod to past labor victories, and then a knee-jerk assertion that "organized labor is in decline." It's time to retire that tired line. It's simply not true. In 2015 there's an untold story about the rising tide of working people finding new and innovative ways to create a better life.

All of this in the face of corporate opposition, archaic labor laws and gridlock in Washington. This is a story that's taking place in cities and towns around the country—in offices, factories and among ordinary people who have decided that they can stand together to make a difference.

This momentum hasn't gone completely unnoticed. A recent Gallup poll shows that support for unions is at its highest since 2008, with 58 percent of people expressing approval, and the Obama Administration is preparing to host a White House summit on Worker Voice in the fall. From Main Street to the White House, our country is taking notice of the different ways working people are on the rise. Here is a snapshot:

Working people are raising wages – 2015 stands to be the biggest year for collective bargaining in generations. Approximately 5 million workers will bargain for new contracts this year, with everything, including raising wages to bettering working conditions, at stake. From airport janitors in Phoenix to mu-

sicians in New York City, workers have won good contracts and will continue to fight to raise wages through collective bargaining.

Being in a union is cool again – From traditional occupations to the "new economy," workers are surging to join unions and they are doing it on their own terms. Less than a year ago 9,000 American Airlines agents joined the Communications Workers of America. The American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees grew by an astounding 135,000 new members from last year through this March. And workers at digital outlets including, Gawker, Vice, The Guardian, and Salon all joined a union despite the difficulties involved in organizing in the digital economy.

Common-sense rules are leveling the playing field – Working people have had the deck stacked against them for far too long, but their voices are starting to turn the tide. Rulings of the National Labor Relations Board have restored common sense to the union election process, and made it harder for companies to hide behind contractors in order to abuse working people.

Making workplaces safer – Today, too many people put their health and safety on the line to put food on the table. That's why workers have fought hard to make workplaces safer. Whether it is the United Steelworkers and the Building Trades working together to improve worker safety at oil refineries or mine workers ensuring high standards, a union workplace is a safe workplace.

Corporations respond to worker pressure – Working people are standing up and speaking out for a robust raising wages agenda, and some of America's biggest corporations are listening. Under pressure from workers, corporations such as Walmart, Target, and McDonald's have all raised their minimum wage over the last year.

Workers are winning at the ballot box – Last November, five states and two cities voted to raise their minimum wage. Working people in major cities such as Seattle and Los Angeles now have more money in their pockets, with many cities from Huntsville to St. Louis debating raising the minimum wage.

We're winning in the South – Over the last year, workers have made great gains in the South. From peanut shellers in Alabama to steelworkers in southern Virginia, workers are beating back the efforts of big corporations to keep wages low and conditions poor.

We're winning fair scheduling – Corporations increasingly create unfair and unsustainable work schedules for working families, but we are fighting back. Over the last year, working people from across the country have spoken out for scheduling reform, earning big wins in California and at one of the world's biggest telecom corporations.

Sick leave is the new norm – A decade ago, paid sick leave was a dream. Now it's a central part of the economic debate. Whether it's at the ballot box, through local legislation, or through collective bargaining, working people are demanding



Richard Trumka
President, AFL-CIO

the right to be healthier and happier in the workplace.

Working people haven't just won big in the last year; we've created momentum. From major organizing wins to issues like paid sick leave and scheduling reform to ensuring pro-working family candidates are supported at the ballot box, there is an undeniable movement underway. The "labor in decline" storyline is yesterday's news.

Know Your Benefits and How to Secure Them

New Benefit Introduced for Federal Employees: Self Plus One

This open season, federal mariners will have the opportunity to select a new health care insurance benefit called Self Plus One. This new program, which is part of the overall Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) insurance program, allows individuals to cover themselves and one other eligible family member. This type of enrollment will be added to current programs Self Only and Self and Family.

Eligible family members must meet the current definition of a family member – a spouse or a child up to age 26. A child may be covered past 26 years of age if the child was incapable of self-support because of a physical or mental disability which existed before age 26. Married same-sex couples are eligible for the benefit. Domestic partners or non-married partners are not eligible for coverage.

Self Plus One may be elected during this year's open season. After open season ends, if you have a qualifying life event, you may also have an opportunity to select Self Plus One coverage. Qualifying Life Events are marriage, divorce, the birth or adoption of a child or a family member's loss of coverage under another health insurance program.

The Office of Personnel Management intends to publish the rates for this program in early October. To better understand if this new benefit is right for you, be sure to study the rates and coverage for both the plan you are enrolled in currently and the Self Plus One option. (See the Open Season article on this page for more information.) Should you select this option during Open Season, your coverage will begin in January 2016.

2015 Open Season Dates: November 9 through December 14

Federal mariners work hard and have access to excellent insurance through the Federal Employee Health Benefits Program (FEHB), but not everyone is in the same boat.

In September, the *New York Times* reported that 33 million people or 14 percent of the population did not have access to health insurance – a vitally important benefit.

A very important event – the FEHB Open Season – begins this November 9 and runs through December 14, 2015. Premium rates will increase by an average of 7.4 percent.

The SIU urges every Federal Mariner to prepare for your open season to ensure the

selection of the best health care coverage, vision and dental benefits. Now is also time to review whether it makes sense to participate in the Federal Flexible Spending Account Program (FSAFEDS).

Additionally this open season the FEHB introduces the Self Plus One health care benefit (see related article on this page).

There are dozens of plans available for review as you prepare for this year's open season and research is critical. For those federal mariners whose assignments take them to international locations, the

SIU encourages you to consider health plan coverage that includes treatment in international medical facilities.

With all the choices, how should you evaluate your health benefit plan options? There are resources to help you learn about the plans, coverage and rates.

- Selection factors to consider include:
1. Coverage benefits.
 2. Premiums.
 3. Access to doctors, hospitals, and other providers.
 4. Access to after-hours and emergency care.

5. Out-of-pocket costs (coinsurance, copayments, and deductibles).
6. Exclusions and limitations.

You can check the OPM website and click on the Insurance tab to review the free information on that site:

<https://www.opm.gov/healthcare-insurance/healthcare/plan-information/guides/>

You can also review Washington's Checkbook Guide to Health Plans for Federal Employees, which is widely considered one of the most comprehensive guides available.

President's Column

Maritime Labor – Progress and Opportunities

New shipbuilding programs in both the public and private sector mean continued job security for SIU members, whether you sail in our Government Services Division or on the commercial side. The ongoing progress with construction of JHSVs, plus LNG-powered containerships and tankers on both coasts reinforces my belief in a bright future not only for our union but also for America's shipbuilding industry.

Those programs reflect the fact that there is plenty of work out there for the U.S. Merchant Marine, and they also demonstrate the outstanding capabilities of our nation's shipyard workers. As a



Michael Sacco

lifelong union man, it's a point of pride for me to note that two of our country's busiest yards – Aker Philadelphia and, on the West Coast, General Dynamics NASSCO – employ union workers. Put another way, union members at those facilities (and elsewhere) are constructing state-of-the-art tankers, containerships and RO/ROs that stack up against any others around the world.

On that note, you may have read or heard about a new Gallup poll that found six in 10 Americans say they approve of labor unions. That's the highest approval rate since 2008, according to news reports.

I didn't realize it until reading an article in late summer, but Gallup has been surveying American views about organized labor since 1936 (two years before the SIU was chartered). That same article said approval of unions has grown by five percentage points in the last year alone, and by 10 percentage points since 2008 (the start of the recession).

You may know that I'm usually at least initially a little leery of studies and statistics, but once I've had time to digest the facts, it's not hard to separate hot air from reality. The Gallup poll shows that union workers are getting the job done, or people wouldn't believe in us. It also shows we're doing a better job of explaining to the general public why unions absolutely, positively still matter. That's what AFL-CIO President Trumka did in a Labor Day message (see page 1). In that spirit, educating yourselves, your shipmates, your friends and families are critical steps in helping people understand how unions offer opportunities and protections in the workplace.

In the labor movement we believe access to health care and leave of all types is a fundamental right. This issue of the *Federal Mariner* has important information about another opportunity for you and your families. All federal mariners should be aware that Open Season, the time when you can select health care coverage for yourself and your family will start this November 9 and last through December 14. I encourage each of you to review your health care benefits and make the necessary elections that will protect you if you become ill or injured in the U.S. or abroad.

For those of you at sea for the past several months, you may be unaware that another strong advocate for working people visited the U.S. during the week of September 23. Pope Francis started his U.S. visit by landing at Joint Base Andrews – the home of Air Force 1 – located about a mile from SIU Headquarters in Camp Springs, Maryland. While in the U.S. the Pope spoke at many gatherings, including the United Nations and a joint session of Congress.

Millions of people of all faiths listened to the Pope's thoughts about a variety of issues. While speaking during a visit with President Obama the Pope said that "humanity has the ability to work together in building our common home." In previous interviews, Pope Francis has spoken about the importance of the dignity of work and his support of efforts to ensure that people are paid fair wages, that workers perform their jobs in safe workplaces and, most importantly, through work people participate in society and have an active voice. One of Pope's Francis' main messages was that the "common good" was paramount over corporate profits and individual greed and consumption.

Many federal mariners work and live on the deck plates of ships for a good part of each year. For these mariners the vessel is a "common home." I want you to know that the SIU understands this unique work environment and uses every opportunity to ensure that mariners are treated with dignity and respect.

Seafarers International Union Directory

Michael Sacco, *President*

Augustin Tellez, *Executive Vice President*

David Heindel, *Secretary-Treasurer*

George Tricker, *Vice President Contracts*

Kermett Mangram,
Vice President Government Services

Chester Wheeler,
Asst. Vice President Government Services



The *USNS Rappahannock* is pictured earlier this year in the East China Sea. (U.S. Navy photo)

SIU Members Help Stranded Boaters

Members of the SIU Government Services Division recently assisted eight people aboard a distressed sailboat during a routine mission in the western Pacific Ocean.

The Seafarers-crewed *USNS Rappahannock*, a fleet replenishment oiler, rendered assistance to a 38-foot craft named *The Remedy*, which is registered in the Federated States of Micronesia, State of Yap, the U.S. Navy reported. The sailboat was headed to Guam but only had gotten roughly half-way through the 1,000-mile voyage when it ran out of fuel.

"After receiving the distress call on radio, the [*Rappahannock*] immediately maneuvered its way

to the sailboat," said Dean Bradford, the *Rappahannock's* master. "Once on scene, the ship deployed its [rigid-hulled inflatable boat] to evaluate the situation and render assistance."

The response took about an hour, and the *Rappahannock* provided fuel to the vessel and potable water to its crew.

"The crew of *Remedy* expressed their gratitude and indicated that they do not need further assistance," said Bradford.

He added, "Boats and ships are spread all over, but I can imagine they were happy to see us. It's a big world out there and a big ocean, and some are just not fully prepared or equipped to sail out."

Navy Sailors Salute CIVMARS



Sailors aboard the aircraft carrier *USS Theodore Roosevelt* render honors to CIVMARS sailing aboard the Military Sealift Command fast combat support ship *USNS Arctic* following a mid-September replenishment at sea in the Arabian Gulf. Members of the SIU Government Services Division sail aboard the *Arctic*. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist Seaman Joseph Yu)



CIVMAR NOTE

Hours of Work and Premium Pay: Why You Get It and How to Protect and Preserve Your Overtime, Premium and Penalty Pay

It is now the two-year mark since the completion of negotiations for CMPI 610, the Instruction which sets out the hours CIVMARS will work and the policy language which covers how CIVMARS sailing aboard MSC vessels will earn overtime, premium and penalty pay.

The entire effort to negotiate this Instruction took about 10 years. CMPI 610 was a 25-year-old Instruction which had not been fully revised during that entire 25-year period. The start of the negotiations involved major disputes and litigation as the SIU, on behalf of unlicensed CIVMARS, fought off every MSC effort to reduce the amount of overtime, premium and penalty pay amount it originally proposed.

For CIVMARS working with MSC in 2009, before the start of the CMPI 610 negotiations, you may remember the SIU requested a different type of negotiation called interest-based bargaining negotiations to ensure the negotiations would be fair and effective. Unlike in traditional negotiations, which often end in disagreement, interest-based bargaining negotiations allow parties to use problem-solving techniques to achieve identified goals. Using this method the SIU representatives were able to ensure that CIVMARS did not experience any significant loss to their overtime, penalty and premium pay when the negotiations were completed.

Another significant success was a change to the organization of the Instruction. The original document language was repetitive, unclear and confusing. The Instruction was streamlined and clarified to ensure a consistent application of the payment rules. Prior to the 2013 negotiations each ship applied these work rules differently and many CIVMARS were unfairly denied pay because the rules were confusing. Lastly, a comprehensive Index was developed so CIVMARS could find their applicable work rules easily.

How can you protect your overtime, premium and penalty payments? First, make sure you are very familiar with all the provisions of CMPI 610. If you aren't aware of when you are eligible for overtime, premium and penalty pay you may not

CMPI 610

Appendix 1
PREMIUM PAY DISPUTE / GRIEVANCE FORM
*All fields must be completed legibly

Section 1: NAME OF SHIP		Section 2: DATE SUBMITTED
Section 3: NAME OF EMPLOYEE(S)	Section 4: POSN	Section 5: CMPI PROVISION IN DISPUTE (REQUIRED)
Section 6: EMPLOYEE(S) CLAIM/DATE OF DISPUTE/REMEDY REQUESTED: (Must		

receive pay for the different types of work you perform. CMPI 610 should be on the vessels' computer library and at the pursers' office for your review.

Second, make sure you carefully check your time and attendance sheet. Do the codes on this sheet match the work you were doing? If you worked through all or part of your meal period, did you receive your penalty meal hour pay? Make sure you are aware if your supervisor redlined (took away) your overtime, premium or penalty pay and find out why this was done.

Third, keep track of your overtime, penalty pay and premium pay on a separate sheet or in a book with the correct pay codes and the hours that you worked. The pay code shows the rate of pay for each type of work.

Once you receive your leave and earning statement make sure you review it carefully. Make sure the hours noted on

your leave and earning statement match up with the hours included on the time and attendance sheet, and your personal record to make sure that you have received all the money you have earned. You have the biggest stake in making sure you get all the money you deserve for the hard work that you do.

If there is a discrepancy, address the issue as soon as you discover it. Speak with your supervisor and ask him or her to review the problem and see if a resolution may be reached. If you do not receive an adequate explanation or if a resolution cannot be reached, file a premium pay dispute/grievance form (found at the back of CMPI 610 – see image on this page) to start the process of disputing the denial of your pay. If you have any questions you can always contact your union representative or send a message to siufedmariner@seafarers.org if you have internet access on your vessel.

With Seafarers on the West Coast



SIU Assistant VP Chet Wheeler (left in photo at left, center in photo at right) met with SIU members in San Diego in early September. Also shown in photo at left are Mike Novak, Bob Doebele, Rocky Talisayan, Ireneo Gentalian and Raul Jao. In the other photo: Dan Davidsen, Kurtis Boyd, Robert Ratcliffe, David Jackson, Ron Larry and Evans Merrill.

Submissions Wanted

Attention all ACOE, NOAA, SBRF-MARAD and MSC federal mariners: Your work on behalf of our government is vital. Your union appreciates all you do in your workplace and on behalf of our nation.

We want your voices to be heard! We want to make sure we are writing about issues and topics that are of importance to all our Government Services units. Please send your comments, pictures and requests for coverage to siufedmariner@seafarers.org

We will do our best to print your photos and publish articles based on your requests.

Be active. Stay involved. Support the *Federal Mariner* and your union!

For contact with SIU:

siufedmariner@seafarers.org

Find us on Facebook:

Click on icon at www.seafarers.org

Find us on Twitter:

www.twitter.com/seafarersunion

How to Become an SIU Member

Joining the SIU is easy. The union's website – www.seafarers.org – includes printable PDF versions of forms that mariners may use to request and authorize payroll deductions for labor organization dues. The forms are posted at:

www.seafarers.org/memberbenefits/civmar.asp

Forms are also available under "union forms" in the SIU membership tab.

Contact Information

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36 Reasons Why You Should Thank a Union

Editor's note: This list was provided by Union Plus, a non-profit organization founded by the American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations. While mariners may chuckle at some of the items related to hours and days of work (it was written with shore-side workers in mind), the overall picture points out many significant, hard-earned benefits enjoyed by Americans because of unions.

1. Weekends without work
2. All breaks at work, including your lunch breaks
3. Paid vacation
4. Family & Medical Leave Act (FMLA)
5. Sick leave
6. Social Security
7. Minimum wage
8. Civil Rights Act/Title VII - prohibits employer discrimination

9. Eight-hour work day
10. Overtime pay
11. Child labor laws
12. Occupational Safety & Health Act (OSHA)
13. 40-hour work week
14. Workers' compensation (workers' comp)
15. Unemployment insurance
16. Pensions
17. Workplace safety standards and regulations
18. Employer health care insurance
19. Collective bargaining rights for employees
20. Wrongful termination laws
21. Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967
22. Whistleblower protection laws
23. Employee Polygraph Protection Act (EPPA) - prohibits employers from using a lie detector test on an employee

24. Veteran's Employment and Training Services (VETS)
25. Compensation increases and evaluations (i.e. raises)
26. Sexual harassment laws
27. Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA)
28. Holiday pay
29. Employer dental, life, and vision insurance
30. Privacy rights
31. Pregnancy and parental leave
32. Military leave
33. The right to strike
34. Public education for children
35. Equal Pay Acts of 1963 & 2011 - requires employers pay men and women equally for the same amount of work
36. Laws ending sweatshops in the United States

Inquiring Mariner

This quarter's question was answered by SIU Government Services Division members at the Military Sealift Command Customer Service Unit in mid-September

Question: What do you like best about going to sea?



Stacy White
Cook/Baker

I really like seeing different parts of the world. MSC offers lots of exciting travel and it's a good job.



Jackie Evans
Chief Electrician

I've been in the union for 35 years. This is not just a job, it's an adventure.



Paul Fergel
Assistant Cook

I love to travel. I love to cook. This job is perfect for me!



Bruce Charity
Steward Utility

I worked in a shipyard for a long time and thought it would be exciting and different to actually work on the ships.



Hassan Rashad
Wiper

I make good money and I get to travel. I like the people and the shipboard environment.



Casberk Brown
Engine Utility

It's a great job and I love to travel and see all the history and cultures of different places.



This benefit is for union members only



Here's one more thing
Union families can share.

Save with AT&T Wireless and Union Plus. Just because you're union, you can save 15% on select wireless service from AT&T, the only national wireless provider that's union—like you. You can save whether you're already an AT&T customer, or switching to all-union AT&T. Plus, if you use a Union Plus Credit Card on qualifying purchases, you're eligible for up to \$250 in rebates. For union members, this is an easy call.



Save at UnionPlus.org/ATT

All program plans for new and existing customers may require a new two-year contract. This offer cannot be combined with any other discounts. Qualifying monthly data plan required.