



**UAW LOCAL
598**

SERVING CHEVY TRUCK ASSEMBLY WORKERS

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APRIL 2021

"A Local Union with a Heart"

44

EYE OPENER

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MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS and events are **CANCELLED** through the end of June

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The AMERICAN DREAM Belongs To WORKING AMERICANS

By Ray Curry, Secretary-Treasurer, UAW

I grew up in a world that held the promise of a bright future for those who were willing to work hard. An America that said you can do better than your parents. A promise that meant job security with decent wages, health care, and benefits; a promise that meant training and education and a path to advancement for so many; a promise that made owning a home and raising a family possible; a promise that guaranteed a middle-class life and the ability to retire one day after a job well done. It was the promise that gave rise to the American Dream and one that has shaped American values and vibrancy for generations.

Where is that promise today?

Sadly, it is now a broken promise. Consider how our landscape has changed over the last 40 years as corporate friendly politicians have increasingly moved to undermine our working class, as they have continued to put corporate greed ahead of the people whose work makes corporate profits possible.

A Harsh Reality

Consider how the terrain has toughened. Consider the damage done as we have increasingly waged war on our nation's unions and the voice for labor they provide. Here are just a few harsh realities: Today, our country ranks at the bottom of industrialized countries relative to employee benefits like healthcare, parental leave, paid vacation and sick days, unemployment and retirement security.

According to the Center for Economic and Policy Research (CEPR), the U.S. is the only advanced country where workers are not guaranteed vacation time. In contrast, Europeans get at least 20 days of legally mandated vacation days, and some countries require at least 30. We are the only industrialized nation that does not offer universal healthcare for its citizens. This is despite the fact that we spend more on healthcare than other high-income countries relative to the size of our economy. And, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics



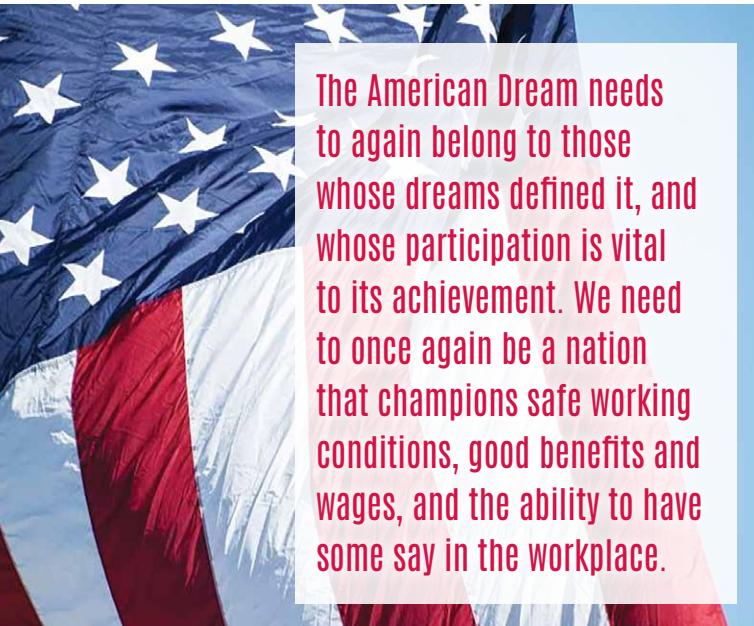
(BLS), less than 22 percent of Americans have employer-paid pensions, and only half participate in a retirement savings plan.

Rather than the leader – as we once were – we are more in line with the Czech Republic, Latvia, South Korea and Mexico as the least generous countries for workers. For reference, Denmark, the Netherlands, Finland, Sweden and Switzerland are the top nations for worker benefits.

So, how did we get here?

Union membership has been falling for decades. This lessening of worker representation has resulted in the erosion of solid employee benefits and good wages, a loss of secure, stable jobs, and diminished worker rights. Right-to-Work laws (designed to weaken unions and the ability of workers to bargain) in many states have made it much more difficult for working people to form or join unions. These laws have predictably resulted in lower wages and diminished employer accountability.

The American Dream needs to again belong to those whose dreams defined it, and whose participation is vital to its achievement. We need to once again be a nation that champions safe working conditions, good benefits and wages, and the ability to have some say in the workplace.



has been cut in half, according to the Pew Research Center. In 1954, nearly 35 percent of all employed U.S. workers were members of unions. Now that number is about 10.5 percent despite the fact that approval of unions is at a 50-year high.

While the unionization of workers has diminished, wealth inequality has accelerated. U.S. Federal Reserve data shows that from 1989 to 2020, U.S. net worth became increasingly concentrated in the hands of the wealthiest 1 percent of Americans possessing 40 percent of the nation's wealth. In 2019, the CEO to worker ratio for compensation was 320 to 1 – a staggering gap.

It is time to close that gap again. It is time to strengthen see **AMERICAN DREAM** on page 4

America should not, and must not, be a nation of broken dreams.

International Suspends Meetings and Events



PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Ryan Buchalski

recently. If you, or someone you know, are interested in receiving a vaccination, I would encourage you to have a vaccination plan.

The Genesee County Health Department can be reached at (810) 257-3612, www.gchd.us/coronavirus, or on their

Facebook page. They have many daily opportunities available. If you need any further assistance or have additional questions, we would be happy to try to lead you in the right direction.

As of the last Executive Board meeting, we had planned on having a membership meeting on Sunday, April 18th, at Union City Fields. Unfortunately, with the COVID-19 cases back on the rise, and wanting to do the right thing with what is in our control, we decided to cancel April's meeting.

"A Local Union with a Heart"

Greeting Sisters & Brothers (both active and retired),

As we continue to navigate these uncharted waters, let's continue to be kind to one another. We need to be compassionate and understanding of others who struggle through these troubled times. We continue to see positive signs, yet we continue to hear words like social distancing, quarantine, capacity limits, and tragic loss. The list goes on.

My wife and I received our vaccinations (Johnson & Johnson)



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POLICY OF THE EYE OPENER

TO OUR READERS: This paper is the voice of our Local and International Union. This is our only vehicle for bringing to you, on a regular basis, the views and actions of the leaders you elected, so you can evaluate them. Through the paper we explain Union policies and show how your dues are spent.

The paper is also the voice of the members. We welcome articles from UAW members and stories about members. While we welcome your contributions, we ask that they be constructive. At no time will the editorial staff tolerate any defamatory remarks regarding any person or persons. We reserve the right to reply to those that seem to reflect a misunderstanding of the Union and its policies and to edit any article for clarity and length. Opinions reflected in signed articles in the EYE OPENER do not necessarily represent the position or opinions of Local 598. Published monthly by UAW Local 598, G-3293 Van Slyke Road, Flint, MI 48507. Phone: 238-4605.

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We were all looking forward to getting together, and I am disappointed, yet not surprised.

Shortly after we decided to cancel, we also received word from the International Union to suspend all meetings and events until further notice. We are hopeful we can resume our 'normal' meetings and activities very soon.

The Local leadership has also decided to suspend the long-sought Union Education courses, as well. Our hard-working Education Committee and the officers are looking forward to the time when we can present to the membership what we have spent months preparing. The plan is to have groups of 25, starting with our second shift G.M. unit members. We are still considering the schedule times.

We will continue to update everyone as information becomes available. If you have any questions, please contact me at the Union Hall at 810-238-4605.

Recently, the Union presidents in the Lansing and Flint area met to form our long-awaited "Presidents Council." As a group, we gathered to look for ways to meet and discuss common issues

facing our members, both inside and outside the shop and various workplaces.

It has been many years since an active Presidents Council has been together. I am personally proud and excited to be a part of this. As the meetings and subjects progress, we will continue to find common ground and concerns that need to be addressed, both in and around our communities.

Our G.M. Subsystems unit recently elected two top negotiators and submitted resolutions for their upcoming contract negotiations. Let's continue to maintain our unity and spirit of solidarity as they head to the bargaining table!

Our Aramark unit has been keeping us very busy lately, as well. The company has been making things difficult, and I ask for continued patience as we work through many different issues affecting our work lives.

April 28th is Worker's Memorial Day. Please keep those who have lost their lives in the workplace, as well as their families, in your thoughts and prayers.

Thank you for everything you do each day, and thank you for your hard work and dedication to Local 598.

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4. Enter pound sign (#) if correct or asterisk (*) if wrong.
5. Record your call-in sequence number
6. Stay on the line until you hear that your call has been successfully completed and recorded in GMTKS.

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An Imperative To Do The Right Thing

SHOP CHAIRMAN REPORT

by Eric Welter



Spring brings new beginnings, but we are still dealing with an old problem – COVID-19. Cases continue to rise, along with the anxiety level of workers. Many workers have gotten their first vaccination and some are fully vaccinated, but many more are still trying to be a part of the immunity plan.

At this point, we have not heard from GM as to when they will start vaccinations. Although this is a path to the end, we are far from it, so please follow the safety protocols to protect one another.

I know there are pay implications to quarantining or testing positive, but it is still imperative that you do the right thing and declare symptoms and exposures. We can and will get through this together.

The forcing of PTT to work on Sunday has been a point of disagreement between the Union and management at every level. I have always taken the position that they can't force *anyone* to work on a Sunday. The plant has disagreed with me the entire time, but we have been able to work around it.

The original arrangement attempted to rotate Sundays to the off shifts and prevent forcing PTT to work Sundays. Once this arrangement was stopped, it left the plant with no options to get enough people to run Sundays.

In fact, the plant manager's boss told them directly to force the Temps, and that it is the company's right under the National Agreement.

I take the position that Temporary employees fall under all the terms of the National Agreement, and the MOU on Overtime limits the company's right to force Sunday work.

The company states the PTT are working for straight time, so the Memorandum of Understanding

on Overtime does not apply. The Workforce Composition language supports any day of the week. Since there is no clear language, it has been escalated to the International Union for discussion. I have not heard back yet. Therefore, the

local union is writing grievances to protest this action.

Locally, we are increasing the number of FTTs. They will receive double time and are more likely to volunteer to work. Hopefully, it will allow us to run Sundays without forcing anyone.

In the meantime, I have talked to the assistant plant manager, and he told me they would not force PTTs to work more than 9 hours. Any increase in the acceptance of Sunday offers by FTT, or seniority employees, will eliminate this issue while it's being argued.

The plant has recently been designated as a "plant with excess." Neither the plant nor I were aware of the status change.

We received offers for Flint Engine and Bowling Green. The Bowling Green offer included a 30K relocation package, which to me means there is a change in plant status.

I questioned the personnel director and the plant manager, and neither was aware of a status change. A few phone calls revealed that Labor Relations in Detroit had changed the status. They based the change on the large conversion of FTT to permanent and the company's budget plan to reduce the number of jobs within the plant. No number has been provided.

I have never seen a plant status change based on projected productivity. Historically, the company released employees from their 3-year commitment for 30K, and we expected that would be the process this time. In fact, a couple of the offers to Engine and Bowling Green included members under the lock. The company notified the

UAW NEPC Rep. that they would not be releasing them, and then I was informed.

The language states, "unless an employee's status has been changed to laid off". The company had always interpreted this as including a plant status change, because they typically only used this when there was a pending layoff, and did not care who leaves, as long as the numbers are reduced.

It is problematic to use this provision for future job cuts. The International Union is involved in the plant status issue, and we are

waiting for disposition.

Semiconductor shortages are an industry crisis that is not easily resolved. We were impacted and had to cancel weekend OT. At this point, that is the extent of the impact. There is no expected downtime and no reduction in our overtime schedule, or a reduction in a shift. They are scheduling Sundays and increasing line speed.

We have a great product that is continually growing market share, and GM is protecting it. We are their top priority plant, and all assets are focused on keeping us running.

Are You Five Years or Less Away From Retirement?

- Do you have questions about how your PSP plan money should be invested?
- Do you have questions on whether or not your beneficiaries named on your accounts are titled best to protect them from taxes, inflation and market risk?
- Would you like to take a look at some future projections on how much you can draw as income from your retirement assets/accounts?

If yes, think of it as being in the red zone for your financial goals

You are at the goal line and each decision is critical!



What investments you choose now should reflect the amount of time you are away from retirement as well as your age at retirement.

If you are going to be under 59½ at retirement or semi-retirement, there are ways through the IRS tax code that you can take monthly income without the 10% tax penalty.

Michelle Gravelle, CFP
Investment Professional

Many people would like to buy an RV, cottage or a place in the sun after retiring. Properly rolling over your PSP can go hand in hand with these goals without incurring major taxes and penalties. There are many options to review and decisions to make before you retire and along the way to retirement.

Regardless of your age at retirement, you need to take into account what the amount of your pension may be. You will need to decide if you are going to begin receiving social security payments or to defer them. It also helps to anticipate what your monthly expenses will be (ballpark) including property taxes, excess insurance payments, utilities, food and entertainment.

This is also the time to assess how much risk you are taking in your PSP/IRA investment allocations. You should be able to reduce your risk and potentially increase your returns simply by reviewing your asset allocation. In many instances, people think they are diversified properly, but often own many overlapping investments. Having a PSP, an IRA, a ROTH IRA and a mutual fund does not mean you are diversified. Owning Fidelity, T. Rowe Price and American Funds, does not mean you are diversified. Having 10 different funds inside your PSP account does not mean you are diversified. How can that be? Because many of these funds own the same stocks and bonds. **In other words, you may be putting all of your eggs in two or three baskets while thinking you have 10 or 12 baskets.** This can increase your risk and reduce your overall return over time.

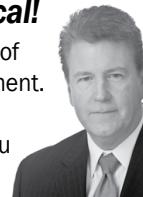
Navigating your descending approach to retirement does not have to be difficult if you know all of your options. Making informed decisions about how to invest in your PSP, how to name your beneficiaries, how to protect your principal in retirement, how to avoid taxes and penalties are all important factors in being financially comfortable in your retirement years.

Every move or play is important. Every decision made is going towards, or away, from your retirement goals.

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AMERICAN DREAM

continued from Front Page

our unions, to reach out to new groups of workers who want to unionize and pave the way for enhancing and encouraging collective bargaining, forming unions, and joining together for solid, secure, workers' rights and benefits.

It does not have to be this way

It is time to commit to our workforce. To once again be that nation that cares about the hard-working women and men in this country and is a world leader in workers' rights and compensation. Moreover, the economic reality is that we *need* unions. A diminished union presence forces people to work two and three jobs just to make ends meet. Many of those jobs are in the service sector, with low wages, no benefits, and little room for advancement. It is the American worker that drives our economy, not wealthy CEOs.

It is time for our state and national leaders and

representatives to come together to make a change. It is time to pass the \$15 minimum wage, to sign the PRO Act into legislation to protect workers, to keep good paying American jobs at home and to set America back on the right track.

The American Dream needs to again belong to those whose dreams defined it, and whose participation is vital to its achievement. We need to once again be a nation that champions safe working conditions, good benefits and wages, and the ability to have some say in the workplace. We need to make the PRO Act the law of the land.

We must all come together and deliver. We made a promise decades ago, one we should now be making for our children as it was made for our generation. Please let your support for the PRO Act be known. The bill has passed the House and will face tougher opposition in the Senate. Please let your representative know how you feel.

America should not and must not be a nation of broken dreams.

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2ND QUARTER DBMSA RECIPIENT

Brothers & Sisters,

Local 598 Veterans Committee is once again proud to announce our 2nd quarter DBMSA recipient of 2021... **Cpl. JEFFREY A. HUNTER**

Jeff grew up in Capac, Michigan but currently lives in Clarkston. After graduation in May 1987, at the age of 18, he joined the USMC, right out of high school, where he loved to play football for his high school team, the Capac Chiefs.

Cpl. Hunter was based out of Camp Pendleton, California. He was assigned to the Amphibious Assault Ship, the U.S.S. Peoria while in the Persian Gulf. His most prestigious award was being awarded the Combat Action Ribbon while in combat in the Persian Gulf. He also earned his Navy "E" Ribbon, Rifle Marksman Badge, Meritorious Mast, Good Conduct Medal, and Sea Service Deployment Ribbon. Jeff says he intended to be a lifelong Marine, but realized he missed his family much more. His beautiful wife, Amber, along with two daughters and four sons, all of which are incredibly motivated and what keeps him going every day.

Cpl. Hunter was Honorably Discharged from Active Duty in 1991 and returned home to Capac to start in the Michigan State Police Academy, while doing four more years of inactive duty service. He joined the State Police Reserves. He soon realized that the State Police wasn't for him either.

General Motors hired him in 2001. He says he's never looked back. Flint Assembly is his 8th plant, where he works as a C.I.P. Coach on days, as well as Final 1, Team 4, TL.

Jeff says he loves spending as much time with his kids as he possibly can. When he gets free time, he enjoys reading, coaching his three-on-three basketball team, or going to the gym while listening to 60's music.

Jeff is also working on completing his Master's Degree in Humanities at C.M.U. and says he'd love to retire from GM and then maybe work in the USMC Reserves or teach.

Jeff, on behalf of Local 598 Veterans Committee...

Welcome Home, and Thank You for your Service!

From the Benefit's Office:

ATTENTION UAW RETIREE RETIREES! Medical Benefits Trust



The **UAW RETIREE MEDICAL BENEFITS TRUST** is conducting an audit to validate dependents, including spouses and covered children. If you are audited and documentation is requested, it is imperative that you comply, and that your documentation is received no later than **May 15, 2021**. Failure to do so will result in your dependent losing health care coverage.

If you have any questions feel free to reach out to a Benefit Representative or contact the Dependent Verification Customer Care Center at 1-866-637-7555 from 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m.

This Month in Labor History...



Occupational Safety and Health Administration

After the Civil War in 1865, factories sprang up all over with little or no concern whatsoever for workers' safety or health. As you can imagine, the 1880s were full of tragedies, and many sustained minor and severe injuries, as well as death.

There were misuses of chemicals, and mixing without proper safety equipment or protocols. They had minimal ventilation, which forced them to inhale dust, metal shavings, and toxic chemicals. Dangerous machines with a chaotic system of belts, gears, and conveyors were wide open with little to no training of the inexperienced workers.

There were no laws that forced the factories to have guards around exposed belts or gears. No one to make sure that toxic fumes were being adequately ventilated, exposing workers to severe medical conditions and potential

asphyxiation.

The progressive era and the growth of mass-circulated newspapers and national magazines helped forge a national movement for workers' safety and health. Finally, an investigation was done, and it was estimated that every year out of 10,000 workers, 1,200 were killed or seriously injured.

With state and local laws and labor-backed support to assist the government legislation for workplace health and safety, we started to see progress in the workplace conditions.

Have you ever wondered why we have the labels that explain the chemical makeup and safety measures on almost every chemical inside the workplace? Why are there signs that direct us to the nearest exit? Ever hear the phrase "wait for the wave"? Why do we have ear and eye protection

at no cost to us? Have you been told you must wear an orange vest before entering certain areas? In one way or another, all these safety measures are in place because of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA).

OSHA was established on April 28, 1971. OSHA ensures safe and healthful working conditions for working men and women by setting and enforcing standards and providing training, outreach, education, and assistance.

With 50 years now of accomplishments through OSHA, we have the employers' responsibility to

pay for safety equipment and so much more. In our current everyday work environment, we have hearing conservation standards, confined space standards, evacuation standards, lockout/tagout, and right-to-know regulations, to name a few.

The large corporations and employers are now held accountable on a federal and state level if they do not abide by these regulations and laws. They can face significant fines and possible legal suits, and/or jail time, if they are found to be in violation of the OSHA standard.



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In Memoriam

The Officers, Representatives and members of Local 598 extend their deepest sympathy to the family and friends of our recently deceased retired members.

ARRINGTON, WILLIAM E.

BARE, JAMES R.

BLACKSTOCK, WILLIAM J.

CHRCEK, RONALD

GROVE, BLAKE D.

HEAD, WALTER E.

HEIER, RICHARD A.

JACKSON, JR. OREE

JENTZEN, WILLIAM R.

KING, DEAN

LOREE, MARSHA

MANTEY, RICHARD G.

MATZKE, JAMES W.

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RENEW THE PROMISE

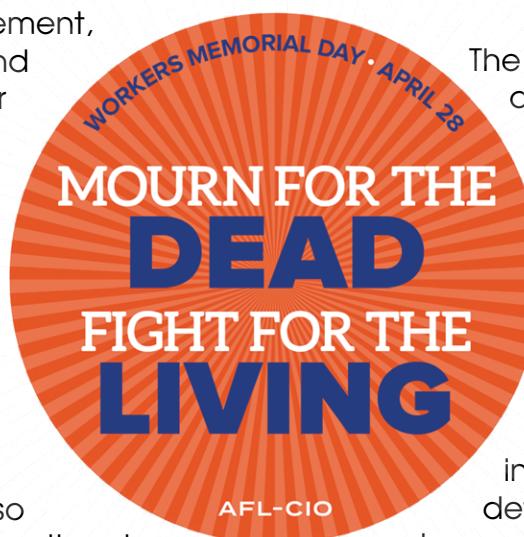
SAFE JOBS FOR ALL

FIFTY YEARS AGO on April 28, **Workers Memorial Day**, the Occupational Safety and Health Act went into effect, promising every worker the right to a safe job. The law was won because of the tireless efforts of the labor movement, which organized for safer working conditions and demanded government action. Unions and our allies have fought hard to make that promise a reality – winning protections that have made jobs safer and saved lives. But our work is not done. Each year, thousands of workers are killed and millions suffer injury or illness because of dangerous working conditions.

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the inextricable link between workplace safety and health and our communities. The virus has killed more than 500,000 people in this country so far—devastating working families, with a disproportionate impact on people of color. Unions and our allies stepped up to demand and win job protections from this highly contagious virus. We organized for safe jobs and the right to speak out against unsafe working conditions. We demanded access to the ventilation, respirators and other measures that protect workers from inhaling the virus at work. Given the lack of federal action, unions won protections in states and held state and local leaders accountable. Organized labor and our allies were key to strengthening job safety to save lives.

Worker safety and workers' voice go hand in hand. The popularity of unions is at 65% – one of the highest marks since the OSH Act was implemented in 1971 – and 60 million nonunion workers say they would vote for a voice on the job today. That is why America's labor movement is leading the campaign to pass the Protecting the Right to Organize (PRO) Act, which would give all workers who want to form a union

a fair path to do so. Strong unions hold employers and the government accountable to keep workers safe. Strong unions raise the baseline level of job safety protections for all.



The COVID-19 pandemic exposed the lack of resources and accountability for the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) to ensure workers are protected on the job, as well as the structural failures that have prevented workers from organizing for safer working conditions. Workplace safety agencies have been hollowed out with a reduction in staff and a stagnant budget. Many workers never see OSHA in their workplace. Penalties are too low to be a deterrent. Workers are not adequately protected to speak out against unsafe working conditions and to join a union without retaliation. As we look to the next 50 years of national worker protections, Congress must strengthen workplace safety agencies to renew their promise to working people, and issue life-saving protections against workplace violence, infectious diseases, heat illness, silica in mining and toxic chemicals – preventable hazards that kill tens of thousands of workers each year.

On April 28, the unions of the AFL-CIO and the UAW will observe Workers Memorial Day to remember those who have suffered and died on the job, and to renew the fight for safe jobs. We will mobilize to pass the PRO Act, so workers have a voice on the job. We will stand united to strengthen workers' rights and protections, and demand resources and actions needed for job safety enforcement. We will fight for the right of every worker to a safe job, until that promise is fulfilled.

OBSERVE WORKERS MEMORIAL DAY APRIL 28 PASS THE PRO ACT