16th Annual

IrishEcho LABOR AWARDS 2026

Friday, September 18, 2026

The Edison Ballroom, New York



Guest Of Honor
Sean O'Brien
General President of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters



Guest Of Honor
John Samuelsen
International President of the Transport Workers Union of America



Guest Speaker
Thomas P. DiNapoli
New York State Comptroller



Guest Speaker
Ethel Buckley
Deputy General Secretary, SIPTU, Ireland



Greetings from Ireland
Gerry Adams

Irish Labor Awards Mark Sixteen Years

By Ray O'Hanlon

The 16th Annual Irish Echo Labor Awards are set for the Edison Ballroom in Manhattan on Friday evening, September 18.

The gathering will honor thirteen labor leaders for their varied, but in every case distinguished, service to the cause of labor in America. All will be honored as Irish Labor Ambassadors.

In addition, Terrence P. "Terry" Fitzmaurice will be honored with a posthumous Labor Ambassador award. Terry, a respected Chicago labor leader and devoted advocate for working men and women, passed away on March 18, 2026 at the age of 70

This year, of course, marks the 25th anniversary of 9/11. On that terrible day many union members lost their lives as a result of the terror attacks.

Many more would succumb to 9/11-related illness in the following years.

As they do every year, members of an array of unions marched in New York in a solemn act of remembrance, this year on Tuesday, September 8.

We join all unions in remembering the fallen, the grieving, and those battling illness.

By way of saluting labor it's no exaggeration to say that the contribution of the Irish in America to the cause of labor has been nothing less than immense.

Indeed, it could be argued that the American labor movement would not exist at all in its current form without the efforts of standout Irish men and women, champions of labor all, down all the years.

Our celebration in the Edison Ballroom will salute a new generation of Irish American labor leaders who are flying the flag for today's labor movement across the United States.

Battling for the cause of labor has never been an easy road, no matter where in the world it has been waged. Here in the United States, the cause of labor has, it's fair to say, never had a day off. And that includes Labor Day.

There are forces afoot, and they have been stomping around since day one of the republic, that view labor as simply that, and nothing more.

And the result is that all too many have to battle tooth and nail to unionize. The human beings who stand in the ranks of labor, and its representative movement, are seen by some as mere details in a world where profit is paramount.

Now there is nothing wrong with profit per se. But how it is achieved, and at what cost to the workers who generate it, has been never less than a primary concern of the labor movement, and the leaders of the labor movement.

The aforementioned new generation of leaders are faced with an array of challenges the likes of which have not been seen before. Technology in all its varied forms presents extraordinary opportunities, but also significant challenges.

When it comes to persons or machines the labor movement, by its very nature, will prioritize persons, men and women.

But not everyone with the means of shaping our world will necessarily see things in the same way.

So labor has to constantly learn and adapt in a world that is changing at not just a rapid pace, but an accelerating one.

The leaders we will be honoring on September 18 embody that ability to adapt and learn, and we wish them every success in their future endeavors.

And of course we remember all who are not with us as a result of that terrible day twenty-five years ago. We will never forget.

2026 Irish Labor Ambassadors

Bob Murray
Local Union No.1 Business Agent of Staten Island

Chris Lalevee
IUOE Local 825 Business Agent; IUOE Local 825 Member Assistance Coordinator; IUOE Crane Instructor; Peer Support Training Instructor

Cyndie Williams
Executive Director at the Carpenter Contractor Trust

Jack McGovern
Political Director of the South Bay AFL-CIO Labor Council

John Gardiner
President/Business Manager Ironworkers Local #1, Chicago, IL

Joseph Keating
Instructor at NYC Carpenters Training Center

Joseph Reilly
President of Local 45 Carpenters Union of NYC and a business agent for the NYC District Council of Carpenters. Elected Delegate from Local 45 to the NYCDCC

Maura Drumm
International Brotherhood of Teamsters Media Coordinator & Communications Project Manager

Michael Regan
Eastern Atlantic States Regional Council of Carpenters, Director of Organizing

Michelle Healy
Director of Not With Our Money, the national pensions and procurement reform campaign.

Patrick Reynolds
President TWU Local 1400; TWU International Executive Committee and Board Member

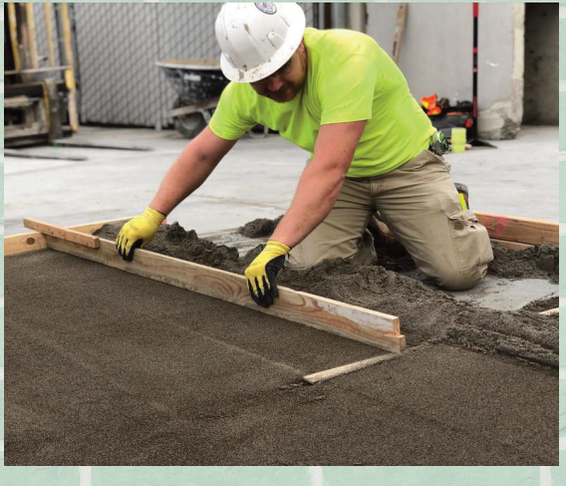
Robert Reiter
President, Chicago Federation of Labor

Thomas Kelly
President Passaic County Central Labor Council, President Telephone & Communication Workers Emerald Society, Executive Board/Business Agent IBEW Local 827, 1st Vice President American Labor Museum

Terrence P. "Terry" Fitzmaurice
A respected Chicago labor leader and devoted advocate for working men and women, passed away on March 18, 2026, at the age of 70. President, District Council 14

BAC
Honors and Salutes a New Generation of Irish American Labor Ambassadors



Tim Driscoll
President

Jeremiah Sullivan
Secretary–Treasurer

Union of Bricklayers and Allied Craftworkers International

Keith Hocevar
Executive Vice President

bacweb.org

Thomas Kelly

City and State: Emerson, NJ.
Current Company and Position: President Passaic County Central Labor Council, President Telephone & Communication Workers Emerald Society, Executive Board/Business Agent IBEW Local 827, 1st Vice President American Labor Museum.
Family: Wife Ann Marie Kelly (Married 33 years, nurse at Hackensack University Medical Center); Son Thomas Kelly (30 years old, Member of IBEW Local 164); Daughter Mary Kelly (29 years old, teacher Verona N.J., Member NJEA); Son Brendan Kelly (27 years old, Marine Corp Veteran, nurse Hackensack University Medical Center).
First Job: Hot Tar Roofing (non Union).
What it taught me: The need to be in a Union and the strength it bought.
Best advice you could give someone starting out: Enjoy every minute you can, especially with loved ones because life is short and work hard there's no substitute for hard work in any task you have.
Who is your hero and why? My father. My father was 1 of 11 children born to Irish immigrant parents. He was forced to drop out of school in 7th grade and go to work in order to help support his large family. He enlisted in the United States Army with 3 of his brothers at the start of WW II. After the war he married my mother and they had 8 children of their own. My father worked multiple jobs for the rest of his life to support his family, his aging mother and his alcoholic brother.

One of the jobs he worked was in an eyeglass factory on the lower East Side. The job didn't pay much, but it made him a Member of the United Optical Workers Union. That Union provided much needed benefits for our family and plainly showed all of us the importance of being a Union Member. My father was dealt with many tough blows over the course of his life, including losing his beloved wife Mary at a young age and his son Peter. But in spite of everything my father always had an extremely upbeat attitude, especially when surrounded by his immediate and extended family. His laughter would echo through every building we were in and his love for his entire family, cousins, nieces, nephews, in-laws etc. was always on full display for all to see. My father knew life was short and our time here is brief, so enjoy the people who mean something to you as much as you can. It's a lesson I carry to this day.

Tom Kelly is currently the President of the Passaic County Central Labor Council, President Telephone & Communication Workers Emerald Society, 1st Vice President American Labor Museum, Business Agent/Executive Board IBEW Local 827, Chairman IBEW Local 827 COPE and Advisory Council on Career and Life Strategies Committees, Member of the NJ Workforce Development Board, Member IBEW 3rd District Veterans Committee and Member NJ AFL-CIO Appeals and Grievance Committee.



Prior to holding those positions, Tom was an Alternate Steward, Steward, Grievance Chairman, Chief Steward, Safety and Tech Change Committee Member, Delegate to the 39th and 40th IBEW Conventions for Local 827 and has represented Local 827 and the Passaic County Central Labor Council at countless rallies, picket lines and conferences.

In his community, he has been overwhelmingly elected to the Emerson Board of Education, was President of the Emerson Parents For Athletes (raising over $150,000 in 3 years), President/Officer/Coach Emerson Soccer, Softball, Baseball, Football and Wrestling Recreation programs and member Emerson Athletic Hall of Fame Committee.

Over his career, Tom has been recognized many times, including receiving the Verizon Foundation Volunteer Service Award and Grant 8 consecutive years (2008-2014), The NY/NJ Blood Services Lifesaver Award for "Efforts Above and Beyond" 2 consecutive years (2004-2005) the NJ National Guard "Heroes Helping Heroes" award 2 consecutive years (2005-2006), Grand Marshal the American Labor Museum Labor Day Parade 2024, recipient Giblin Association Community Service Award (2022), honoree Wimberly Evening of Hope (2023), Paterson "Hibernian of the Year" (2024), Passaic County "Irishman of the Year"(2024), Knights of Columbus "Gideon Award" recipient (2024), National Finalist FHE Health Community Impact Award, Bergen County Central Labor Council "Community Service Award recipient (2025), Passaic County Education Association "Joseph Cheff Friend of Education Award recipient, inducted Emerson Athletic Hall of Fame (2018), selected to throw out the first pitch by Emerson Baseball & Softball Opening Day (2011).

Terrence P. "Terry" Fitzmaurice

Terrence P. "Terry" Fitzmaurice, a respected Chicago labor leader and devoted advocate for working men and women, passed away on March 18, 2026, at the age of 70.

Born on May 31, 1955, Fitzmaurice dedicated his life to the painting trade and to organized labor. He began his career in 1978 when he was initiated into Local Union 194 after entering an apprenticeship with Ruffalo Painting while attending Washburne Trade School. He graduated in 1981, laying the foundation for a lifelong commitment to his craft and to union service.

In 1982, he joined the City of Chicago as a painter at O'Hare International Airport, where he rose through the ranks to become a foreman. At the same time, he became deeply involved in union leadership within Local 194, serving in numerous roles including Conductor, Trustee, Vice President, and President, earning the respect of his peers for his dedication and leadership.

In 1989, Fitzmaurice was appointed Business Representative for Painters District Council 14, where he worked tirelessly on behalf of union members—securing employment opportunities, resolving disputes with contractors, and protecting fair wages and benefits. His commitment and effectiveness led to his appointment as Business Manager/Secretary-Treasurer in 2005.

During his tenure leading District Council 14, Fitzmaurice played a pivotal role in strengthening the union. He negotiated collective bargaining agreements, helped lower retirement age requirements for members, and introduced initiatives such as union newsletters and safety recognition programs. He was also a strong proponent of community engagement, encouraging members to participate in charitable and civic efforts throughout the Chicago area.

Beyond his work with District Council 14, Fitzmaurice served as a trustee for the Chicago Building Trades, a member of the Chicago Federation of Labor Executive Board, and a trustee of the Painters and Decorators Welfare and Pension Fund. He also contributed to public policy, playing a role in the development of Illinois Senate Bill 1281, which established statewide corrosion prevention standards.

Fitzmaurice's legacy is one of steadfast leadership, advocacy, and service. Upon his retirement, he was honored by the Illinois General Assembly in recognition of his lasting contributions to the labor movement and to the lives of countless union members and their families.

He is remembered not only for his professional accomplishments, but for his unwavering commitment to improving the lives of working people across the Chicago region.



EAS CARPENTERS PROUDLY CELEBRATE







MICHAEL REGAN FOR THE 2026 IRISH ECHO LABOR AWARDS

Under Executive Secretary-Treasurer William C. Sproule, the Eastern Atlantic States Regional Council of Carpenters is part of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America. We represent over 42,000 highly skilled men and women, 2500 businesses, 15 regional offices, 25 Local Unions, 17 Training Centers and close to 4500 apprentices living, working, and operating in Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Washington D.C., Virginia and West Virginia.

Learn more at EASCarpenters.org or add us on socials @EASCARPENTERS

Eastern Atlantic States
REGIONAL COUNCIL OF CARPENTERS

Michelle Healy



City and State: Washington, DC
Current Company and Position: Director of Not With Our Money a national pensions and procurement reform campaign.
Family: Children - Nora and Liam Olagbaju.
First Job: Stop & Shop Grocery Store (Bagger).
What it taught me: My first job was working at our neighborhood Stop & Shop - a union job. My dad spent 35 years as a butcher in the meat department at Stop & Shop stores throughout the greater Boston area. I kind of grew up in that store so it was great to be at the front of the store and hear from so many of the old timer's stories about my dad. I also observed and was saddened to watch my proud dad and the other store employees be treated so badly by the management. It was so painful to see the power dynamic at play. I learned a lot about: how much coworkers matter; and how much solidarity on the job can make it easier to bear the times when bosses exercise petty power; how much having the union can give workers a way to stand tall on the job.
Best advice you could give someone starting out: Find your joy and lean into that on the job. Also, always have some recent examples of what you have made happen. It gives you pride but it also protects by equipping you with a concrete way to illustrate if you need to prove your worth.
Who is your hero and why? My father Michael Healy is my hero. As one of 15 children growing up in rural Ireland, he like so many of his generation had to immigrate to the U.S. for work. His parents had passed away. An amazing bond of love and solidarity united he and his younger siblings. Many of whom came in and out of our house my whole lovely but chaotic childhood. He was a decent and kind man who worked so hard each day to support his four children and his many siblings. He worked in cold, dangerous and messy conditions yet always dressed impeccably. He had a beautiful Irish tenor voice and went on to learn arias and operas and how to play piano and even cut a CD. I learned from him to look beyond who you think someone in a service job is and see them for the whole person they are.

Over the past few decades Michelle Healy has been one of the most accomplished union organizers of her generation, organizing hundreds of thousands of workers into SEIU including childcare, fast food, higher education and gig workers. Growing up in Quincy, MA, as the child of Irish immigrants who worked in the service and care industries, Michelle witnessed first-hand the dignity of labor and the quiet determination of immigrant families to put food on the table, keep the culture, push your children to succeed and as a family navigate the new.

After 30 years with SEIU, Michelle has recently begun leading a national campaign focused on pensions, procurement and purchasing accountability with Community Change. She has settled in the D.C. area and is perhaps most proud of her wonderful twenty something children, Nora Olagbaju who works for a social justice organization in Los Angeles and Liam Olagbaju who is an aerospace engineer.

Michael Regan

City and State: Armagh PA.
Current Company and Position: Eastern Atlantic States Regional Council of Carpenters, Director of Organizing.
Family: Wife Valerie, three daughters Felicity, Kallista and Liberty.
First Job: Lawn Care at the age of 11.
What it taught me: I began cutting lawns for mostly elderly residents in my neighborhood who needed additional assistance. The experience instilled in me the value of helping others, hard work, responsibility and pride in doing a good job.
Best advice you could give someone starting out: Come in with an open mind and a great attitude. Pay attention and learn from the people around you. Be willing to listen and absorb different viewpoints, friends, co-workers, peers, managers, etc. Show up every day with the mindset that you're going to be better than you were yesterday regardless of any obstacles in your path. Be a good teammate. Hold yourself accountable and be someone others can depend on- someone who earns trust through consistency, effort and integrity.
Who is your hero and why? First and foremost is my father. He is a retired union steelworker from Bethlehem Steel. He showed me what it means to be a man, how to be present for your family and friends, supporting them even during the tough times and being someone they can count on for honesty and guidance. He's a man of few words, but when he speaks, you listen and learn, because there's always a lesson behind it. He created a blueprint for how I live my life, loving my family and working tirelessly for them, and I continue to follow it every day.

My second hero is my wife of 27 years, Valerie. We were young parents starting out. With me working residential construction and her staying home to raise our children. When I finally got into the carpenters union as a first-year apprentice, her support never wavered. She raised our three daughters – Felicity, Kallista and Liberty nearly on her own while I worked sometimes seven days a week for most of the year. Her strength, resilience, and unwavering support have been the backbone of our family. I can honestly say I would not be where I am today without her.



Michael J. Regan's story is deeply rooted in the proud tradition of Irish labor, resilience, and craftsmanship. His family's journey began in 1891, when his ancestors emigrated from Skibbereen, County Cork, to the United States. Word had reached Ireland that work would be plentiful in Pennsylvania and as skilled forgers and blacksmiths, the Regan family seized that opportunity. His father and both grandfathers were all steelworkers who helped to rebuild the City of Johnstown.

After graduating high school, Michael pursued junior hockey in the New York Metro League, with aspirations of continuing at the collegiate or professional level. After hockey and taking on the responsibilities of a growing family, Michael worked in residential construction and as an auto glass installer before joining the United Brotherhood of Carpenters as an apprentice.

He became deeply involved in his union, volunteering for community initiatives and taking on leadership roles early in his career. He served as Local Delegate and Vice President, chaired the volunteer committee, and helped strengthen member engagement. On the job, he advanced from steward on large industrial scaffold projects to foreman and eventually superintendent, overseeing major projects across Western Pennsylvania and beyond.

In 2018, Michael expanded his impact by becoming a Council Organizer. Inspired by the organizer who once changed his life, he dedicated himself to helping non-union workers find opportunity through union membership. His organizing efforts have spanned six states and Washington, D.C., and extended internationally to Canada and Puerto Rico, where he has contributed to major campaigns focused not only on recruiting and empowering workers, but also on expanding market share.

Throughout his career, Michael has held numerous leadership roles, including serving on contract negotiation committees with the Keystone Contractors Association, working as a facilitator at the International Training Center to help develop future organizers, and holding positions such as Local 423 Vice President and Delegate, Chair of the Volunteer Organizing Committee, Co-Chair of the Mentorship Committee, EAS Council Trial Board member, EAS Council Pension Trustee, Council Executive Board member, and Chair of the EAS Council Election Committee. He has also served on advisory committees supporting local technical education and workforce development. In late 2024, he was promoted to Senior Council Representative. In July 2025, he was appointed Director of Organizing for the Eastern Atlantic States Regional Council of Carpenters.

CARPENTERS LOCAL UNION No. 253

Serving Bergen, Essex, Hudson & Passaic Counties

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Local Union 253, 91 Fieldcrest Ave., Suite A22, Edison, NJ 08837



Maura Drumm

City and State: Washington, DC.
Current Company and Position: International Brotherhood of Teamsters, Media Coordinator & Communications Project Manager.
Family: Parents: Christopher and Maureen; sisters: Bridget, Caitlin, and Erin.
First Job: Camp Counselor at my local recreation center in Northeast Philadelphia.
What it taught me: This job taught me the importance of community. I was 16 working with many of my friends and siblings of my friends while taking care of our neighbors' children for the entire summer for four years. It introduced me to my community members of all different ages and helped me form long-lasting bonds with those in the neighborhood I grew up in.
Best advice you could give someone starting out: Gov. Pritzker once said, "The kindest person in the room is often the smartest," and I couldn't agree more. Being kind is an invaluable quality in life, but it is often undervalued in the workplace. In my experience, working on teams with many kind people has always led to a more positive work environment, stronger teamwork, and better outcomes - results that were not replicated as smoothly in offices where kindness was not valued. So, my advice is to be that kind person. Be the person who helps set the standard for kindness on your team, and watch the hard work and success follow.
Who is your hero and why? My hero is my great-grandfather, Felix Heaney. My great-grandfather immigrated from County Derry to Philadelphia and worked at Schmidt's Brewery - first taking care of the delivery horses and then as a truck driver, always as a proud Teamster.

Through his career as a Teamster, despite having only a grade school education himself, he was able to send three of his five children to college. This focus on education was passed down to me and my sisters, who have seen firsthand the impact that a career in labor can have on a family. I'm not sure if the young man from Maghera, who proudly worked as a rank-and-file member for decades, would have imagined that his great-granddaughter would one day be working in DC at the International, but I hope I have made him proud.

Maura is a proud third-generation Teamster, with her dad and great-grandfather both having been members before her, and she comes from a family with a long history of union membership.

Maura previously spent time at the Department of Agriculture and the Biden White House. During her time in the Biden Administration, she served in both the Press Office and the White House Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ). While at CEQ, Maura and her team worked to support President Biden's goal of ensuring that the federal government's transition to clean energy and sustainable operations created and supported good-paying union jobs. Maura received her bachelor's degree from Catholic University and her master's degree from American University. She grew up in Northeast Philadelphia with her parents and three sisters.



Robert Reiter

City and State: Chicago, IL.
Current Company and Position: Chicago Federation of Labor, President
Family: Diana Reiter – wife; Caitlin & Logan Reiter – children.
First Job: Burger King.
What it taught me: That dignity in work is important.
Best advice you could give someone starting out: Respect yourself and your co-workers.
Who is your hero and why? My parents are my heroes. I come from a working-class family that believed in family, community, and justice for everyone. I've accomplished a lot in my live due to those lessons my parents taught me. Stand up for yourself, but be compassionate. Treat people well, but hold your ground.

Bob Reiter is the President of the Chicago Federation of Labor, the third largest central labor council of the national AFL-CIO. He previously served two terms as Secretary-Treasurer of the CFL from July 2010 to May 2018. Bob is a third-generation member of the International Union of Operating Engineers Local 150. His family's roots in the labor movement run deep with backhoe operators, crane mechanics, railroad workers, public safety officers, and teachers.

Additionally, Bob's family is descended, in significant part, from Irish and Croatian immigrants. Bob's Irish roots trace back to the Kiley's of County Limerick and the Maguire's of County Fermanagh.

Throughout his career, he has worked as a labor attorney, an organizer, a negotiator and a lobbyist. In his role as president of the CFL, Bob serves on executive and advisory boards for labor, civic, and community organizations across Chicago and Cook County including the Cook County Health and Hospital System, United Way of Metropolitan Chicago, and ABOC Bank. His involvement with these organizations allows him to represent the interests of labor and protect the fundamental rights of all workers.

Bob holds a bachelor's and master's degree in political science from Eastern Illinois University, and a Juris Doctor degree from IIT Chicago-Kent College of Law.

Joseph Reilly

City and State: Westbury, New York.
Current Company and Position: President of Local 45 Carpenters Union of NYC and a business agent for the NYC District Council of Carpenters. Also, an elected Delegate from Local 45 to the NYCDCC.
Family: Father of two Daughters Maggie and Andie Reilly.
First Job: At 13 I worked with my best friend's father doing sidewalks and stoops in our neighborhood.
What it taught me: It taught me that hard work and a good work ethic pay well and gives a large measure of pride in seeing something built better than it was before I got there.
Best advice you could give someone starting out: Show enthusiasm for the task at hand and always be teachable. Being successful in construction is not by accident and you can learn a lot from successful people in all aspects of your life.
Who is your hero and why? JFK. He spoke of doing you part in society and giving more than taking. He also believed in the equality of people no matter what their background is. A true representation of the ideals of what this country was founded on, which sadly isn't always the case today.



Joseph Reilly is the fifth of five children born to Irish Catholic parents from NYC. Grandson of four Irish immigrants that made good in a time when it was very rough for Irish to succeed in the early 1900s. He joined the carpenters as an apprentice, winning the coveted "Golden Hammer" from the carpenter's apprentice program. He became a Shop Steward, an executive board trustee for Local 45.

With hard work and determination, he became the recording secretary, vice president and finally the President of Local 45. He never forgot where he came from giving back with volunteer work with Catholic charities, and volunteer work for the Union distributing school backpacks for school children, turkeys at thanksgiving, and toys at Christmas and 3 kings day. He is a mentor to apprentices becoming the chair for the first apprentice committee in the NYC DCC for Local 45. He continues the work of uplifting and preserving the ideals of the Labor movement. He also takes an active role in local Politics in NYC working alongside of Council members, congressman and women and Senators.

CARPENTERS LOCAL UNION 45

Joseph J Reilly, President

Christopher Ortiz, Vice President

Caridad Castro, Executive Delegate

Mario Salguero, Financial Secretary

Kevin Cain, Recording Secretary

Samantha Martin, Treasurer

Michael Ettinger, Trustee

T.J. Libretto, Trustee

Michael White, Trustee

Patrick Keenan, Conductor

John Bowe, Warden

Phillip Fiorentino, Delegate

114 Jericho Turnpike, Ste. 3, Floral Park, NY 11001

Phone: 516-216-5423 / Fax: 516-216-5421

Patrick Reynolds

City and State: Montvale NJ.
Current Company and Position: President TWU Local 1400; TWU International Executive Committee and Board **Member.**
Family: Married to wife of 35 Years Lisa, children Patrick and Amanda.
First Job: My first job was in a kitchen in a small restaurant.
What it taught me: To work hard every day to build a better path for my future.
Best advice you could give someone starting out: Work hard, get educated and put in the time to reach your goal. Hard work pays off in every aspect of life. Nothing comes easy in life, overcoming challenges and adversity will prepare you for the future.
Who is your hero and why? Michael J Quill, Fought for fairness and equality. Founder and long-term President of the Transport Workers Union.

Organized and bus and subway workers in time when labor conditions were harsh. Built the TWU into a labor force that ultimately represented union workers across the country. Michael Quill's style of pushing back, being outspoken and committed to workers' rights, still influences labor movements today.

Patrick J. Reynolds, born November 28, 1965, is a proud first-generation Irish American with deep family roots in Ireland. His father, John Reynolds, was from Dublin, Ireland, and his mother, Patricia (née Coll) comes from a family rooted in Cork, Ireland. His heritage has helped shape his strong values of dedication, resilience, and service. Patrick began his career with the Port Authority of New York & New Jersey on December 16, 1985.

He was promoted to Facility Operations Agent on October 11, 1987. In this role, he received extensive training in firefighting, First Aid/CPR-AED, towing operations, and traffic management, demonstrating his commitment to safety and operational excellence. During his time at the Lincoln Tunnel, Patrick was appointed as a TWU Local 1400 Shop Steward and served as Co-Chair of the Lincoln Tunnel Safety Committee. He also played a key role on a Contract Negotiation Team, representing the interests of union members. On April 1, 2002, Patrick made a lateral move to the Aviation Department as an Airport Operations Agent, where he was assigned to the Downtown Manhattan Heliport.

His leadership continued to grow within the union, and from 2006 to 2021, he was elected as TWU Local 1400



Aviation Division Chairman, overseeing more than 275 members. He again served on the union's Contract Negotiation Team in 2012. Later in 2012, Patrick was elected Vice President of TWU Local 1400, where he continued his advocacy work and served on the 2018 Contract Negotiation Team. In 2021, he was elected President of TWU Local 1400.

As President, Patrick led the Toll Collector Redeployment Program during the Port Authority's transition from manual toll collection to all-electronic tolling (E-ZPass). Under his leadership, 75 Toll Collectors were successfully redeployed into other Port Authority positions represented by TWU Local 1400, ensuring continued employment opportunities for union members.

In addition to his local leadership roles, Patrick was elected in 2012 to serve on the Transport Workers Union of America International Executive Committee and Board, further expanding his influence and commitment to labor representation on a national level.

Patrick as President guided Local 1400 through the Pandemic. Outside of his professional and union leadership, Patrick is an active member of the Ancient Order of Hibernians (AOH), where he volunteers delivering meals to senior citizens through the Meals on Wheels program and participates in additional community service efforts.

Bob Murray

City and State: Staten Island, NY.
Current Company and Position: Local Union No.1 Business Agent of Staten Island.
Family: Grandson of James and Nora Murray of County of Mayo, Ireland and Son of Patricia and Thomas Murray of the Bronx.
First Job: Initiated in 1985 to Local 371 in Staten Island where he worked as an Apprentice for four years. He graduated in 1989 and served on all boards starting as inside guard, examining board, financial board and eventually executive board. In 1997 Local 371 merged with Local 1 and Local 2 where they became a 5800-member local. He again rose through the ranks as a shop steward on the biggest jobs in NYC.
What it taught me: Starting as a plumber apprentice, you learn fast that effort isn't optional. If you don't show up on time, don't pay attention, or cut corners, it shows immediately - in your work, your reputation, and how much people trust you. You also learn patience, because you're at the bottom at first, doing the less prestigious jobs and slowly building skill.
Best advice you could give someone starting out: "work hard and learn your trade" to "be someone people can rely on, because others depend on what you do."
Who is your hero and why? My father is my hero because he helped build the foundation I stand on—my work ethic, my sense of right and wrong, my resilience. He showed up, he carried weight, and he shaped me into who I became.



Robert Murray, son of Patricia and Thomas Murray, was born in the Bronx and raised in Staten Island. In 1985, he was initiated into Local 371, where he completed a four-year apprenticeship program. After graduating, he steadily rose through the ranks, serving as an Inside Guard, and later on the Examining Board, Financial Board, and Executive Board.

Following the 2002 merger of Local 371 with Local 1 and Local 2, Robert took on the role of Organizer, a position he held for seven years. In 2009, he was elected Business Agent, a role in which he continues to serve, now marking over 25 years of dedicated leadership and service.

During his tenure, he served as Bronx Board President for 10 years and was recognized as a Labor Leader during Bronx Week by Borough President Ruben Diaz. In 2019, he was again honored as a Labor Leader by the Liberty Democrats.

Robert currently serves as President of the Staten Island Plumbers Club and is a member of the Staten Island Board of Business Agents Executive Board. He is also a proud advocate for diabetes awareness.

Throughout his career, he has attended more than six National Conventions and was appointed Sergeant-at-Arms for five of them—an honor reflecting the respect he has earned among his peers.

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www.irishecho.com

Congratulations to our Brother and Business Agent Bob Murray

Paul O'Connor
Business Manager

Freddy Delligatti
Financial Secretary-Treasurer

Richard Gilligan
Business Agent-At-Large

Business Agents

Paul Cotto
Carl L. Johnson, Jr.
Bob Murray

Andrew Friscia
Tommy Kinirons
Louie J. Pasquale

Richard Garner
George Malandrakis
John Totino

Organizers
Christopher Egbert
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John Gardiner

City and State: North Riverside, IL
Current Company and Position: President/Business Manager Ironworkers Local #1, Chicago, IL.
Family: Wife, Lora; children: (3) sons (1) daughter - John, Joey, Peter, and Amelia.
First Job: First job started one week after 8th grade, 13 years old. Worked in a maintenance crew all summer at the Catholic high school I would attend that fall. The school kept half the pay the eight or nine kids on the crew earned, which is how we all literally worked our way through high school. Relieved our families of any monetary burden at all for our tuition. I held that job all fours' years doing janitorial work two hours every day after school plus four hours every Saturday morning, and then all summer six hours every weekday doing building maintenance work (stripping and waxing floors, cleaning hundreds of light fixtures, etc).
What it taught me: My first job taught me that everything in life is earned. Very little will be given to you, and if something is given, there's a fair chance it can be just as easily taken away. I learned the values of contributing to our family's financial health while also getting a great education. And also developing a very strong work ethic which has stayed with me my whole life.
Best advice you could give someone starting out: Never let another person's negativity or poor work ethic drag you down. Be true to what you know is right. Hard work and a good attitude, especially eagerness to learn, will sustain you throughout your career.
Who is your hero and why? My father Thomas Gardiner (1928-2016). My father came from a life of poverty in County Clare, Ireland. Born in a stone constructed building on a farm, and raised in a home without indoor plumbing or any comforts at all, he dreamt of coming to America. He left home as a teenager and made his way to Chicago. Through nothing but hard work and perseverance, he established himself as a proud member of Ironworkers Local #1. He went on to marry my mother and have 13 children, and eventually 48 grandchildren at the time of his passing in 2016. He taught us all the virtues of integrity, honesty, and treating people with respect at all times. He also taught us the importance of humor and storytelling, both of which he was never short of. He made all of us in our family exactly who we are today. And for that I will be forever grateful.

John F. Gardiner is currently the President/Business Manager of Local #1 of the International Association of Bridge, Structural, Ornamental, and Reinforcing Ironworkers. John began his career as a Local #1 Ironworker in 1989, following his father, uncle, two brothers, and a cousin into the trade. Beginning in 1999, John was elected by his fellow Local #1 members to the positions of Union Trustee, Recording Secretary, Business Agent, and Welfare Trustee before being elected as President in 2023. John also serves as a vice-president of the Chicago-Cook County Building Trades Council and is a member of the Irish Fellowship Club of Chicago.

John was born in July, 1969 in Chicago, Illinois to Thomas and Mary (Rudden) Gardiner. Thomas was a native of Lisdoonvarna, County Clare. Mary was born in Chicago to her father Michael Rudden, a native of Stradone, County Cavan. Mary's mother Delia Marie was born in Chicago to Thomas Ross who was from County Antrim and Delia Buckley, who was from County Kerry.

John has twelve brothers and sisters, of which four brothers are Union Ironworkers and one brother a Union Electrician.

John resides in the Chicago suburb of North Riverside with his wife Lora. John's oldest son John is a Licensed Therapist/Program Director at Positive Sobriety Institute in Chicago, his son Joey is a 10-year Local #1 Ironworker, and his two youngest kids are currently attending college (Amelia at St. Mary's College in Notre Dame, Indiana, and Peter at the University of Iowa). John enjoys fishing and golfing as well as traveling, especially to Ireland.

Jack McGovern

City and State: San Jose, California.
Current Company and Position: Political Director of the South Bay AFL-CIO Labor Council.
Family: Married - my wife's name is Jacqueline Taysi.
First Job: Campaign Manager for Josh Becker for California State Senate.
Best advice you could give someone starting out: Your career will evolve and change as you move through it. Do not stress about choosing the right first job. Find something that aligns as much as you can with your values that also will allow you to grow and move up.

Remember to build your skills and commit to going above what is asked of you. You won't have much to offer in terms of skills or experience, but what you will have plenty of is time and energy. Give your time and energy early on while learning as much you can, and you will see your skills, expertise, and success grow.
Who is your hero and why? My hero is James Connolly. James represents the best of both my Irish ancestry and labor values: courage, solidarity, and justice. Connolly understood that the struggle for Irish independence and the struggle for workers' rights were connected, and he gave his life fighting for both.

I was born in San Francisco, but my family has kept its connection to our family in Ireland. I grew up proud of my ancestry, and learning what it means to be just and stand in solidarity.

I admire James because he stood with working people and oppressed people, particularly when it came at great personal cost. As someone with deep Irish roots and a life in the labor movement, I remember Connolly's legacy and I hope I can be that brave in the face of great injustice.

An athlete, political operative, and public servant, Jack McGovern is committed to making a difference. His passion for policy and public service was sparked early in his life while watching his father manage and win many political campaigns. As the campaign coordinator for the Josh Becker for State Senate campaign, he honed his skills in politics and campaigning. As a policy aide for Santa Clara County Supervisor Cindy Chavez, he learned and emerged as a trusted and experienced voice in labor issues, housing and land use, economic development, and public safety and justice.

Playing a role in shaping local policy, Jack wrote policy measures such as the ban on vaping in the unincorporated area of Santa Clara County and a comprehensive study on the public cost of gun violence on Santa Clara County. During the COVID-19 pandemic, he worked to support the County's emergency and rapid response center, which provided PPE and other essential equipment to front-line health care workers.



Jack then stepped into the role of financial director for the Cindy Chavez for San Jose Mayor campaign. Even as a first-time fundraiser, he managed fundraising efforts, raising over $3 million.

In addition to my work in politics and policy, Jack is the namesake of and a founding board member of a charitable organization committed to finding a cure for a rare pediatric retinal eye disease. With Jack's athletic roots in NCAA Division I lacrosse, he brings a blend of tenacity, strategy, and team spirit to the political arena.

Jack serves as the Political Director of the South Bay AFL-CIO Labor Council. He has won campaigns for candidates and ballot measures in the past two years to help working people in Santa Clara and San Benito counties. He is committed to the betterment of working people in the Bay Area, and he'll continue that work throughout his career.

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CONGRATULATIONS

to the 2026 Labor Ambassadors honored at the

16TH ANNUAL IRISH ECHO LABOR AWARDS

John Gardiner
President / Business Manager, Ironworkers Local 1, Chicago

Chris Lalevee
IUOE Local 825

Maura Drumm
Int'l Brotherhood of Teamsters

Thomas Kelly
Passaic County CLC · IBEW 827

Michelle Healy
Community Change · Retired SEIU

Patrick Reynolds
TWU Local 1400

Terrence P. "Terry" Fitzmaurice
District Council 14, Chicago — Posthumous

Jack McGovern
South Bay AFL-CIO Labor Council

Joseph Reilly
Carpenters Local 45, NYC

Michael Regan
EAS Regional Council of Carpenters

Cyndie Williams
Carpenter Contractor Trust

Bob Murray
Local Union No. 1, Staten Island

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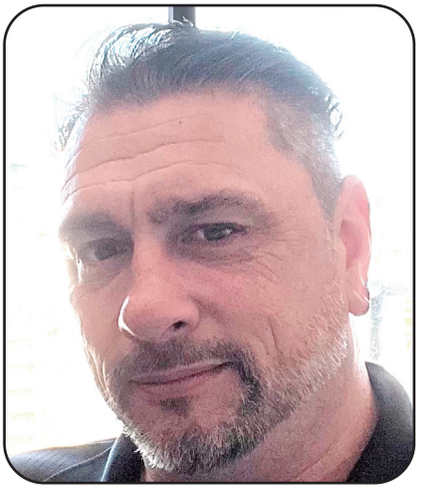
City and State: Keyport, NJ.
Current Company and Position: IUOE Local 825 Business Agent; IUOE Local 825 Member Assistance Coordinator; IUOE Crane Instructor; Peer Support Training Instructor.
Family: Very proud father of two boys, Shawn is 19 and a college student and Mark is 17 and a high school senior.
First Job: Delivering newspapers at age 12.
What it taught me: It taught me responsibility, the value of earning my own money. It strengthened my work ethic and taught me how to work in the elements.
Best advice you could give someone starting out: Never forget where you came from and to always be yourself.
Who is your hero and why? My father was proud operating engineer of Local 825 for 46 years. He was hardworking, dedicated, strong, smart, honest and a true gentleman. He always had good advice; he didn't sweat when pushing through hard times.

Chris Lalevee is a Business Agent for IUOE Local 825. He is the Coordinator of the Local 825 Member Assistance Program (MAP) and of the IUOE's peer support training program. He is a certified Peer Recovery specialist. Chris has over 30 years in heavy and civil construction as an operator, instructor, mentor, and coach.

Chris is active nationally and collaborates with many entities writing or discussing mental health, addiction alongside suicide awareness & prevention. Chris teaches crane courses several times a year at the IUOE Training Center in Crosby, TX with a focus on tower crane operations.

Chris is often found addressing life issues in construction and discusses the topics through his own lived experiences and safety all while working full time.

Outside of work, Chris is a degreed member of the Ancient Order of the Hibernians, South Amboy, NJ chapter.



Cyndie Williams

City and State: Tinton Falls, NJ.
Current Company and Position: Executive Director at the Carpenter Contractor Trust.
Family: Jaclyn Williams (spouse); Nate Williams (15); Braedyn Williams (13); Brody Williams (13).
First Job: painting houses in the summer at a townhome complex when I was 17.
What it taught me: That summer job painting gave me a firsthand look at what a carpenter does. I would watch the men work, placing cedar siding, board by board. I was fascinated by the skill, the precision. As I bathed in paint thinner at the end of every day, I thought, "I want to be a carpenter, I want to learn how to do that". And so, I did. I found the union, and I became an apprentice.
Best advice you could give someone starting out: "Head down and work hard. Somebody will eventually show up to help you discover your next opportunity."
Who is your hero and why? My heroes are the ones who give selflessly to their communities. The ones that show up for the small moments, the hard moments with no cameras, no limelight. The doers are my heroes.

Cyndie Williams accepted the role as Executive Director of the Carpenter Contractor Trust (CCT) in December 2021. She actively oversees CCT's partnerships with the Eastern Atlantic States Regional Council of Carpenters (EASRCC) and union signatory contractor organizations to promote and support their shared values, competencies, and ambitions. Cyndie extends this vision across the EASRCC domain, encompassing New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia and Washington, D.C.

As the Executive Director, Cyndie is committed to overseeing all CCT's initiatives, ranging from collaborating with industry partners to developing a unified workforce. She believes that expanding market share and work hours are vital indicators for the union's sustained growth and well-being.



Under Cyndie's guidance, CCT aims to broaden its reach and impact within the construction industry. She considers rich talent pools essential to her mission. This emphasis is vital to attracting new talent and fostering a robust, prosperous environment for union carpenters and signatory contractors.

This aligns with CCT's efforts to bolster the engagement of the region's workforce partners, encouraging ethically responsible employment strategies. Cyndie supports this effort by promoting the building trades as a promising career path for American youth and advocating for more project labor agreements. Both are important components that add to the development of union jobs.

Cyndie also views energy infrastructure initiatives as vital to maintaining the union's robust presence in the region's critical energy sector. The CCT's involvement with several energy coalitions throughout the council reflects its commitment to long-term energy solutions.

Cyndie's leadership is instrumental in steering CCT toward achieving these core objectives, with a focus on the broader vision of building a prosperous future for the construction industry and the communities it serves.

Joseph Keating

City and State: NY.
Current Company and Position: Instructor at NYC Carpenters Training Center.
Family: Joey Keating (wife); Joe (son); Frank (son); Liam (son).
First Job: Working for my father and uncle in residential carpentry.
What it taught me: Hard work pays off and to take pride in your work.
Best advice you could give someone starting out: Be on time, don't be afraid to ask questions, and be willing to learn your craft.
Who is your hero and why? My Dad. He was a dedicated family man and was a role model for me both as a carpenter and a father to my sons. He showed kindness and strength throughout my life and helped me become the man I am today.

With over three decades of grit and craft under his belt, Joseph F. Keating, Jr. is a seasoned union carpenter who embodies the spirit of the New York City District Council of Carpenters (NYCDCC).



A proud member of Local 157, Joe has spent 32 years mastering the intricacies of the trade, from high-end interior finishes and millwork to complex glass and metal installations. His career spans long-term roles with industry leaders like Duncan Interiors and Glenwood Management Services, where he built a reputation for precision in layouts, hardware, and blueprint reading.

Beyond the job site, Joe is deeply committed to the leadership and financial health of the brotherhood. He serves as the Treasurer for Local 157 and continues his work as a union delegate. Since June 2019, he has also served as an instructor at the NYC Carpenters Training Center, passing on his extensive knowledge to the next generation of apprentices and teaching them that carpentry is as much about integrity as it is about skill.

Joe's hands-on approach extends to a life of service in his community. He is a local volunteer firefighter and spends his summers volunteering for the Appalachian Service Project through a local church, assisting residents by rebuilding their homes and their lives. Whether he is volunteering his carpentry skills for the Wounded Warrior Project or participating in union leadership programs, Joe speaks and acts with the sincerity of a man who knows the value of hard work and giving back. He remains a steadfast advocate for the trade, always striving to build a stronger future for his fellow journeymen.

Congratulations to All the Honorees at the Irish Echo Labor Awards

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Chicago Calling: John Gardiner

By Mike Houlihan

My late grandfather Frank Houlihan was an Iron Worker who fell to his death while working on a building in 1916, leaving behind my dad, (who was 12 at the time) and dad's two older cop brothers.

If there had been an Iron Workers union then it would have been a different story, especially for my grandmother and her three sons.

My friend John Gardiner, President/Business Manager of Local #1 of the International Association of Bridge, Structural, Ornamental, and Reinforcing Iron Workers Union tells me, "There was absolutely no protections. There was poor pay, long working hours. Before the union was formed, death was just a regular part of the trade and it was expected. And that's really the reason our union became what it was, because 20 guys got together in Chicago. And they formed The Bridgeman's Mutual Aid Association to provide for each other in case of a death, a decent burial. So that's really how the union came into existence."

In the "city of big shoulders" the Irishmen in the trades built it all back up after the Great Chicago Fire. We owe a debt of gratitude to those Irish immigrant Iron Workers, carpenters, plumbers, bricklayers, and stone masons who resurrected the "city that works" They made 'em tough in those days. They still are today.

John tells me one of those guys was "My father Thomas Gardiner (1928-2016). He came from a life of poverty in Lisdoonvarna, County Clare. Born in a stone constructed building on a farm and raised in a home without indoor plumbing or any comforts at all, he dreamt of coming to America. He left home as a teenager and made his way to Chicago. Through nothing but hard work and perseverance he established himself as a proud member of Iron Workers Local #1. He went on to marry my mother and have 13 children, and 48 grandchildren at the time of his passing in 2016."



John Gardiner

John is the middle child, "So, yeah, I have six older than me and six younger than me; four older sisters, four younger sisters, two older brothers, two younger brothers."

John started his first job at the age of 13, working on the maintenance crew of Holy Cross Catholic HS. "We literally worked our way through high school, relieved our family of any monetary burden for all our tuition."

John worked his first summer as an Iron worker when he was 19 and learned the trade. "Iron workers have had their hands on every building built in downtown Chicago since the Chicago fire. I'm very proud of that."

For 22 years John walked the beams above the skyscrapers over ninety floors up, swinging an eight-pound sledgehammer and firing up an acetylene torch to weld together the American dream.

He was elected President of the union back in 2023. Four brothers and his son Joey are all union Iron workers, along with cousins and nephews in the trade as well. "It's a brotherhood. It's in the bloodstream for sure!"

John will be honored in September at the Irish Echo Labor Awards in New York City. He's giving all credit for his success to the women in his life, his lovely wife Lora and his mother Mary, the matriarch. "Huge shout out to my mother!"

Lately there's been scuttlebutt about young people forgoing college for the trades, and John sees logic in that. He has good advice for the apprentice Iron workers.

"I tell the young guys if they're not giving you a nickname you don't like, or busting your balls, or sending you for a tool that doesn't exist-those are compliments, they show that they're having fun with you and they're teaching you some things. And they're the future of our local."

John is proudest of his family, his sons and daughter and his wife Lora. They first met when John was working the door at Doc Ryan's pub and checking for fake IDs. "She was too pretty to turn away."

He says the best advice he can give is: "Never let another person's negativity or poor work ethic drag you down. Be true to what you know is right. Hard work, and a good attitude, especially eagerness to learn, will sustain you throughout your career."

John says that when he hears folks exclaim at the beauty of Chicago's skyline he smiles and just says "Thank you!"

Along with his family, and the union brotherhood, John's cousin Jim is Chicago's 45th Ward Alderman. Yes, the Gardiners are "kickin' ass" in Chicago.



Mary Gardiner the Matriarch



John Gardiner Iron Worker



Mr. & Mrs. Gardiner



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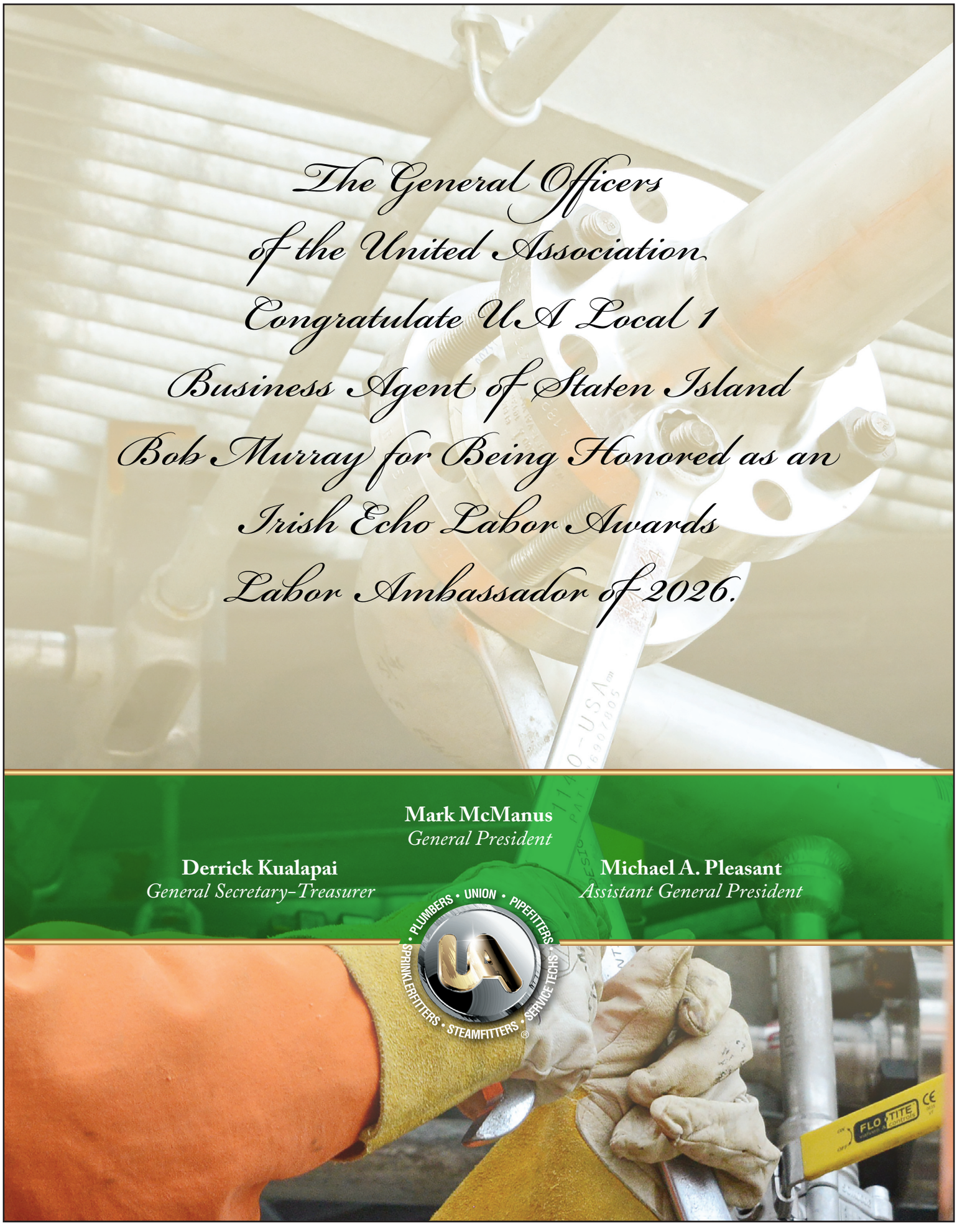
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GREGORY LANCETTE
U.A. International Representative

Congratulations to the Labor Ambassadors of 2026 on your recognition by The Irish Echo, especially to one of our own, Bobby Murray, U.A. Local 1 Business Agent of Staten Island.

Your contributions in the American labor movement are most commendable.

Local No.	Business Manager	Local No.	Business Manager	Local No.	Business Manager
1	Paul O'Connor	81	Marcus Williamee	373	Thomas Gandolfini
7	Edward Nadeau	112	Barrett Grant	638	Robert Bartels
13	John Carpenter	128	Santino D'Amario	669	Justin Koskowski
21	Sean Carey	200	Richard Brooks	773	Michael Jarvis
22	Rich Evans				


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Gerry Adams sends greetings to Irish America's labor leaders

United Ireland campaigner and labor advocate Gerry Adams has hailed the enduring solidarity of the American labor movement with Ireland, telling this year's Irish Echo Labor Awards that US trade union support for the peace process and Irish unity remains "hugely important".

In a special message from his native Belfast to the 16th annual Irish Echo Labor Awards, Gerry Adams sent his greetings to trade unionists from across the United States and praised the Irish Echo for sustaining an event which celebrates the contribution of organized labor.

"Go raibh maith agaibh to the Echo and to all of you in the American trade union movement for sustaining this important annual occasion," he said.

The former West Belfast MP described the Labor Awards as "a pivotal annual event".

"The solidarity that extends from the labor movement in the USA is hugely important in keeping people up to date on events in Ireland and developments here," he said.

The Irish Echo columnist also praised the Irish Echo's role in maintaining links between Ireland and its diaspora at a time of considerable international uncertainty.

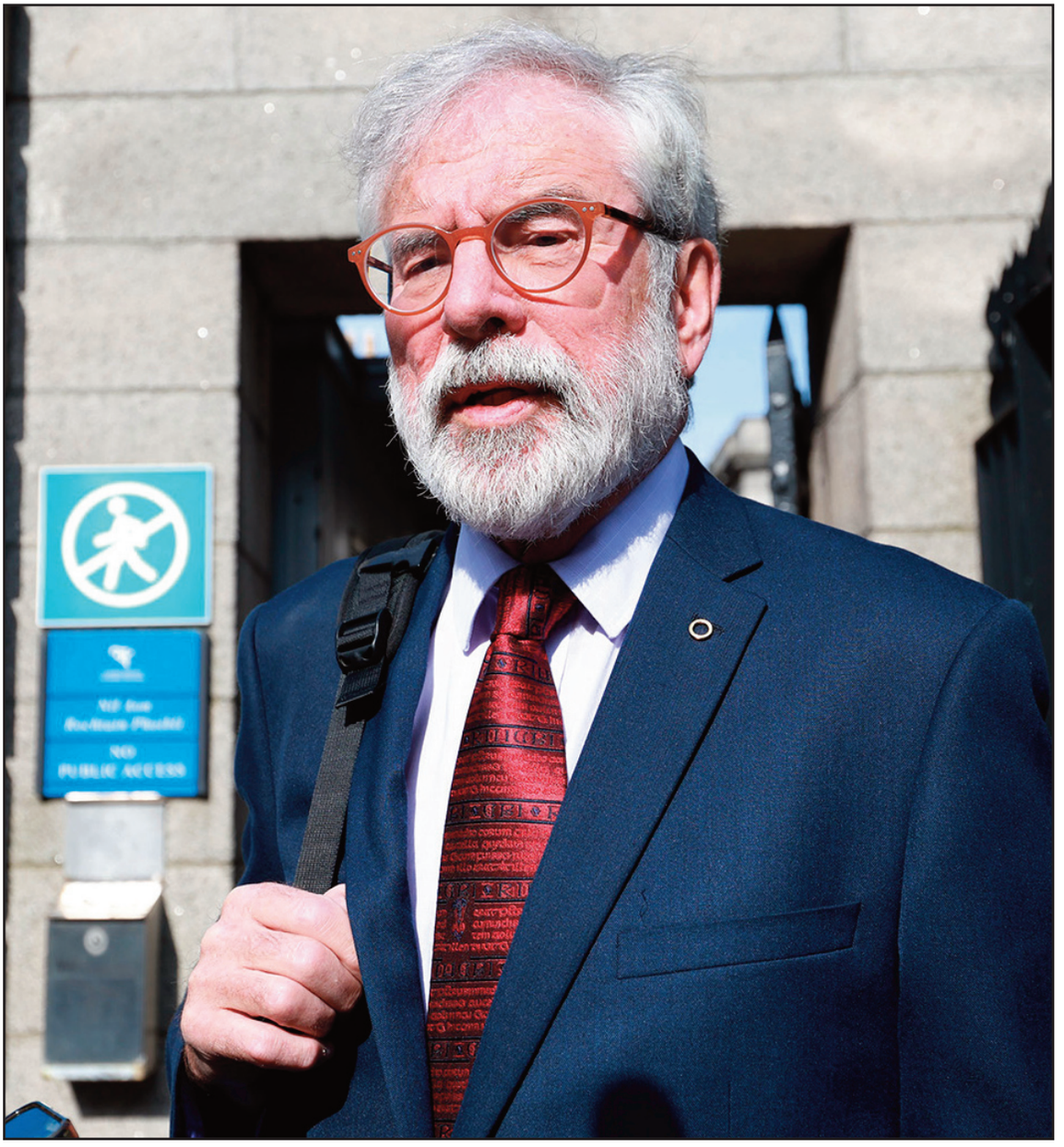
"In a world beset by conflicts, political divisions, the impact of climate change and other disasters, the role of the Irish Echo in reporting on events in Ireland and within the vibrant Irish community across the States is essential and very, very significant," he said.

For 16 years, he added, the Irish Echo Labor Awards have celebrated "the hard work and essential contribution of the American labor movement in defending the rights of workers".

This year's honorees span a wide cross-section of the US trade union movement, including representatives of the Teamsters, Operating Engineers, IBEW and the Carpenters Union, which Mr Adams described as "those great advocates for Irish unity".

He reserved a special greeting for the Chicago delegation, led this year by Bob Reiter, president of the Chicago Federation of Labor.

He also singled out three women being honored this year: Máire Drumm, media coordinator with the International Brotherhood of Teamsters in Washington, DC; Michelle Healey, campaign director with Community Change and formerly of SEIU; and Cindy Williams, executive director of the Carpenters Contractor Trust. "Each of those we honor this evening are champions of their trade union colleagues, of their trade unions and of working people," he said. "They've been nominated by their peers in recognition of their hard work on behalf of their fellow workers."

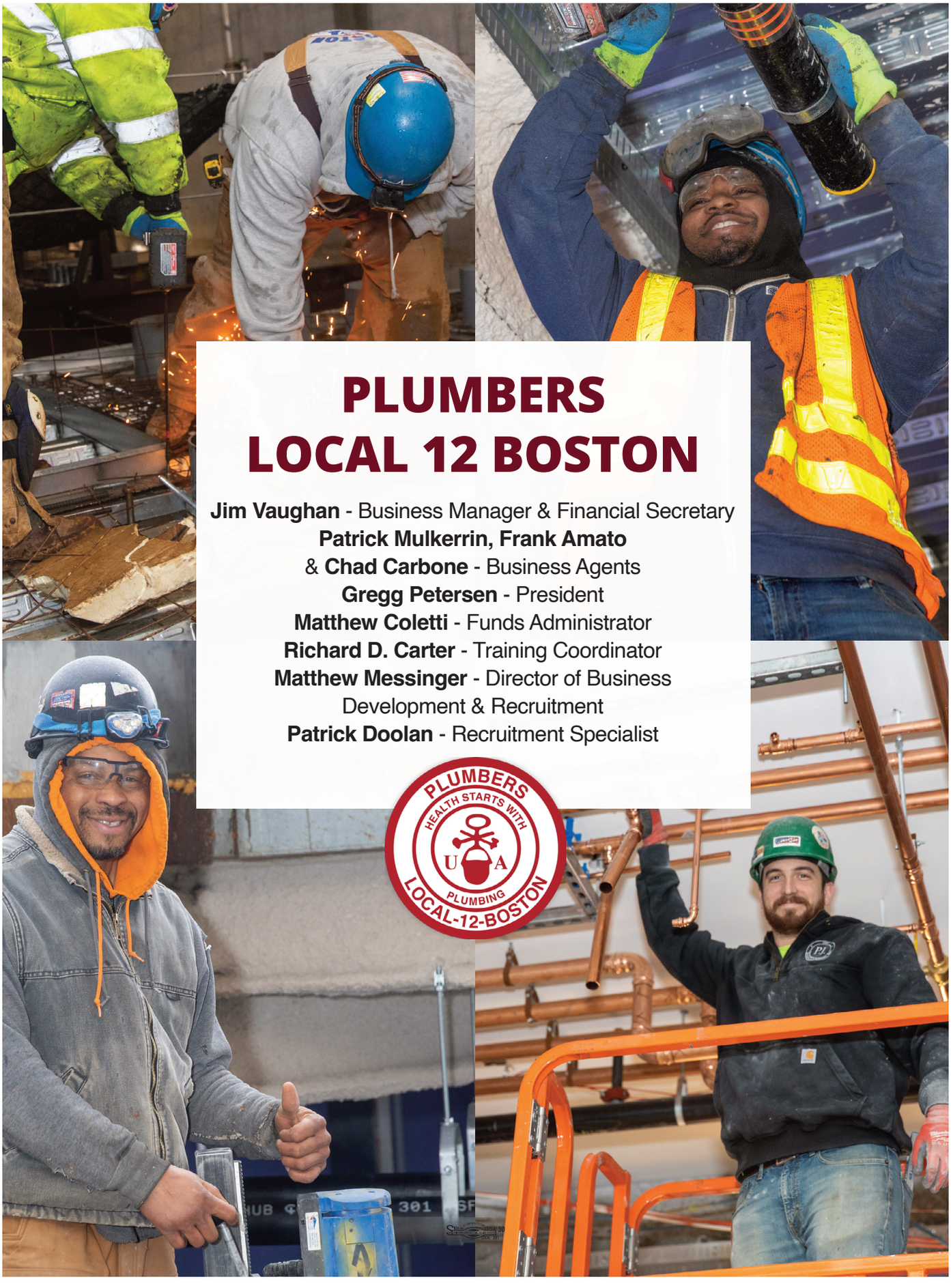


Adams also used his address to thank American trade unions which have contributed to Áras Uí Chonghaile — the James Connolly Visitor Centre on Belfast's Falls Road.

The centre chronicles the life and work of the Belfast-based socialist and Easter Rising leader James Connolly, including his years in the United States, and recalls his famous declaration: "The cause of Labour is the cause of Ireland, the cause of Ireland is the cause of Labour."

Calling for continued solidarity between Ireland and Irish America, Adams added: "Our demand is very, very straightforward: We want the full implementation of the Good Friday Agreement, but in particular, we want our people, North and South, to have their say about our future. That's contained in the Agreement."

You can see Gerry Adams' full address on YouTube.



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With gratitude, Michelle dedicates this honor to her parents, Michael and Maureen Healy, who left Ireland for Boston in the 1960s. They worked hard, kept the faith and the culture, and raised four children on a strong foundation provided by union jobs. Theirs is a dignity that no one hands you. It is fought for and protected and has carried working families through for generations. In solidarity, that same thread runs to the immigrant families raising young children across this country today, just as Michael and Maureen once did. They are the backbone of our communities and the future of our nation's tomorrow.

SEIU
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Congratulations Bob Murray

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The man they couldn't deport

By Peter McDermott
pmcdermott@irishecho.com

In 1941, Woody Guthrie and Pete Seeger wrote a song praising him. In 2001, the governor of California declared July 28 to be his day. American high schools and research institutes, boulevards, parks and plazas bear his name in 2026. But perhaps most important of all, the San Francisco headquarters of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union is called Harry R. Bridges Memorial Building.

Harry Bridges was born 125 years ago — yes, on July 28 — and led an iconic three-month strike that began when he was still 32, which many thank for the middle-class lives that they lead in the 21st century.

On the San Francisco waterfront, longshoremen and their seafaring allies led their maritime strike in the spring and summer of 1934, which "plunged the West Coast into a state of virtual class warfare."

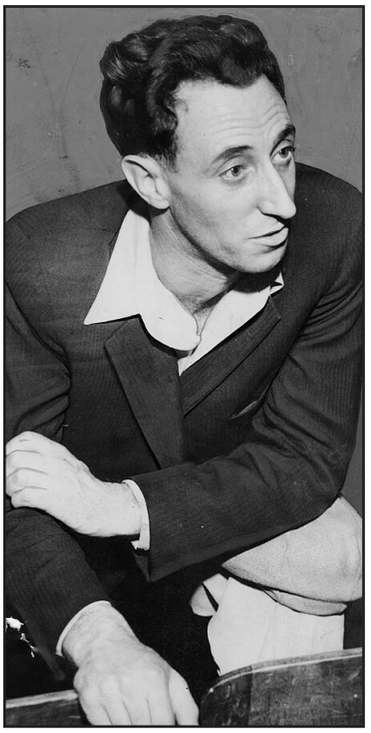
Historian Ellen Schrecker wrote, "There was the usual police harassment and American Legion vigilantism; early in July, when the employers and the police tried to open up the docks, a full-scale battle took place."

Two workers were shot dead by police and scores were wounded on July 5, "Bloody Thursday."

The Roosevelt administration asked all sides to submit to arbitration and the longshoremen returned to work, provisionally, at the end of July.

In "Harry Bridges: Labor Radical, Labor Legend," historian Robert W. Cherny writes that the final decision, announced in October, was "a smashing victory" for the longshoremen.

"When the fighting stopped and negotiations began,", wrote Schrecker, the union was "in control of the hiring system on the docks and soon able to extend its influence beyond the Bay Area to the entire West Coast. By the end of World War II, Bridges and his men even organized the workers in the sugar cane and pineapple plantations of Hawaii."



Harry Bridges pictured on July 9, 1934, during the strike.

Bridges was a Roosevelt and New Deal loyalist for the most part, and close to Labor Secretary Frances Perkins, and yet FDR allowed the FBI to go after labor radicals, especially those considered close to or in the Communist Party. Indeed, an agent was caught red-handed trying to bug Bridges's hotel room.

FDR really enjoyed hearing about that, saying to FBI Director Hoover, "By God, Edgar, that's the first time you've been caught with your pants down!"

In "Many Are the Crimes: McCarthyism in America" (1998), Schrecker wrote, "From the moment he emerged as the main spokesman for the waterfront workers early in 1934, Legionnaires and business leaders clamored for his deportation. The issue became a national crusade. For the next two decades, it would be possible to gauge the strength of anticommunism by the intensity of the campaign to deport Harry Bridges."

Alfred Renton Bryant Bridges was born in Kensington, a suburb of Melbourne, Australia. His father, Alfred Sr., was a successful suburban realtor; his mother, Julia (née Dorgan), was a devout Catholic of Irish heritage.

The young Bridges joined the merchant marine as a teenager, and, inspired by Jack London, was drawn to a life of "seafaring and socialism." He adopted the first name of a favorite uncle, Harry, a world-traveling socialist, and became involved with Australian unions and, in the U.S., the Industrial Workers of the World. Bridges, after spending time in Mexico and New Orleans, decided to stay on in San Francisco for work.

"It was common then to go from seafaring to longshoring, despite the brutal, irregular rhythm of the docks—being on the water wasn't any easier," writes E. Tammy Kim in a review of Cherny's book.

Believing the IWW's tactics to be ineffective, and rejecting the company union, a group of workers, with several Communists and fellow-travelers among them, decided to form a local of the East Coast-based International Longhoremen's Association. It was that local that led the 1934 strike, but without the backing of the ILA leadership in New York.

The West Coast broke away to form the ILWU in 1937, and Bridges led it until his retirement in 1977.

Even though during the McCarthy period the union was expelled from the CIO, he was always popular with the rank and file, which stood by him during his legal battles to stay in the country.

In our own time, the U.S. House of Representatives passes resolutions to repeal the Affordable Care Act; 80 years ago, its obsession was sending Harry Bridges back to Australia. Twice, though, the Supreme Court made 5-3 decisions in his favor, in 1945 and 1953.

Some historians, such as Schrecker, say that Bridges probably was a signed-up Communist at the height of the party's influence, much like they assume the Transport Workers' leader Mike Quill was in New York, until he publicly broke with it. Bridges didn't make such a break, but his biographer, Cherny, argues instead that however close he stuck to the party line he wasn't a member, nor subject to its discipline.

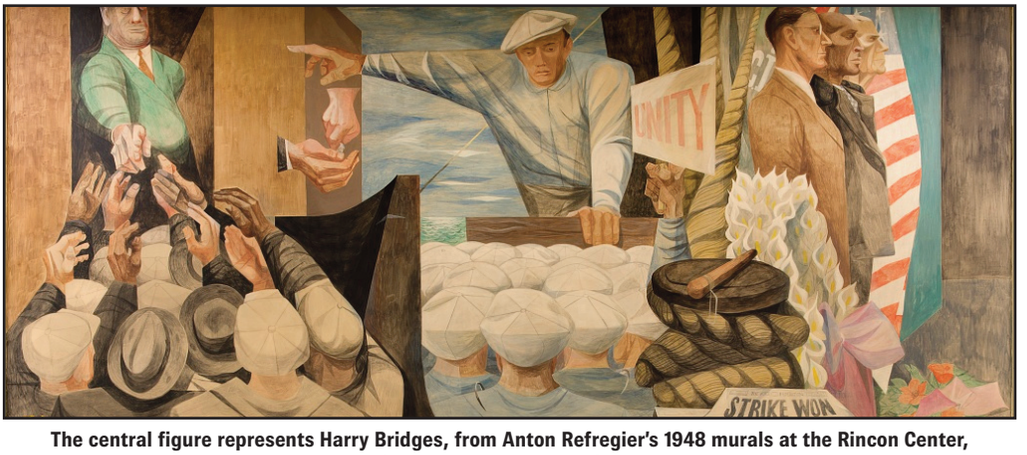
It likely helped that Bridges had lots of non-Communist secret admirers in politics and in the labor movement. The Jesuit campaigner the Rev. John M. Corridan, the model for the priest in "On the Waterfront," and a critic of the ILA and its president Joseph P. Ryan, would point to the West Coast as the way to go. Those worried about a security breach in American ports, Corridan argued, should focus their attention on the mobbed-up East Coast docks where "shape-up" hiring practices were still used, and not on the allegedly Reds-influenced San Francisco.

Kim writes that Bridges ruled "democratically and without scandal," if for too long, while Cherny says he set his own salary "well below that of the best-paid ILWU longshore workers."

Harry Bridges died on March 30, 1990, at age 88. He'd been married three times, and had four children and a stepchild. His widow, Noriko Sawada, whom he wed in 1958, gave Cherny access to his papers for the biography, which was published in 2023.



Harry Bridges signing the register at San Quentin State Prison on Aug. 25, 1939.



The central figure represents Harry Bridges, from Anton Refregier's 1948 murals at the Rincon Center, in Downtown San Francisco.

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2026 Honorees!



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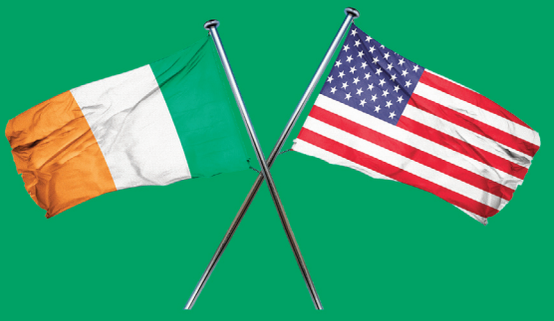
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In memory of Terrence P. Fitzmaurice...

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LOCAL 162 DAYTON, OHIO
LOCAL 168 MARIETTA, OHIO
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LOCAL 219 AKRON, OHIO
LOCAL 392 CINCINNATI, OHIO
LOCAL 396 BOARDMAN, OHIO
LOCAL 495 CAMBRIDGE, OHIO
LOCAL 577 PORTSMOUTH, OHIO
LOCAL 669 SPRINKLERFITTERS
LOCAL 776 LIMA, OHIO



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of IUOE Local 825
and all other
Labor Ambassador Honorees

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APP

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LOCAL 66
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John Gardiner, President/Business Manager, Ironworkers Local #1 Chicago, IL
Joseph Keating, Instructor at NYC Carpenters Training Center
Thomas Kelly, President Passaic County Central Labor Council, IBEW Local 827
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Chris Lalevee, IUOE Local 825 Business Agent and Member Assistance Coordinator; IUOE Crane Instructor; Peer Support Training Instructor
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Terrence P. "Terry" Fitzmaurice - Posthumous Labor Ambassador Award, District Council 14, Chicago Federation of Labor Executive Board, and a trustee of the Painters and Decorators Welfare and Pension Fund.

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Thomas Kelly
Bob Murray
Michael Regan
Joseph Reilly
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Chris Lalevee
Jack McGovern
Robert Reiter
Patrick Reynolds
Terrence Fitzmaurice

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THOMAS KELLY
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JACK MCGOVERN
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Matthew Jones
Organizer

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Congratulations to an incredible Husband, Dad, and Labor Leader on receiving the 2026 Irish Echo Labor Leader Award!

We are so proud of you!

Love, Your Family


CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL OF THIS YEAR'S IRISH ECHO LABOR AWARD HONOREES.
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Mary Harris "Mother" Jones

Transatlantic labor co-operation needed to counter the global corporate oligarchs

By Ethel Buckely
Deputy General Secretary of SIPTU, Dublin, Ireland

The story of America's rise as an industrial power is inseparable from the story of Irish immigrant and Irish-American workers. From railroads, mines and docks to factories, skyscrapers and city streets, generations of Irish helped build the foundations of the American economy, often while enduring poverty, discrimination and dangerous working conditions. From that hardship emerged something equally enduring: a fierce belief in solidarity, collective action and the dignity of labor.

That tradition produced some of the great names of American trade unionism. Mary Harris "Mother" Jones, from Cork, became one of the most fearless organizers the American labor movement has ever known, standing with miners, railway workers and working families against some of the most powerful corporations in the world. Mike Quill, from Kerry, carried the spirit of Irish republicanism and militant industrial unionism into the New York subway system, helping build the Transport Workers Union into a formidable force for good wages, dignity and civil rights.

Nor did the traffic of ideas move in one direction. James Connolly — trade unionist, socialist, republican and founder of my union — spent vital years in the United States organizing workers, writing and learning from American labor radicalism.

The 1916 Proclamation of the Irish Republic was printed in Liberty Hall, the union's headquarters in Dublin, and it was from there that Connolly led the Irish Citizen Army to the GPO garrison in the Easter Rising. But Connolly's vision of a Workers' Republic remains unfinished business.

It may surprise readers to learn that workers in the Irish Republic still have no legal right to have their trade union recognised by their employer. Workers across Europe benefit from such rights. American and British workers, however weak and patchy the systems may be, at least have a legal roadmap to union recognition and collective bargaining.

Irish workers remain an outlier. Successive Irish governments have denied workers these rights, making it harder for trade unions to organize workplaces and harder for workers to improve pay and conditions.

In an age of growing corporate concentration, with employers deploying increasingly aggressive anti-union tactics, legislation that vindicates workers' right to collective bargaining is essential.

The law cannot organize workers; that is the work of trade unions. But laws that obstruct workplace organization make that work harder — and it will not get easier. The Swedish trade union movement's struggle with Tesla should be a wake-up call for trade unionists in both the United States and Europe. If one of the strongest union movements in the world struggles to secure a collective agreement with Tesla, how much harder will it be for Irish and American trade unionists facing the same corporate power?

We need industrial, political and international strategies to confront the growing power of oligarchs and corporations. That is why transatlantic cooperation between the American and Irish labor movements matters now more than ever.

Ethel Buckley will be a special guest at the 2026 Labor Awards. Buckley is Deputy General Secretary of SIPTU, Dublin, Ireland, SIPTU is Ireland's strongest trade union, representing over 180,000 workers across the public and private sectors in every community and county.

On 250th anniversary, America should aim to strengthen — not weaken — its unions

By Donna McGuire

America250 is more than an anniversary — it is a monumental moment for every American. It calls us to reflect on how this country began, the hardships endured by its earliest settlers, and the courage of those who crossed oceans to build a new life. For more than 250 years, people left their native lands with nothing guaranteed except the hope of the American dream. My own family was among them. They came from Ireland with little more than determination, and they found their footing through the strength and solidarity of America's unions.

The work my parents and extended family found in various trades didn't just provide jobs — it provided dignity. Their union careers offered fair wages, safe conditions, health benefits, pensions, and the chance to give their families the quality of life they once only imagined. They took risks, made sacrifices, and when they looked back, they all agreed it was worth it. They were grateful then, and we remain grateful now.

America250 marks the anniversary of our independence — the moment our forefathers laid the foundation for a nation built on shared responsibility and collective progress. The infrastructure that rose from their vision — our cities, roads, railways, and waterways — was a remarkable achievement. But it was the immigrant worker, and the generations of laborers who followed, who turned that vision into reality.



UPS Is one of the largest unionised companies in the private sector.
Izyan Sultanali for unsplash.org

Even before July 4, 1776, workers were organizing in small pockets across the colonies. Their strikes were risky and often met with fines, punishment, or unemployment. Many were hurt. Some were prosecuted. But they stood up anyway. They believed that better conditions were worth fighting for, even when the odds were stacked against them.

These early labor leaders are my heroes. Their courage and persistence shaped the AFL-CIO and the labor movement we know today. Terence Powderly led the Knights of Labor in the late 19th century, growing it to nearly a million members at its peak. Samuel Gompers later guided the Federation of Organized Trades and Labor Unions, fighting against child labor and for shorter workdays. And in 1886, Peter McGuire — co-founder of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America — helped merge these efforts into what became the American Federation of Labor. These pioneers envisioned a national movement strong enough to protect workers for generations.

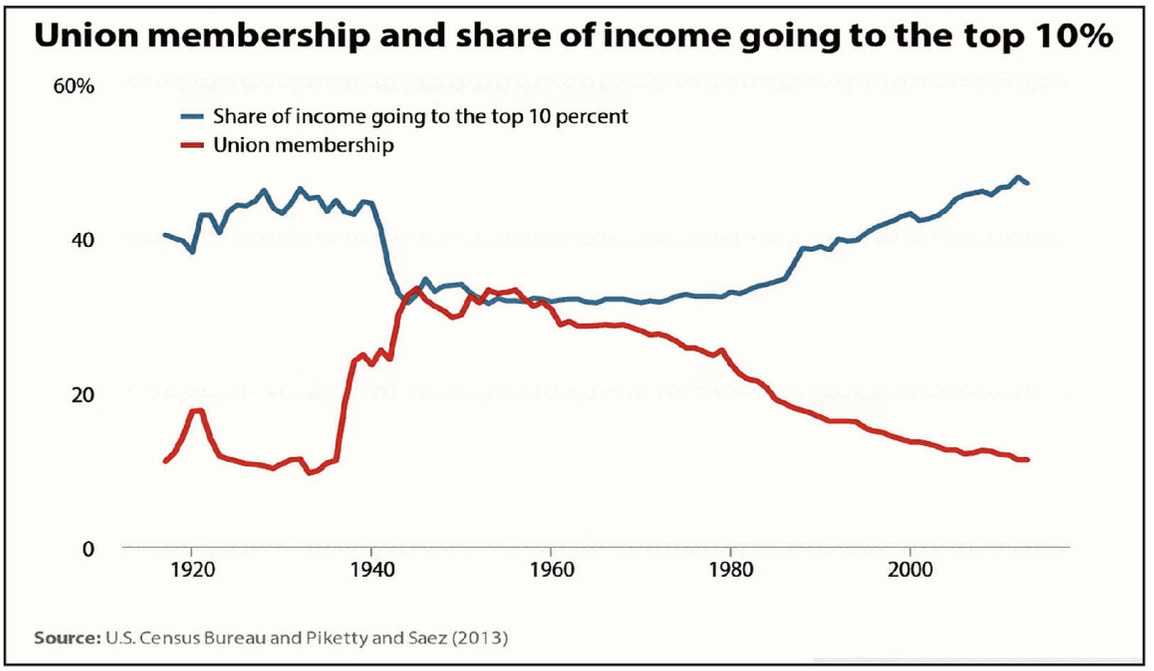
I'm especially proud that Peter J. McGuire first proposed a Labor Day parade in 1882 in New York City — a day meant to honor the American worker between Independence Day and Thanksgiving. The idea spread quickly, celebrated in more than half the states before becoming a national holiday in 1894.

Let's fast-forward to the late 1970s. This is when unionism began to decline. Less people started to take an active stance in unions or took non-union employment. The graph from the Economic Policy Institute (top) depicts a decline in income in the decades that followed.

Right now, during this monumental time in history of America250, our country is experiencing an expanding population, new immigrants, the housing and cost-of-living, all continue to rise. It can be difficult to find work and sometimes people resort to positions that are not affiliated with a union. It can be enticing, may be seem like a short-term solution that may develop into a long-range position. However, positions that counter or compete with union-based work, may not always provide the expensive health care benefits, overtime, just to name a few. Over time, the decrease in union membership has created more of a divide in overall pay and work conditions. The union model that has kept our country strong is being challenged and we need to support the unions that have supported us for generations. It is also imperative to protect them so that the next generation can continue to enjoy the same quality of life that I experienced from being in a union household.

Our workforce — and the unions that support it — are the backbone of this nation's success. I am proud of the forefathers and foremothers of the AFL-CIO. Their courage, sacrifice, and vision are deeply woven into the meaning of America250. Their legacy is alive in every bridge, every school, every factory, every home — in the very fabric of American life.

They are the heroes behind the American dream. This Labor Day, as you celebrate, please take a moment to reflect on groundwork our forefathers and mothers created, to bring us to our dream and then continue to salute America250.



Donna McGuire, assistant principal at PS/IS 18 – The Park Terrace School in the New York City Public Schools, District 6, has been selected as the 2023 New York State Assistant Principal of the Year by the School Administrators Association of New York State (SAANYS) and the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP). Donna has been honored at the Irish Echo Labor Awards.

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2026

