

OPEN CHANNELS



THE NEWSLETTER OF IBEW LOCAL 45

WWW.IBEW45.ORG

SPRING 2016

Arbitration Victory

CHALLENGE AT KTXL GOES THROUGH

PAGE 03

Touchdown!

IBEW 45 WORKS THE SUPER BOWL

PAGE 03

Steward Spotlight

MEET STEWARDS AT LAUSD, FOX/CBS SPORTS, LA COUNTY

PAGE 04



TOP – In March, IBEW Local 45 Business Manager Elaine Ocasio was honored at the Latinas Breaking Barriers Breakfast hosted by Assemblymember Sebastian Ridley-Thomas. Pictured from left: Assemblymember Thomas, Chief Executive Officer of the Los Angeles Latino Chamber of Commerce and Ocasio. LEFT – IBEW 45 members brought the spectacle of Super Bowl 50 to the viewers at home in February. From left: Marc Kennedy and Francisco Del Rosario assigned to parabolic microphones.

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 3)

Labor Unions: Stronger Together

BY MICHAEL MESSINA

Today's unions and the members that form them are a part of something that is at its core quite simple, extraordinarily strong, unprejudiced, and in the end, invaluable.

"A union is the people in a workplace getting together and having a

voice in that workplace," said IBEW Local 45 Business Manager Elaine Ocasio.

Unions offer solidarity and provide a voice for the collective in matters of negotiating wages and benefits and providing workplace protections. In the face of heavy-

handed management, unions provide a crucial counterweight.

The concepts of a collective voice and a counterweight to management have recently been challenged by the *Friedrichs v. California Teachers Association* Supreme Court case, possibly the most dangerous anti-union lawsuit in decades.

The plaintiff, teacher Rebecca Friedrichs, and her deep-pocketed backers argued that the agency-fee payer rule (which requires non-union members to pay their fair share while they benefit from good benefits, pay increases, workplace protections and more) should be eliminated. The Friedrichs lawsuit was backed by relentless anti-labor forces, and they almost won. With the death of Justice Antonin Scalia in February, the court evened out

politically and a 4-4 ruling in March meant that a lower court ruling would stand, rejecting the Friedrichs argument.

And while the tie was a huge victory, this attack was just one of what Ocasio called "a very concentrated, highly financed campaign to destroy unions." She noted that unions are doing their job, and doing it well, hence the reason for the all-out assault.

It was a close call and it forced unions, including Local 45, to reassess the strength of their membership and what solidarity really means in terms of meaningful participation. And unions are not out of the woods yet as several similar cases are in the pipeline. The drive

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 8)

IBEW Local 45
6255 Sunset Blvd., Ste. 721
Hollywood, CA 90028

Leading the Charge

By Elaine Ocasio
Business Manager, IBEW Local 45

Stop me if you've heard this one before:
This November will be the most important election of our lifetimes.

Yes, yes, it seems like we say this every four years, and yes, each presidential election and everything else down ballot is crucial. But 2016? How this election turns out will be vital in shaping the history of this country.

Look no further than the Supreme Court. In case you've been living under a rock these past few months, Justice Antonin Scalia unexpectedly passed away in February, leaving a vacancy on the nine-member Supreme Court. The remaining eight justices are, more or less, ideologically split 4-4. The next justice named to the court will tip the scales one way or the other for the foreseeable future and could be a fixture for a generation.

President Obama has done his duty by naming the honorable Merrick Garland as Scalia's successor. All reasonable people seem to be in agreement that Judge Garland – the Chief Judge of the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia – is a suitable replacement and would make for a fine Supreme Court justice.

Unfortunately, the Republican Senate Leadership, paced by Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, has decided to not do its job and hold hearings on the president's nomination. Furthermore, the remaining Republican

presidential candidates have inexplicably stated that, at least in the case of naming a justice to the Supreme Court, the remainder of President Obama's term doesn't matter. They claim the people should get a say in who the next Supreme Court justice should be, ignoring the fact that the people voted Barack Obama president. Twice.

In coming years, the Supreme Court will be ruling on a number of important cases, and labor unions are bound to be at the center of at least a few of these. Recently, the Friedrichs v. California Teachers Association lawsuit unsuccessfully challenged the notion of fee payers (when non-union members pay a fee in exchange for the benefits of representation, such as pay raises, good benefits and workplace protections). The Supreme Court ruled 4-4, upholding a lower court's decision in favor of labor. But had Scalia not passed away, that vote could have very well been 5-4 against labor unions.

We dodged a bullet. For now.

It's not like the deep-pocketed, anti-labor forces behind the Friedrichs case are just going to throw in the towel. There are and will be additional legal challenges to the rights of working people to collectively form a labor union making their way through the court.

As a union, we need to get the word out as to the benefits of representation: Good pay, good benefits, workplace protections, job security, expert training, a skilled workforce, a collective voice to bring our needs to the table, and on and on. Unions made the middle class, which made America the envy of the world. We can't lose sight of that.

Which brings us back to the importance of the November election. Every vote counts, so please register to vote in time for the June primary (you have until 15 days before the election, so there's still time). And then vote. Have your voice heard. It matters.

The most important election of our lifetime?

You're darn right.

Elaine Ocasio
Business Manager/Financial Secretary



Staff Box

IBEW Local 45
6255 Sunset Blvd # 721
Hollywood, CA 90028
(323) 851-5515

Business Manager/Financial Secretary
Elaine Ocasio

Executive Assistant
Lupe Perez

Dues Administrator
Marceil Wright

Bookkeeper
Anthony Wainaina

Membership Department
Rebecca Lehrmann

Business Representatives

Southern California
Victor Marrero

Northern California
Hugh McGuigan

*This newsletter produced by
Senders Communications Group*

Publisher - Cherri Senders

Editor - Robert Fulton

*Writers - Michael Messina
Kelly Ross*

Art Director - Michael Teitelbaum

LOCAL 45 SUPPORTS A CULTURE OF LEARNING

Local 45 is empowering its membership through free training. Visit the Lynda.com video-based content library at www.lynda.com to make an investment in yourself.

Now is the time to improve, enhance and build your skills and knowledge.

The D.I.Y. Learning Check List:

- Identify the gaps in your current knowledge and experience.
- Research what is new or unfamiliar in your field.
- Develop a list of skills you want to pick up.
- Identify and adapt to changes in the workplace.
- Pursue areas for development and training that will enhance your job performance.



lynda.com
You can learn it.

Email the Local 45 office at info@ibew45.org to get started with Lynda.com

IN SOLIDARITY

Local 45 stands in solidarity with the Armenian community on the 101st anniversary of the Armenian Genocide.



Find Us On Facebook!
www.facebook.com/IBEW45

Have a photo you'd like to share? Email us at info@ibew45.org

Arbitrator Sides with Reporters at KTXL

In a victory for IBEW Local 45 employees, an arbitrator recently sided with 19 reporter/multi-media journalists at KTXL Fox 40 in Sacramento over a meal period dispute with the employer.

“Shortly after signing the new and first agreement with KTXL last January, the employer took the position that the meal period treatment didn’t apply to the reporters, only the photographers,” said Local 45 Northern California Rep. Hugh McGuigan. “The contract provided no such carve out, nor was any proposal made by the employer on that subject.”

It is a provision of California state law and a provision of the collective bargaining agreement that an employee shall receive a half hour unpaid meal period or a penalty equal

to one hour’s pay in the event that the employer doesn’t provide them a meal period. The employer was not complying with this provision for the reporter/MMJs and a grievance was filed.

The case was heard in October of last year and the arbitrator’s decision was entirely in favor of the employees. It was found that while the employer never intended for the meal period treatment to apply to the reporter/MMJs, they failed to make any proposal to exempt these employees and that they were in fact entitled to meal period treatment. Reporters/MMJs are now allowed, nor can they be refused a meal period, or pay in place of that meal period. The employer was further ordered to pay retroactive missed-meal-period penalties to January of last year.

Breaking Barriers

In March, IBEW Local 45 Business Manager Elaine Ocasio was honored at the Latinas Breaking Barriers Breakfast hosted by Assemblymember Sebastian Ridley-Thomas. The annual event is held in recognition of the life and work of Cesar Chavez. Also honored was Theresa Martinez, Chief Executive Officer of the Los Angeles Latino Chamber of Commerce.



IBEW Local 45 Southern California and Public Sector Business Rep Victor Marrero, Business Manager Elaine Ocasio and Assemblymember Sebastian Ridley-Thomas.

Touchdown!

IBEW 45 members brought the spectacle of Super Bowl 50 to the viewers at home and the spectators in Santa Clara, CA. Levi’s Stadium played host to the game and it couldn’t have been done without the expertise of these highly skilled union workers.



Photo by Gary Grafail

Row 1 (kneeling): Jim McCoy, Sultan Thomas, Marc Kennedy. Row 2: (six from left) Carol Peterson, Valerie Bremier, Sean Boyd (red billed cap). Behind Carol: Charles Johnson (left of pole), Sam Jack (right of pole). To left of Charles (back row behind red t-shirt guy) Andy Lubinsky. On right side of frame (unfortunately cropped) Francisco Del Rosario.



Assemblymember Sebastian Ridley-Thomas says a few words in recognizing Los Angeles Latino Chamber of Commerce CEO Theresa Martinez and IBEW Local 45 Business Manager Elaine Ocasio.



Post game toast by CBS. Left to Right: Thomas Harlan, Marc Kennedy, Sean Kelly



Left to right: Sean Boyd, Jim McCoy, Charles Johnson, Sultan Thomas



Smiley assisting parabolic microphone setup

Spotlight on Stewards

Three Local 45 members who get the job done **BY JACOB BOURNE**



Herb Flores, LAUSD

Becoming a shop steward wasn't something that Herb Flores had originally planned. Yet, when another steward retired last year, he noticed the void in leadership and happily jumped into the role.

Flores has been an electronic communications technician in the Information Technology Department for the Los Angeles Unified School District for the past five years. After working for Communications Workers of America for 30 years, Flores views his position with the school district as a second career where he's able to make a difference.

"In my previous job at the phone company, during the final 10 years I was in management and got to see things from both sides of the goal line," Flores said. "It made me better suited to understanding the conflicts if there are any."

Being a union member was always a given for Flores. He attributes much of his family's success to the strength of unions. Being a shop steward for IBEW 45 the past year has been especially meaningful as he's been very active in membership meetings.

"There was an issue with our whole department being forced to work nights," he reflected. "We fought to get everybody back on days, which came out of our discussions."



Charles Smith, FOX/CBS Sports

When Charles Smith heard the words of "The Star Spangled Banner" sung at CenturyLink Field in Seattle, Washington prior to a Seahawks game six years ago, it struck a deep chord in him. It was his first day on the job as a utility worker for FOX/CBS sports coverage and he knew that this was his true vocation.

Smith is the one who makes sure everything runs smoothly on game day. He sets up the cameras and fiber optic cables throughout entire stadiums to ensure effective broadcasting. Six months ago, he signed up to be an IBEW 45 steward so that he could be a voice for other members who weren't getting heard.

"It's about making sure that others are getting their fair share," Smith remarked. "It will be a continuation of what I've already been doing in a lot of ways since being with the union. I've always helped bring people to the table."

At age 50, Smith looks back on the struggles he faced after losing his father when he was 16. Overcoming many challenges, his mission in life has become to help others achieve their goals. By serving as an approachable steward and good communicator, Smith hopes to continue working towards positive resolutions for the membership.



Michael Montano, L.A. County

Michael Montano has been working as an electronic communications technician for Los Angeles County for 15 years. In 2001, he started with the Sheriff's Department and was transferred to the Internal Services Department in 2010. It was while studying for an electronics technology degree at Antelope Valley College that Montano first encountered his instructor, Rick Stone, who inspired him to begin a career with the County and served as a mentor during his years at the Sheriff's Department.

Montano is part of a group of technicians who are invaluable to the communications infrastructure for the entire County including 150 fire stations, 24 sheriff's departments, and public works. Whether it's the functioning of mobile radios, mountaintop receivers, or microwave sites, Montano is one of the people working to keep the public safe.

It was after a meeting with the IBEW 45 union representative and business manager that Montano decided to volunteer as a steward, noticing that his team in the northern part of the county needed more of a voice in negotiations.

"It's been a really interesting experience," Montano said. "I saw that negotiations were moving really slowly and wanted to contribute."

Always seeking to improve his skills, Montano became a specialist in cyber security through Colorado State University last year.

Retirees Corner



Bob Lai, KPIX

Recent Retiree Bob Lai has been a member of IBEW 45 for nearly a quarter century. Born and raised in San Francisco, Lai attended San Francisco State University where he majored in broadcasting.

Shortly after graduating from college, Lai was offered an Internship at KPIX. That internship turned into a job, and he has been there ever since.

“Television was not my first choice,” Lai said. “I wanted to go into radio, but KPIX gave me my first internship and it just grew on me. It’s very exciting.”

After working at the same station for 29 years, Lai has developed a strong affinity with his coworkers, and will miss them dearly.

“I’ve learned a lot from them,” Lai said. “They are my brothers and sisters. They even helped me fight to get my job unionized. It wasn’t a union job when I started 29 years ago.”

Lai is a strong believer in the power of solidarity, and said he was most appreciative of the support he received from the union as well as the skill sets and opportunities he was provided. Though he will be sorely missed, Lai is excited for his retirement and says he is most looking forward to being able to sleep normal hours after eight years on the morning shift.

IBEW 45 wishes him a wonderful retirement.

By Kelly Ross



Glen Roe, CBS TV City

Glen Roe has been behind the scenes of some of television’s most memorable moments, but after 50 years in the business, it’s his career that has taken center stage.

“After such a long career, you wear many hats and earn a lot of credentials,” Roe said. “And I’m a technical person, so I did it all.”

In 2007, when Roe first retired from his role as senior studio supervisor for CBS’s “The Price is Right,” show host Bob Barker commended him for being the go-to guy on set.

“That’s when I told him I was retiring, and he just said, ‘Well, if you’re leaving, I’m leaving,’” Roe recalled. “It’s amazing this business we’re in. I started as a young tech maintenance guy and because I was elevated to studio level and had these technical abilities, all the shows that came and went – the family shows, the game shows, the Jim Nabors and Tim Conway shows – they’d invite me in.”

Roe first joined CBS in 1966 as a 22-year-old from Wisconsin, where he helped transition the technology on set from vacuum tubes to solid-state devices. He soon found himself setting up the mic for Dolly Parton, Richard Nixon and news anchor Connie Chung, and traveling around the world as senior supervisor for “The Young and Restless” and “The Bold and Beautiful.” Most recently, Roe worked tech maintenance for “The Late Late Show with James Corden.”

Now entering his second retirement, Roe plans to focus on his hobbies: amateur radio and radio-controlled airplanes.

“I’m grateful for my union and the work I’ve been offered throughout the years,” Roe said. “Being in the room on a ship in Malta and setting up the camera and microphone for the peace talks between Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev and U.S. President George Bush Sr., was an exciting moment for me, [and I’ve had] so many stories for a kid from Wisconsin.”

“I felt it was probably time to let the younger people work these jobs.”

By Allison Fazio



Stanley Roberts Honored for “People Behaving Badly”

Stanley Roberts, an IBEW Local 45 shop steward and multimedia journalist at KRON in San Francisco, was recently honored by the San Mateo County Police Chiefs and Sheriffs Association for the work he does at the station. Roberts’ “People Behaving Badly” segment has been chronicling citizens of the Bay Area making poor choices for about 10 years now.

The Association said the award was in appreciation for Roberts’ efforts to assist law enforcement with the Saturation Traffic Enforcement Program (S.T.E.P.). “The media coverage of our deployment on your ‘People Behaving Badly’ segment provides the public with an added educational and awareness component that is valuable to our overall traffic safety goals,” said the Association in a press release.

Roberts has been at KRON for 16 years and has been awarded in the past for work he has done on his show.

“The best part I like about it is I get to get out there and have some fun and share what’s going on,” said Roberts.

Notes From Around the Union: Northern California Report

Here's a round up of recent activity from Northern California Rep. Hugh McGuigan:



KTVU

There is finally good news to report at KTVU. After 19 months of heated battles and tense negotiations a tentative agreement was reached on April 8. The membership ratified the package by a comfortable margin after informational meetings and voting sessions were held. We are happy to report that the package is a significant improvement over the terms imposed by the employer when Fox acquired the station in late 2014.

KPIX

The station and Local 45 members played a key role in the very successful coverage of the Super Bowl. Local management all the way up to Les Moonves complemented the job that was done. A Labor Management meeting was held on Feb. 25 to discuss station operations, safety and staffing. Writer's shop steward Brad Belstock has left the station for a new position elsewhere. We wish him well and thank him for his service as steward.

KRON

As we feared, Nexstar has acquired the station. We have experience with this employer and fought a long battle with them at KSEE/KGPE in Fresno. Additional bad news is that the employer has Hubbed out Master Control and some long term members have lost their jobs. The Union is currently processing two complaints with the employer. The first is a contract violation on Holiday Treatment for part time employees. The other is a violation of Weingarten rights. The holiday pay issue was settled in favor of the union, and we will continue to work towards a proper outcome on the Weingarten rights violation.

KCRA

The new agreement reached late last summer is now fully implemented. The bulk of the membership enjoyed a 2.5% increase. Newer employees saw even greater increases due to improvements in start rates and progression schedules that the Union was able to secure. The Local recently represented a member in a disciplinary matter to ensure that just cause and proper treatment was followed.

Notes From Around the Union: Public Sector & Southern Cal Report

Here's a round up of recent activity from Public Sector and Southern California Rep. Victor Marrero:



LA CITY

A shop meeting was held at LAWA. Discussions took place about the changes on the new contract such as re-classification of CE's, Tier 2 effects ongoing at Water and Power, new hiring of CE's and Senior CE's at LAWA and stand-by.

Business Manager Elaine Ocasio and I had a shop meeting at the Harbor Department to discuss the new contract. We toured the facility and checked-out all the locations where our members work.

An ITA member complained about not getting proper notification regarding his performance interview. A call was made to the chief personnel analyst to request that he find out what happened. He informed me that it will be investigated and that he will get back to me with an update.

A third level grievance meeting was held at ITA with the General Manager. This was regarding the one person shift at the 911 dispatch centers.

LA COUNTY

Chris Hannan of the Building Trades and I had a discussion on the update on the L.A. County (County) negotiations since we have not had a meeting for approximately three weeks. Chris filed an Unfair Labor Practice claim against the County and now they do not want to negotiate with us until the charges are cleared. Meanwhile, I am receiving a lot of calls from members wanting to know when the negotiations will be completed.

A member is being represented by me on a third level grievance based on a one-day suspension. He was not treated well. I presented the grievance package to Chris Hannan of the Building Trades so that he can file for arbitration.

A complaint came in from the County Sheriff's installation section where the County has hired a contractor to install radios on new cars. I will investigate and file a grievance.

GE

The new agreement reached last fall is now in place. Members received up front bonuses and other wage increases later in the agreement. Newer employees enjoyed improvements in progression schedule. The news of last December that the company was not selling off the appliance business to Electrolux was good in that members received more benefits under the agreement. The news, however, was short lived because in January of this year it was announced that a new deal was in the works with Chinese company Haier and we recently learned that they are not accepting labor agreements. It is anticipated that this deal will close mid-2016. Business Representative Hugh McGuigan will be attending a meeting in July where it is anticipated that information on how this will impact our members will be disseminated.

KFSN

A Labor management meeting was held in December to discuss the implementation of new vacation allotment to our members. Making sure that access and scheduling of this new vacation was a key issue. Monitoring of our jurisdictional work was also discussed. It was recently announced that a new staff photographer has been hired. This should help us with vacation access.

LAUSD

A shop meeting was held with the members to discuss changes in the IT department. A member complained about the District policy regarding religious holidays. I found out that employees must give a five day notice to request the day off. Once approved, the day off is considered personal leave.

A Labor/Management meeting is being arranged with the HR Director so that our new steward can assist with member concerns.

LACCD

A meeting with the new LACCD/Building Trades Representative Ernesto Medrano took place at the Building Trades. We discussed the wage calculation for the new contract.

A meeting with members from LACCD was held to discuss the changes that took place after the remodel at the ENG and Audio sections. They are going to hire a new engineer.

KSEE/KGPE

After a protracted 3 year battle we are happy to announce that a new agreement is now in place. We received assistance from the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service in late January and were finally able to reach a tentative agreement. The membership ratified the package by a comfortable margin. We were able to move away from the company merit pay plan and achieve guaranteed increases totaling 4.9%. Many of the company demands to diminish the agreement in other areas were dismissed

DAY WIRELESS

A number of shop meetings have been held in preparation for upcoming bargaining. A disciplinary issue was also recently resolved with our member receiving far better treatment than the employer was originally planning to administer.

KTXL

GREAT NEWS: The Local won the arbitration case against the employer on meal period treatment for the Reporters. The employer was ordered to allow meal periods and pay prescribed penalty when a meal period is not provided. Retro-active treatment to January 2015 was also ordered. The employer continues to be difficult

CHARTER COMMUNICATIONS

Contract negotiations were held April 13th and 14th, 2016. Future negotiation session will be arranged.

CBS TV CITY (ACFE)

A meeting with a member and a steward was held in conjunction with management to settle a grievance where a bonus was not paid. Management settled with us and our member was very happy.

CAPITOL RECORDS

All corrections to the Recording Engineers contract were finalized and now it is complete.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

An L.A. County Integration Advisory Board meeting was held and I participated in the meeting as a Board member. The County is putting three departments together. This Board assignment is to make recommendations so as to not affect the workers and the Public Health Department in a negative way.

on this issue and we will continue to police the matter. The arbitrator retained jurisdiction over the issue and if needed we will file additional complaints.

FOX SPORTS/CBS SPORTS

Numerous site visits have been made to visit Local 45 members working these events.

Many Local 45 members and other IBEW members from across the country did a stellar job of bringing the Super Bowl to a worldwide audience. Well done!



The power is in your hands! Remember to register, and vote this June.

California residents register at registertovote.ca.gov.

All other states, visit www.eac.gov.

A one-day training on how to communicate to the membership the Friedrichs vs CTA Supreme court case was held at L.A. Trade Tech.

The 2nd Annual Latinas Break Barriers Breakfast by Assemblymember Sebastian Ridley-Thomas was held on March 25th, 2016 where Elaine Ocasio was honored.

Our member Rafael Barrios was honored for his 30 years of service as well as his retirement.

Unions (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

to fortify the union as it stands continues, and part of that is a reminder of what the union provides for its members, as well as the economic and social implications should those benefits disappear.

There's a tendency to oversimplify the usefulness of the union as a means to simply negotiate a bigger paycheck. While higher pay is a proven standard across the board for unionized employees, the value exceeds basic finances.

"We negotiate a contract and include things like making sure you have time with your family, or things like meal penalties. Meal penalties aren't there to make more money, they're there to make sure you get a lunch," Ocasio said. "A lot of the time it isn't about money. Sometimes it's just the sense that [employees] are respected in the workplace, that they can't get pushed around."

Eduardo Nunez, a communications electrician for the City of Los Angeles, has been a member of IBEW 45 for more than nine years, a union member in general for 22 years and has a very positive attitude toward the power of unionism.

"Being part of a union means you have an opportunity for a middle-class income, to provide for your family and an opportunity to advance," said Nunez.

Nunez is a first-generation American who grew up in East L.A. and looks up to labor activist Cesar Chavez, who instilled in him that improvement for this country is about the people. Nunez faced some negative attitudes toward the union when he first

got his city job around the time of the economic downturn. He rejected that negativity, got others to see the great things the union does (both inside and outside the workplace), became a steward, and today people at work are wearing IBEW t-shirts.

"It's being able to inspire others," he said. "It's changing people in a positive way."

That idea seems counterintuitive to the oft-used phrase "union thugs." When asked about this, Ocasio said, "They call us thugs because if you say something enough, people begin to believe it. It's not about thuggery and forcing companies to do anything, it's working with companies. Companies have to be profitable, otherwise we don't have jobs."

James Pearson, audio video security systems tech for the L.A. Sheriff's Department and IBEW 45 steward, echoed Ocasio's sentiments that a union is about bettering the relationship between employer and employee. And in a unionized workplace, he says his experience and the general feeling of the people around him has been a good one.

"There's also a camaraderie between employees," said Pearson. "And a peace of mind because you are being treated fairly and with respect. You're not out there by yourself."

The hope is that with the renewed push, more and more people will see the innate solidarity for themselves, and that those like Rebecca Friedrichs will happily join the family.

Benefits Beyond Bargaining

While the heart of the union advantage takes place at the bargaining table, members also have access to a number of other great benefits. AFL-CIO Union Plus is a special program that caters specifically to union members, offering savings on travel, insurance, health and more. Here are just a few exclusive offerings:

- **Cars:** 10% off tires, 25% off car rentals, roadside assistance, auto buying service.
- **Travel:** Disneyland and other theme park discounts, \$150 off on vacation tours, 48% off movie tickets, 50% off theater tickets.
- **Finances and Insurance:** Credit cards with 1.5% cash rewards, union-made checks, life and auto insurance.
- **Health:** Savings on prescriptions, dental, vision, hearing and more.
- **Other Discounts:** Flowers, gift certificates, moving, union-made clothing, mortgages and wireless services.

Find more discounts and all the details at unionplus.org.

Bullet Dodged: Friedrichs v. California Teachers Association

What: The *Friedrichs v. California Teachers Association* lawsuit that eventually made its way to the U.S. Supreme Court claimed that it was unconstitutional for unions to collect fees from non-union employees, commonly known as "fee payers." If the plaintiff had won, it would have upset a nearly 40-year-old precedent set by the *Abood v. Detroit Board of Education* case.

On Scalia: It was widely believed that the Supreme Court would rule 5-4 in favor of the plaintiff. However, the passing of Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia on Feb. 13, 2016, tipped the scales in favor of unions.

The Vote: A 4-4 tie from the remaining justices meant that a lower court ruling rejecting the challenge would stand. For unions, the tie was a victory.

The Future: This is not the end of the challenges from anti-union groups. Similar cases are in the pipeline, signaling that unions will have to redouble their efforts to remain fortified.

The Middle Class Needs Unions

As inequality grows, unions are more important than ever in helping boost workers' wages and benefits, as well as ensuring their access to basic workplace protections.

