



THE DISPATCHER

"AN INJURY TO ONE IS AN INJURY TO ALL"

OFFICIAL NEWSPAPER OF THE INTERNATIONAL LONGSHORE & WAREHOUSE UNION

www.ilwu.org

Vol. 83, No. 9 • October 2025

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2026 Secretary-Treasurers Conference [page 8](#)



The 2025 Young Workers Conference in Vancouver, B.C. emphasized strategic organizing, understanding current fights in the context of past struggles, the ILWU's values and traditions, and a commitment to fighting for the rights of all workers.

United in Struggle: 2025 Young Workers Conference prepares next generation of ILWU leaders

More than 150 delegates and guests gathered at the Maritime Labour Centre in Vancouver, B.C., from September 10 to 12, for the sixth ILWU Young Workers Conference, which aimed to empower workers, foster leadership, and strengthen solidarity within the union.

The three-day event emphasized the importance of active participation, strategic organizing, understanding current fights in the context of past struggles, the ILWU's values and traditions, and a commitment to fighting for the rights of all workers.

ILWU Canada's Second Vice President, Dan Kask, welcomed everyone and encouraged the delegates to make the most of the three-day event.

"You're going to get out of this what you put into this; put in the

effort. This room is filled with people who have attended this conference and are now in every level of leadership within the ILWU. This is the beginning of leadership, activism, and organizing training within the ILWU," Kask said.

Throughout the three days, delegates heard from ILWU leaders, young activists, organizers, labor historians and economists, and key labor leaders from British Columbia and across the globe.

Welcome blessing

The conference was officially opened with a traditional welcome by Sam George, Sr. and his son, Sam George, Jr. Sam George, Sr. is a respected elder of the Squamish Nation, an original descendant of the Bow and Arrow Gang, and the eldest grandson of Chief Dan George and Amy George. He was a member of Local 500 for 43 years and has been retired for 19 years.

They performed a traditional blessing to officially open the conference, marking the start of the day with a prayer to the Creator, Mother Earth, and ancestors, asking for protection and love for everyone in the territory. Sam George, Jr. explained that their opening ritual is to 'open a door' for ancestors to join the gathering, providing guidance and support.

International Indigenous solidarity

The welcome was followed by Local 500 member Joulene Parent and Local 333 member Christina Verde. They discussed Indigenous solidarity and highlighted the connection between the labor movement and Indigenous rights. Verde explained how Indigenous people laid the groundwork for the values that the ILWU fights for: fairness, dignity, and collective strength.

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Embers of hope: Lahaina's fight to rebuild two years later

This article first appeared in the Local 142's Voice of the ILWU.

It's been two years since wind and fire mixed to set Lahaina ablaze. The devastation was swift and widespread — entire neighborhoods reduced to ash, hundreds displaced, and a beloved historic town forever changed. But in the months and years since, something else has taken root: the long, uneven, but determined path toward healing and rebuilding.

To mark this solemn anniversary, The Voice spoke with two ILWU members impacted by the fire, each offering a personal view of what "recovery" looks like. What we heard were stories of strength, neighborly care, and steady progress, alongside frustration, exhaustion, and the ongoing challenges that remain. For many, the fire exposed structural cracks that were already there: an overheated housing market, long permitting delays, and systemic barriers to rebuilding local lives. And yet, within the loss, many found new sources of solidarity and hope.

One of those members is Stephanie Smythe, a lifelong Lahaina resident, graduate of Lahainaluna, and now a Maui Division Business Agent. At the time of the fire, she was Unit Chair at Royal Lahaina. She also lost her home that day.

"I lost everything," she shared. In the months that followed, Stephanie lived out of a room at the Royal Lahaina, balancing her union responsibilities while navigating her own displacement. Today, she calls Ka La'i Ola home — a state-funded temporary housing community that opened its doors one year after the fire and now houses roughly 1,500 fire survivors.

Finding peace one year later

Nestled just mauka of Hawaiian Homes, Ka La'i Ola was designed for stability and peace — and for many like Stephanie, it's working. "I'm beyond pleased with the state for this housing," she told The Voice. "I'm so happy and have gratitude for Governor Green for providing these units. Just this morning, we got a letter from the Governor letting us know that the waiver on rent and utilities is being extended until February 2026."

Stephanie's unit is a 296-square-foot one-bedroom laid out in a cluster with a dozen others — a neighborhood, with planter boxes, picnic tables, and communal grills. "It's a good feeling," she said, "considering you lost everything and were scattered — and then came together at Ka La'i Ola. You're in a neighborhood again."

That sense of community is no small thing. "The little things we used to take for granted, they're huge now," she reflected. "Being able to say to your neighbor, 'Hey, I just went to Costco, I don't have room in my icebox — you got space?' That's mental health. Maybe even physical health."

Her permanent home is still under construction. "It's going, but it's slow," she said. Stephanie is among the many who are rebuilding one step at a time, with support from family, union siblings, and neighbors who may not be from the same neighborhood, "but I know all of them. They're solid members of the community."

The road for Stephanie has been rough. But progress toward peace and stability has been consistent. Not all survivors of the fires, however, have shared such a road. Owen Kahahane, Unit Chair at the Hyatt Regency, Kapalua, has had a rocky road to say the least, in his life after the fires.

The Struggle of the System

Owen Kahahane, Unit Chair for Unit 2516, the Hyatt Regency Maui, lost the home he shared with his extended family. Seven people lived in the house—his mother, siblings, their children—but because only his mother's name was on the title, each family member had to file separately with FEMA as renters.

Owen lived at the Hyatt for six months following the fire. While grateful for the hotel's shelter and meal program—three meals a day—he noted that it wasn't always the healthiest, and it was no substitute for having a stable home. He technically owned a five-bedroom home in West Maui, but it was occupied by tenants paying \$2,100 a month—well below market. "I thought about moving in," he said, "but that would've meant evicting my tenants in the middle of a housing crisis. I couldn't do that in good conscience."



Stephanie Smythe, Local 142 Maui Division Business Agent, who worked at the Royal Lahaina during the 2023 fires, in the kitchen of her temporary home in the Ka La'i Ola complex, built by the state of Hawai'i.

Instead, he and his wife were offered temporary housing in Ha'ik', a long drive from Lahaina on the other side of the island. The home had no air conditioning, and the summer heat was unbearable. When Owen purchased a portable AC unit, the homeowners' association objected. What followed was four months of frustrating back-and-forth between FEMA, the HOA, and contractors just to get an AC installed. "We finally got it done, but it wore us out," he said.

By February, they had left Ha'ik' altogether. "The FEMA system just became too stressful. "There's a psychological side to it that people don't talk about," Owen shared. After opting out of the FEMA program, he and his wife moved to a rental in Wailuku, where they now make the long daily commute to Lahaina for work.

The experience left him deeply critical of how housing support was handled. "The federal government agreeing to pay whatever landlords asked—that was a huge mistake. Short-term rental owners and landlords saw an opportunity, not a crisis," he said. Owen later discovered that his landlord in Ha'ik' had been charging FEMA \$5,100 a month for their rundown two-bedroom unit.

Still, he keeps fighting. "This is why I fight for Bill 9," Kahahane said. "We have to do something about the housing crisis on Maui. If we don't, nothing's going to change for working people like us."

Bill 9 is a Maui County proposal that would limit short-term rentals in apartment-zoned areas—housing that was originally intended for local residents. Advocates like Kahahane

say the bill is a crucial step to bring long-term housing back into the hands of working families.

In July, after months of organizing and testimony from unions, housing advocates, and fire survivors, the Maui County Council passed Bill 9 on first reading. The final vote is expected in August. For workers like Owen, it's more than policy—it's about protecting the future of life on Maui for everyday people.

Two years after the fires, the recovery in Lahaina is far from over. On a drive through Lahaina today, one sees multiple government mini-home complexes up on the hill where a large number of survivors live. The debris is mostly cleared out and the new frames of one or two houses per block are beginning to stand up.

For some, the current phase has meant finding new forms of community in unexpected places. For others, it has meant confronting the harsh realities of a broken system—one that too often puts profits over people. But across every story, one thing is clear: the people, including ILWU members, are not finished fighting for their future.

Whether it's organizing around legislation like Bill 9, caring for displaced neighbors, or simply showing up every day to rebuild their lives, members are proving that real recovery is collective. The path forward may be uneven, but it's being shaped by the people who call Lahaina home—who lived the disaster, who stood by one another, and who continue to fight not just to recover what was lost, but to build something stronger in its place.

— Ilima Long

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The *Dispatcher* (ISSN 0012-3765) is published monthly except for a combined July/Aug issue, for \$5.00 a year and \$10.00 a year for non-members by the ILWU, 1188 Franklin St., San Francisco, CA 94109. Periodical postage paid at San Francisco, CA. The *Dispatcher* welcomes letters, photos and other submissions to the above address © ILWU, 2012. Postmaster: Send address changes to The *Dispatcher*, 1188 Franklin St., San Francisco, CA 94109-6800.

Inside the beltway: What’s happening on Capitol Hill

Washington is in another high-stakes staring contest – and this one could reshape everything from our healthcare plans to the future of work. For much of the year, Congress has been negotiating and fumbling the Fiscal Year 2026 budget. The country has been in a government shutdown since October 1, 2025 (at the time of print), which is rattling agencies, delaying port projects, and threatening healthcare costs for millions of working Americans – including many covered under ILWU health plans.

“For ILWU members, the concern is clear: reliable health coverage and steady investment in infrastructure are critical to keeping our workplaces safe, our ports competitive, and our communities protected.”

Shutdown showdown: The long game

The shutdown stems from stalled negotiations over federal spending and the fate of key healthcare subsidies under the Affordable Care Act. Democrats are demanding a renewal of the ACA’s premium subsidies, which expire at the end of this year. According to the Kaiser Family Foundation,

without them, marketplace premiums for subsidized enrollees would more than double (to an average of \$1,016, or 114%) next year, and that pressure would undoubtedly spill over into union-negotiated plans. Employers could use those higher benchmarks to push up cost-sharing, leading to higher out-of-pocket expenses for working families.

Other parts of the federal government are feeling pressure. Agencies responsible for port infrastructure, the Coast Guard, and worker-training grants are operating with limited staff. If the shutdown continues, backlogs and project delays could extend well into next year.

Healthcare, Medicaid, and fiscal battles

Much of the budget debate focuses on how to balance health spending with deficit reduction. Some proposals, including those bundled in the “One Big Beautiful Bill Act,” would drastically cut Medicaid funding and reduce climate and infrastructure investments previously approved by Congress. Democrats warn that these cuts would

hit working families the hardest. As previously reported, cuts to Medicare are not off the table for early 2026.

For ILWU members, the concern is clear: reliable health coverage and steady investment in infrastructure are critical to keeping our workplaces safe, our ports competitive, and our communities protected.

Some legislation ILWU is tracking

Even amid fiscal fights, several bills important to the ILWU are moving forward:

- **FY26 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA):** Includes provisions on domestic shipbuilding, supply-chain security, and workforce development that could benefit U.S. ports. Given the current landscape on Capitol Hill, we’re closely reviewing every bill for technology provisions that could unintentionally – or intentionally – harm workers.

- **Coast Guard Authorization Act:** The legislation passed the House earlier this year with bipartisan support and is awaiting Senate action (most likely to be included within FY26 NDAA). The bill would strengthen safety programs, modernize the fleet, and improve oversight of vessel operations.

- **SHIPS for America Act:** Sponsored by Senators Mark Kelly and Todd Young, this comprehensive maritime package would create a dedicated Maritime Security Trust Fund to support shipbuilding, expand the U.S.-flag fleet, and invest in training and apprenticeships. It also includes language discouraging the use of fully automated cargo-handling equipment

built in China — aligning with ILWU’s long-standing safety and job security concerns.

- **Job Corps –** Although the current administration has advocated for the complete elimination of one of the most successful workforce development programs in government, Congress continues to negotiate funding for Job Corps. Job Corps is a long-established program under the Department of Labor that provides an essential pipeline for young Americans to receive tuition-free education and career technical training. The results for graduates are monumental and provide a pathway to family-sustaining jobs, particularly for individuals who are not on the traditional college track. Current Senate proposals for FY26 maintain program funding levels, while House proposals slash funding by nearly half.

AI, automation, and the future of work

Artificial intelligence and automation are advancing rapidly across nearly every industry, from logistics and manufacturing to hospitality and academia. Recent figures project as many as 12 million job transitions by 2030, with many workers being displaced or completely replaced.

International President Bobby Olvera, Jr. recently submitted testimony to the Senate HELP Committee emphasizing that “human oversight is not optional — it’s indispensable.” His remarks reminded lawmakers that skilled workers are essential to keeping ports secure, especially given cybersecurity risks linked to automated equipment.

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Local 94 member Priscilla Appell helps save a life during ILWU Women’s Conference

On September 29, the last day of the ILWU Women’s Conference at the Hyatt Regency in Maui, HI, Local 94 member Priscilla Appell was having lunch when she received a panicked call from her partner saying that someone had drowned in the hotel pool.

She was at a restaurant next to the pool area, and although she wasn’t sure if the person was alive, she headed over immediately.

“Before I became a longshore worker, I was a lifeguard,” Appell explained. “I started junior guards when I was 13 years old, which led to my first job being a pool guard.”

Appell added that it’s a running joke in San Diego that she has the longest safety speeches on the Coast that include how to properly toss a lifering to someone in the water.

When she arrived at the scene, two people were already assisting. The man had been pulled out of the water, and hotel security had retrieved an AED (Automated External Defibrillator). The other two helpers also had first-aid training—one was a former lifeguard and the other was a retired military medic.

We had to start CPR. It’s more effective when you rotate, and everybody has a job. We were all

very familiar and comfortable with what we needed to do, without much communication,” she said.

Appell aid the incident showed how important it is to have an AED available close by

“We had to shock him [with the AED] at some point. I’ve trained with practice AEDs, but you don’t really get to see the machine in full action,” Appell said. “It’s almost foolproof. It guides you through everything; it tells you to stand clear if it’s going to deliver a shock. It even indicates if the paddles aren’t placed correctly and if your chest compressions are correct.”

They eventually got a pulse. Shortly after, paramedics arrived and took over.

Appell credited her lifeguard training, her focus on safety as a foreman on the docks, and the empowerment she received from the Women’s Conference for her quick reaction.

“The situation was something that I’ve trained for since I was 13 years old. For it to have happened on a weekend that I’m in Maui, for a conference that has been very empowering for me, just seemed like God’s timing, honestly,” said Appell.

“My response was second nature. Safety has always been the premise of every facet of my life. You see somebody in distress, you just give assistance.”

After the incident, Appell said she was in shock and couldn’t even remember her room number when she gave a statement to paramedics and police. The emotional support from her union sisters at the conference was crucial after the incident.

“I had my group of union sisters right there hugging me and helping me decompress. It’s a whole different level of bond that I have with them now because of that emotional turbulence that I went through,” she said.

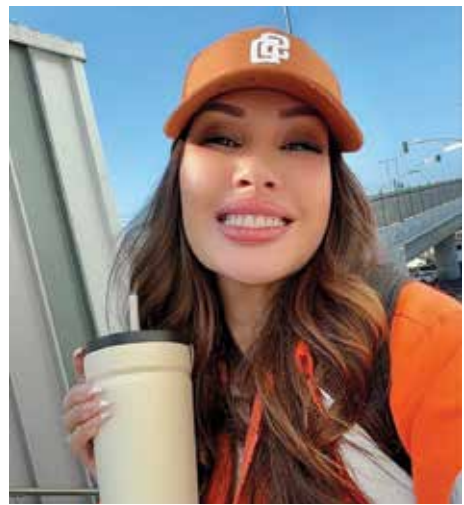
Appell said that the family of the person she helped contacted her afterward to thank her, and that the doctors told them he probably wouldn’t have survived without Appell’s and others’ help.

Kekoa Mowat, head of security at the Hyatt Regency Maui, also thanked Appell for her heroic actions.

“I am incredibly grateful that Priscilla Appell was there and ready to respond,” Mowat said in an interview with the *Dispatcher*.

“Priscilla did not hesitate to leave her seat and assist. Her knowledge, quick thinking, and selfless willingness to help someone in need made all the difference.

“Thanks to Priscilla and the others who stepped in to assist, what could have ended in tragedy instead became a story with a happy ending. Her



Local 94’s Priscilla Appell’s quick action helped save a life during the 2025 Women’s Conference.

swift action and teamwork are truly commendable, and I want to express my deepest gratitude for their courage and compassion.”

Appell has continued to stay in contact with the individual’s family, and they messaged her to say he is expected to make a full recovery.

“The confidence I gained from the conference and the leadership skills I’ve developed throughout my career played a huge role in getting to the scene and trusting myself,” Appell said. “As a foreman, it’s my responsibility to ensure everyone is safe and to render aid if needed. I believe all of those components really came into full display that day.”

United in Struggle: 2025 Young Workers Conference prepares next generation of ILWU leaders

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ILWU Canada Pres. Rob Ashton

ILWU Canada President Rob Ashton spoke on the conference theme, "United and Struggle." He emphasized the important lessons of organizing, overcoming internal divisions, fostering constructive dialogue with those you disagree with, and the collective action of the working class against the ruling class.

"You'll learn how to debate and discuss issues, without bringing people down but lifting them up, so their voices are also heard, even if they're of an opposing opinion," Ashton said.

He ended his speech with a call to action, urging delegates to become unifiers who can organize the working class to fight "the only war worth fighting" — the fight for the working class.

"The employing class and the ruling class like to divide and separate," Ashton said. "It is your responsibility as organizers to bring people together and to find the common thread that binds everyone. The only division that should ever matter is working class versus ruling class."

Crisis, inflation, and profits

Union economist Jim Stanford from the labor think tank, the Centre for Future Work, debunked the misconception that workers' wages were the cause of the post-pandemic inflation surge.

"The storyline that we got from our central bank that looks after interest rates and oversees the banking system was that the reason inflation took off was because workers had too much money to spend," Stanford said. "They said high prices resulted from too much spending power. Where does worker spending power come from? It comes from wages."

Stanford compared data on employer profits, labor costs, and inflation rates to demonstrate that it was employer profit, not labor costs, that directly correlated with rising inflation. "There's no correlation at all between wages and the rise and the fall of inflation," he said. "You can't explain what happened by talking about workers' wages."

He concluded that deliberate price increases by corporations — especially in key sectors such as global shipping, energy, and food — rather than rising wages, drove the post-pandemic surge in inflation. He explained that companies took advantage of the crisis to raise prices to increase their profits.

Lessons from the 1912 Vancouver Free Speech Fight

Mark Leier, a history professor at Simon Fraser University, explained how social movements can build solidarity. He said solidarity is a practice that must be intentionally developed across political and organizational differences.

"Solidarity is not a point that you reach. It's a discipline, a habit, that has to be consciously built, rebuilt, and refigured to reflect changing conditions and needs," Leier said.

He examined the 1912 Vancouver Free Speech fight by the I.W.W. to illustrate how combining the complementary tactics of direct action, legal defense, political pressure, and inclusive self-organization can help labor movements achieve victory against repression.

The session included a small group exercise that emphasized the importance of understanding historical divisions and coordinating diverse roles of helpers, advocates, organizers, and rebels to strengthen collective power.

Pensioner perspective

A panel of ILWU Canada pensioners provided an important perspective on ILWU history. The group included Ron Noullet, Herb Howe, and Peter Lahay. The panel discussed the importance of learning from past struggles, building community leadership, and addressing systemic inequities. Each reflected on their biggest struggles and the lessons they learned from them, and their experiences of rank-and-file power in the workplace.

Unions and worker power

Local 23's Zack Pattin led a session that included both large and small group discussions, focusing on the adversarial relationship between workers and employers, and exploring the sources of workers' power and how



ILWU Canada Organizer Genevieve Lorenzo co-facilitated the "Beating Apathy" workshop with Local 23's Zack Pattin. The workshop emphasized that everyone cares about something, and it's the organizer's job to ask the right questions and identify the issues that matter to people.

they can exercise it. Pattin concluded with a history of the ILWU in the 1930s and 1940s. He highlighted the importance of coast-wise unity during the 1934 West Coast Strike and the significance of the "March Inland" — the successful effort to organize thousands of warehouse workers between 1934 and 1938 that was aimed at preventing strikebreaking and expanding the sites of struggle.

The first day concluded with a brief address by Jason Woods, President of Local 400, the Marine Division of ILWU Canada. Woods spoke about the importance of educational programs, such as the Young Workers Conference and LEAD, as successful pipelines for leadership development. He noted that two vice presidents for Local 400 have come out of the Young Workers program. Woods also spoke about the successful organizing efforts in Local 400, which have doubled the local's membership in recent years.

Focus on organizing

Day two was filled with educational workshops focused on internal and external organizing. Delegates heard from several speakers, including ILWU International Secretary-Treasurer Ed Ferris, ILWU Canada First Vice President Tom Doran, ILWU Canada Third Vice President Jessica Isbister, and B.C. Federation of Labour's President Sussanne Skidmore and Secretary-Treasurer Hermender Singh Kailley.

ILWU Canada First Vice President Tom Doran opened the second day.

His address highlighted key moments of struggle for Canadian dockworkers, starting with the Battle of Ballantyne, when striking longshore workers were attacked by police in Vancouver, British Columbia, on June 18, 1935.

He then placed the current labor struggle in the context of the decades-long attacks on union rights and workers' rights that began in 1973. "Employers and the capitalist class have sought to undo decades of victories by the working class" through the application of free market fundamentalism that "ushered in a half-century assault on trade unions," Doran said. This has resulted in the weakening of unions and the "rise of the billionaire class across the globe and the impoverishment of the vast majority of the people in the world."

He urged delegates to recognize the importance of solidarity and understand that workers are the producers of all wealth. He also cautioned delegates to think critically about the information they are consuming.

Young workers speak

Doran was followed by a panel discussion from the outgoing Young Workers Committee, who spoke on their experiences over the past two years. They encouraged delegates to stay engaged in their locals and to actively pursue educational opportunities.

Local 23's Brian Skiffington, Local 19's DJ Marin, and Local 10's Beau Logo facilitated a group discussion on practical tips on starting and sustaining

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More than 150 delegates and guests attended this year's Young Workers Conference. ILWU Canada Second Vice President Dan Kask said that the bi-annual conference has become a full-fledged movement in the union, cultivating leaders who are now integrated into all levels of the ILWU leadership

a Young Workers' Committee. The three shared their experiences starting one in their own locals and discussed the successes and obstacles they had to navigate, including the need to challenge local union cultures that discouraged participation by younger workers. Skiffington emphasized the importance of ensuring young workers have a voice and a path to participate early in their careers, before they develop habits of not participating in union activities due to years of exclusion.

B.C. Federation of Labour

B.C. Federation of Labour President Sussanne Skidmore and Secretary-Treasurer Hermender Singh Kailley recognized the young worker delegates for already being leaders vital to the strength of the labor movement.

“I’m proud to be here with all of you, because this room is filled with power. Not power that will show up ten years from now. Not power that’s on its way. You’re not just the future of the labor movement; you are the movement. This event isn’t just a young workers’ conference; it’s a war room for the working-class,” Kailley said.

Skidmore added, “This movement is only as strong as the people who step up. The fact that you’re here means that you saw a chance to lead and you took it. And that’s really where the change starts. I’m here because one day I showed up. I kept showing up and doing the work. And the most powerful thing any of us can do is raise our hand and then inspire others to do the same. Because a strong union is one where every member has a voice.”

Beating Apathy

Local 23’s Zack Pattin and ILWU Canada Organizer Genevieve Lorenzo led an interactive workshop that challenged the notion that apathy is the primary obstacle to organizing a workplace.

“If you are looking at the problems in your union and you are going on the assumption that people don’t care about anything, then you have already lost. You can’t organize yourself or your union out of that situation,” Pattin said.

The fundamental lesson of the workshop was that apathy isn’t real. Everybody cares about something, and it’s the organizer’s job to ask the right questions and identify the issues that matter to people.

Spotlight on safety

ILWU Canada’s Third Vice President and Safety Chair, Jessica Isbister, spoke on the important topic of workplace safety. She shared a critical incident more than 20 years ago from her own career, where a co-worker suffered a life-changing injury in a ship’s hold. She emphasized that workers in Canada have the right to refuse dangerous work and the importance of workers knowing, practicing, and being prepared to exercise that right, despite pressures from their employer. She said that safety awareness and rehearsing refusal are essential to act decisively when unsafe working conditions arise.

Empathy & hope

ILWU International Secretary-Treasurer Ed Ferris addressed the delegates, stating that leadership is rooted in humility, service, and active

listening. Ferris said that effective leaders should embrace discomfort, avoid ego, and maintain empathy and hope in challenging times. “Leadership is about service. It’s not about titles,” Ferris said. He recounted his own experience as a younger worker in Local 10, where he learned an important lesson from one of his mentors, Melvin Mackay, who taught him to turn complaints into constructive action.

Supply chain organizing

ILWU International Assistant Organizing Director Jon Brier presented on supply chain organizing and harnessing the “heat”—the energy and passion among fellow workers about an issue—and identifying the “hammer”—the points of leverage and pressure to apply to decision-makers and the tactics and actions that will be used to reach an organizing goal.

The session began with a demonstration of a “human supply chain,” which highlighted the complexity and fragility of supply chains and showed how workers acting in solidarity can strategically disrupt the entire system to create leverage for workers to win their fights.

Brier’s presentation included an analysis of the recent organizing victory by Wallenius Wilhelmsen Logistics (WWL) vehicle processing workers in the Port of Tacoma. The session was followed by a panel discussion with three WWL workers who recounted their inspiring experiences of struggling to form a union and join Local 23.

Safety and solidarity

The third and final day of the conference was packed with information on organizing worker solidarity and safety in the workplace, including a talk on workplace health and safety by Brian Campbell of the BC Federation of Labour Occupational Health and Safety Centre.

Union democracy

The final day began with a solidarity message from Paul Finch, President of the British Columbia General Employees’ Union (BCGEU), which represents approximately 95,000 public and private sector workers. Finch informed delegates about the ongoing strike by BCGEU Public Sector workers, who are fighting for a fair wage increase. Approximately 15,000 of the BCGEU’s 35,000 B.C. public sector workers are participating in work actions. As the Dispatcher was going to press, the strike had been ongoing for more than six weeks, making it the longest strike by public workers in B.C. history.

Along with updating delegates on the strike’s progress, Finch highlighted the importance of unions as engines of democracy for the working class. “The number one reason unions exist is to have a democratic organization for working people,” Finch said. “We have inherited a democratic movement for working people that is not just to safeguard our wages but to allow us to come together and make collective, democratic decisions.” He emphasized that only through struggle can workers maintain worker-led democratic institutions.

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Matt Campbell
Local 333

What motivates me is the ability to keep workers united and connected. This conference has shown that we can be a voice for young people, helping them see that we can all come together and stand as one—an important achievement for a union.

I was inspired at the conference by stories of people’s struggles and the fights they had to endure to establish a union, as well as the importance of supporting different industries in unionizing. I think it’s pretty cool to have that voice and that power.

Thomas Koon
Local 75



I attended the LEAD conference, where I learned so much. I just thought that it would be important for me to continue my education. I bring all the knowledge gained from attending these conferences back to share with my local. We have a younger crowd, and I just want to bring it back to the rank and file.

I really enjoyed the pensioners panel. I learned a lot just hearing all their stories and all their struggles and realizing that we didn’t have to go through the exact same thing. It made me appreciate what they did for us to get us to where we are now.



Brittany Nelson
Local 502

There is this sense among casual long-shoremen, which is the group I’m part of—I’m certainly not a member yet—that we don’t really have a say, that we can’t effect change, and being able to attend this conference just turned that whole idea on its head for me. I realized that I was doing myself and my union a huge disservice by thinking that I just didn’t really matter, that I couldn’t do anything

until I became a member, and that I needed to wait until then before I could participate. The key takeaway from attending this conference is that everyone, regardless of their level within the union, has something valuable to contribute. We all can participate, but you have to look for those opportunities.

I had a conversation with Dan Kask and told him about the great experience I was having at the conference. He said it was great that I was enjoying it, but he reminded me that I was not just here to learn things and feel good, but that at the end of this, it’s important for me to find a way to participate in the union, and I think that’s really important.

Jeremy Hoblet
Local 52



I’m a fairly new clerk; I’ve only been in for a couple of years. I saw what the young workers at Local 19 were doing, and it made me excited about this—we are teaching future generations. I wish we had this when I first started. It’s a different culture, and it’s exciting to be part of it. It’s great to meet so many ILWU members from Canada here, and to get to know people from our union that I would never have had the opportunity to meet otherwise. We all share the same goals and take pride in our jobs and our union.

Attacks on federal unions, collective bargaining rights accelerate

Administration targets workers, collective bargaining agreements in historic attack of labor rights

The federal government's attacks on collective bargaining and federal workers intensified in the second half of 2026, with widespread layoffs and the cancellation of collective bargaining agreements by the Trump Administration. Since taking office, approximately 300,000 U.S. federal civil service layoffs have been announced; an estimated 200,000 of those federal workers have already left their jobs.

As the *Dispatcher* was going to press, the administration terminated an additional 4,000 federal workers across seven federal agencies in response to the October 1 shutdown of the federal government. Russ Vought, director of the Office of Management and Budget and one of the main architects of Project 2025, stated that more than 10,000 workers could receive layoff notices during the shutdown.

Court temporarily halts firings

On October 15, Judge Susan Illston from the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California issued a temporary restraining order blocking the firings, stating she believed the evidence would ultimately show the layoffs were illegal. A lawsuit filed by the American Federation of Government Employees and the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees alleges that the administration's plan to fire federal employees during a shutdown is an unlawful abuse of power designed to punish workers and pressure Congress. Judge Illston said she believed the layoffs were not permissible because they were "politically motivated," citing statements by President Trump that officials were targeting programs and agencies favored by Democrats.

"[T]here are laws which govern how we can do the things we do. Including laws which govern how we do [reductions in force]," Illston said, "And the activities being undertaken here are contrary to the laws."

A preliminary injunction hearing, where the Court will consider extending the protections of the TRO while the case proceeds to a final judgment, is scheduled to take place on October 28.

AFSCME President Lee Saunders celebrated the victory, saying, Federal workers have already faced enough uncertainty from the administration's relentless attacks on the important jobs they do to keep us safe and healthy. They deserve respect for the work they do – not to be treated as political pawns by the billionaires running this administration who see workers as expendable."

ILWU solidarity

ILWU International President Bobby Olvera, Jr. sent letters of solidarity on October 13 to the presidents of the six unions – AFSCME, AFGE, IFPTE, NAGE, NFFE, and NTEU – who represent workers targeted for mass firings during the government shutdown.

"Regardless of who is at fault for the ongoing shutdown, I believe that using it as an excuse to punish hardworking civil servants – many of whom are still working without pay – is an affront to our democratic values that must be uniformly condemned by the American labor movement. There can be no rationale for threatening to fire and laying off thousands of Americans who have devoted their lives to serving and protecting the public, more than a third of whom are veterans," the letter stated. "We stand ready to raise our voices in protest along with millions of other trade union members across the country. You are not alone in this fight."

AFSCME President Lee Saunders



Editorial cartoon from the October 1981 issue of the *Dispatcher* depicting Ronald Reagan shooting a striking PATCO worker.

responded with a letter to Olvera stating, "The shutdown, mass firings, and threats not to pay the very people who keep our nation running only underscores the administration's contempt for working families. These attacks have not diminished our resolve. As you know, we have taken our fight to wherever the voices of working families need to be heard. When we win, it is because we have allies like ILWU standing shoulder to shoulder with us."

Historic act of union busting

The Thursday before Labor Day, the Trump Administration unilaterally canceled collective bargaining contracts with the unions representing scientists, engineers, and other staff at NASA, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (which includes the National Weather Service), the Patent Office, and the International Trade Administration. This follows the cancellation of union contracts for 400,000 workers at the Department of Veterans Affairs, as well as those at the Department of Health and Human Services and other agencies.

Since taking office, Trump has stripped the collective bargaining rights of 1 million federal workers—about one-fifteenth of all American workers covered by a union contract. This marks the largest union-busting action in U.S. history, far exceeding that of Ronald Reagan, who fired 11,000 air traffic controllers represented by the Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization (PATCO) in 1981.

As labor reporter Steven Greenhouse noted in a recent article in the *Guardian*, the government's attack on collective bargaining rights sends a signal to private sector employers that it is open season on unions.

"Donald Trump's aggressive wave of anti-union actions is already spurring some US employers to take a more hostile stance toward unions, as labor leaders voice fears that the president's moves will embolden more and more companies to fight harder against unions and slow their recent progress," Greenhouse wrote.

ILWU rebukes Newsom for veto of SB 34

On October 13, California Governor Gavin Newsom vetoed legislation aimed at protecting jobs at the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach. Senate Bill 34 (SB 34) was introduced by State Senator Laura Richardson and received bipartisan support in the legislature.

SB 34 prohibited the use of public funds for automated or remotely controlled infrastructure at the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach while allowing public funds to purchase human-operated, zero-emission equipment. The bill aimed to find a fair balance between protecting jobs, the environment, and the state's economy.

Following the veto, ILWU International President Bobby Olvera, Jr. sent a letter to Gov. Newsom expressing the ILWU's "profound disappointment" in

the governor's failure to support port workers.

"To the ILWU, your decision represents a deliberate choice to turn your back on the thousands of workers who form the backbone of California's ports and who have depended on your leadership to safeguard their livelihoods," Olvera wrote.

"SB 34 had broad, bipartisan support and offered a balanced approach to addressing emissions while safeguarding the good-paying union jobs that keep our ports and economy strong. By rejecting this legislation, your administration has betrayed the working families who have supported your vision for shared prosperity and opportunity."

He went on to add, "The ILWU has always been committed to environmental progress, but we believe that such progress cannot come at the expense

of working people. California's port workers have consistently adapted to new technologies and higher environmental standards, often leading the nation in doing so. But your veto sends a clear message that corporate interests and foreign shipping conglomerates carry more weight than those of American workers and their families."

Local 13 President Gary Herrera, Local 63 President Danny Vilicich, and Local 94 President Danny Miranda also sent a joint letter to the governor, sharply criticizing Newsom for his "profound betrayal."

SB 34 was a balanced approach to advancing environmental progress while simultaneously safeguarding the economy and good middle-class union jobs. It would have ensured that innovation and attaining environmental goals did not come at the expense of the working class," the letter read.

"The veto undermines the ILWU, and all workers grappling with the realities of increasing automation. Based on your decision to not fight against the implementation of additional job-displacing technology, the fight against job displacement must be led by workers themselves."

Scan to read the full letter from Pres. Olvera



Scan to read the full tri-party letter



United in Struggle: 2025 Young Workers Conference prepares next generation of ILWU leaders

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Finch was followed by a session led by the East Van Workers Assembly, focusing on understanding how solidarity can be a powerful tool for the labor movement and exploring ways to better organize and express it.

“Every worker deserves a union”

Columbia River Lead Organizer Ryan Takas discussed the importance of organizing workplaces that have not traditionally been the targets of union campaigns, such as retail, preschool teachers, and restaurants. “Every worker deserves a union,” Takas emphasized.

To illustrate the effectiveness of this approach, Takas used the example of Local 5, which was born from an organizing campaign by workers in a non-traditional sector 25 years ago – bookstore workers at Powell’s in Portland. Local 5 continues to organize workers in non-traditional sectors such as preschool teachers, pet care workers, and nonprofit workers. They are now one of the fastest-growing locals in the ILWU.

The final panel discussion, titled “Organizing New Territories,” focused on tailoring organizing strategies to diverse sectors. Panelists included Sam Connolly, from CUPE Local 2278, which represents academic workers; Felix Trudeau, a former Amazon worker and president of the Laval Amazon Workers Union; Reagan, one of the founding leaders of Equity Strippers NOHO, and Eddy Pedreira, President of the Canadian Animation Guild-IATSE Local 938.

Global solidarity

A panel on international solidarity featured International Transport Workers Federation (ITF) delegates, including Luis de Lima, ITF Regional Coordinator for Latin America and the Caribbean; Colombian docker Oliver Orobio Diaz; Miracle-Ann King from the Barbados Workers Union and ITF Youth Committee Representative; Brazilian docker Laiara Martins; Dannan Edwards O’Neill from the Maritime Union of Australia; and ITF Western Canada Inspector Nathan Smith. Panelists discussed ITF campaigns to secure the rights of dock workers and protect seafarers worldwide.

New Young Workers Committee

This year, the Young Workers Committee for the next two years was selected by caucuses held on the final afternoon. The Young Workers Committee from 2025-2027 will be:

- Local 333 - Matt Campbell
- Local 400 - Marcus Shepert
- Local 500 - Gary Bains
- Local 500 - Sanja Radulovich
- Local 502 - Caitlyn Hoolsema
- Local 502 - Trevor Honey
- Local 505 - Kieran Payne
- Local 508 - Ryan Lavallee
- Local 514 - Justin Rovtar
- Local 517 - Katie Lofto
- Local 522 - Adrian Chan
- Local 523 - Charles Ryan
- Local 56, International Rep - Alexxa Esparza



Young workers' delegates gained valuable insights from ILWU Canada pensioners Ron Noullet, Herb Howe, and Peter Lahay on the importance of learning from past struggles, building community leadership, and addressing systemic inequities.

Young workers’ movement

At the end of the conference, Dan Kask reflected on the growing support and activism of young workers in the ILWU and its importance for the long-term vitality of the union.

“This year’s conference was really successful,” said Dan Kask. “Over the past 12 years, the Young Workers initiative has transformed from a conference to a full-fledged movement, cultivating leaders who are now integrated into all levels of the ILWU leadership across the states and Canada. These leaders view the Young Workers Conference as their foundational starting point.”

Scan for to see the photos from the 2025 Young Workers Conference



Local 13’s ‘Give Pack’ program supports kids in need

700 backpacks and school supplies were distributed to harbor-area youth

On August 2, Local 13 collaborated with the Toberman Neighborhood Center in San Pedro, CA, to distribute backpacks and school supplies to children in need. Local 13 has partnered with the Toberman Neighborhood Center for the past three years to ensure this summer event benefits children in the Los Angeles Harbor Area. Toberman has served San Pedro and the LA Harbor Area since 1937. Today, they focus on gang prevention and intervention, food distribution, counseling, and other support services for the area's youth.

The “Give Pack Program” was started by Local 13 member Jacob Connelly as a way for Local 13 to serve the community and advocate for those living around the Port of Los Angeles. “This program is what love looks like. Love for community, organization, and self,” Connelly said.

Local 13 supplied the backpacks and school supplies from donations from members, pensioners, the ILWU Credit Union, and Local 94. Last year, Local 13 packed over 600 backpacks with school supplies with the help of union volunteers.

This year, they supplied more than 700 backpacks for the giveaway. Volunteer Jaime Hipsher said, “Reaching out to our surrounding communities through programs like the ‘Give Pack’ event allows the ILWU to show gratitude for what our union has provided us by providing support to the families in our area who aren’t as fortunate. Efforts like this are how we give back and keep our communities strong.”

Unfortunately, due to the Immigration and Customs Enforcement raids in the harbor area, turnout from the children was much lower this year. Toberman planned to deliver backpacks to any family that couldn’t attend to ensure children stayed on track for a successful school year.

Class A and Class B longshore workers and their families volunteered



Volunteers in the “Give Pack” program helped support harbor-area schoolchildren for the new academic year.

to organize and stuff the hundreds of backpacks at the Local 13 office. On the day of the event, a small group of Local 13 volunteers helped children choose their own backpacks. Although it was a more reserved event this year due to the

raids, many children still walked out smiling, carrying a backpack featuring their favorite cartoon character.

– Peter Dever, Local 13

LETTERS TO THE *DISPATCHER*

Dear Editor,

This past week I had the opportunity to attend the ILWU Canada Young Workers Conference in Vancouver, BC. It was an amazing experience to connect with longshore workers from up and down the West Coast, across Canada, and even as far as Australia and Colombia. Hearing everyone’s stories, sharing our own, and learning about the struggles and victories of dockworkers around the world reminded me what our union is all about which is solidarity, unity, and fighting for the working class.

I’m grateful I was chosen to represent and bring back the knowledge, energy, and inspiration from this conference. It showed me that no matter where we come from, we all share the same goal, to protect what those before us fought for, and to continue building a stronger future for the next generation of workers.

As a fourth-generation longshoreman, I was proud to share the insights and stories passed down to me from my grandparents and family who worked the docks before me. It was a reminder that what we carry forward today is built on the sacrifices and lessons of those who came before us.

Thank you to Local 13 and ILWU Canada for giving me this incredible opportunity! The network I’ve built up and down the West Coast is a group of people I know I’ll be connected with for the rest of my life.

Building Solidarity across borders!

Ryan Herrera 137795

Local 13

Send your letters to the editor to: *The Dispatcher*, 1188 Franklin St., San Francisco, CA 94109-6800 or email to editor@ilwu.org

Inside the beltway: What’s happening on Capitol Hill

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Earlier this year, the ILWU, with the support of many of our members, actively opposed the AI Moratorium amendment introduced by Senator Ted Cruz (TX) during budget reconciliation. This proposal would have prevented states from setting their own rules on AI and automation. ILWU worked with other stakeholders to oppose the amendment, arguing that states should maintain the authority to establish safety and labor standards suited to their industries. Through persistent outreach by ILWU locals and partner unions, the provision was ultimately removed from the final bill, thus preserving flexibility for state-level oversight and worker protections.

Looking toward the 2026 midterms

With roughly a year remaining before the next midterm elections, lawmakers are positioning them-

selves on issues that matter to working families: health care costs, infrastructure investment, and the responsible use of new technologies. ILWU’s priority will stay on practical results — ensuring fair treatment for workers adapting to technological changes, maintaining strong safety standards, and securing stable funding for worker programs.

As discussions on artificial intelligence and automation legislation continue, ILWU will advocate for federal labor-impact studies before AI deployment, union-led retraining, and national rules that keep human decision-making at the core in critical infrastructure and all industries. No matter the industry, one principle remains constant: the future of work must include workers.

– Alexa Jurczak

TRANSITIONS

NEW PENSIONERS:

Local 4: Carl J. Bong; **Local 8:** Karen R. Younge-Lugo; **Local 10:** Fabian G. Burgin; Anthony J. Creggett; John T. Fuller; Archibald D. Nelson; Shaheed M. Salaam; Gail D. Trevors; Vickie D. Tucker; Emily P. Turnbull; **Local 12:** Kenneth L. Daugherty; Larry B. Daugherty; **Local 13:** Gary D. Butler; Craig A. Campbell; Leopoldo Cano; Herman L. Dagdagan; Michael D. Englehart; Felipe J. Garzon; Prentice L. Hill; Dennis B. Howe; Bobby J. King; Susan M King; Bryce J. Lazzaro; Don A. Llanderal; Sandra L. Magana; Manuel L. Mares; Raymond C. Martinez; Michelle Mejia; Gerardo J. Pena; Tim J. Raciak; Carlos E. Ramirez; Jose Richards, Jr.; Ida M. Saenz; Gregory C. Smith; Nancy L. Suess; Gregory T. Thomas; Bruce L. Wolfe; **Local 19:** Jon T. Perry; Cornelious C. Culcleasure; John G. Griffin; Cary A. Head; Perry A. Keeley; Rodney Liverman; Kurt C. Von Carnop; **Local 21:** Jennifer E. Geisler; Richard A. Vance; **Local 23:** Brian M. Allen; Scott M. Anderson; Arthur Chambers, Jr.; Patricia K. Mathes; Troy F. Miller; Douglas A. Nelson; Petr P. Yakovlev; **Local 34:** Derek A. Hollis; **Local 52:** Celso Tolman; **Local 63:** James M. Allen; Bryan L. Bark; Richard S. Cowart; Regina M. Gonzales; Sidra L. Haney; Sharon Hernandez; Cheryl A. La Pinta Allred; Edith F. Leomiti; Deborah L. Luz-Bond; Marvadell S. Malone; Greg S. Peyton; Lilia R. Ponce; Virginia J. Saldana; Lance M. Stewart; **Local 63 OCU:** Peter Huynh; **Local 91:** Enrique Roman; **Local 94:** Mitchel Wurzer; Thomas Garcia; Daniel B. Gasperov; **Local 98:** Arnold W. Williams;

DECEASED PENSIONERS:
Local 8: Patrick G. Grierson; **Local 10:** Carlos D. Austin; Levaile Harbin; Jose C. Pinguelo; Raymond E. Steptoe; **Local 13:** Robert E.

Brown; Jimmy D. Curtis; Robert E. Honsberger; Fred Hudson; Jose C. Huerta; Roy D. Mora, Sr.; Antonio J. Salazar; Leroy B. Sanchez; Wendell R. Stafford; **Local 19:** Michael J. Callanan; Ronald S. MacIennon; **Local 21:** Lynn Hadlock; Vernon Jacobson; **Local 23:** Robert P. Moran; **Local 24:** Robert E. Brueher; **Local 34:** Paul L. Wolfson; **Local 40:** Jerald V. Bitz; **Local 52:** Michael A. Angelo; William D. Crawford; **Local 63:** Burton A. Lucich; Wesley S. Brickner; Rhonda P. Erving; Dennis D. Regan; Allen C. Widner; **Local 75:** Elizabeth V. Susim; **Local 91:** Brian R. Mc Donald; **Local 94:** Phillip J. Bergstrom; John T. Hanamaikai; Mark A. Milosevich; Terrance L. Samudio; **Local 98:** Philip M. Lelli, Jr.; Joel E. Woock;

DECEASED ACTIVE MEMBERS:
Local 13: Albert A. Brown; Frank Fernandez III; Gerald A. Pangelinan; **Local 19:** Jed N. Holm;

DECEASED SURVIVORS:
Local 8: Louise M. Arthur; **Local 10:** Blanche P. Williams-Evans; Jan E. Shull-Crum; Shirley White; **Local 12:** Helen L. Erickson; **Local 13:** Marie C. Dominguez; Betty C. Hernandez; Joanne Nelson; Gladys Rooks; Adelita Tejeda; **Local 14:** Beverly Moorehead; **Local 19:** Sharon K. Carlson; Sandra L. Fredriksen; Rosie L. Hubbard; Loree Maeso; **Local 21:** Sharon L. Larson; **Local 23:** Catherine A. Perrin; **Local 24:** Joyce M. Hayes; **Local 29:** Modesta Esquivel; **Local 34:** Donna A. Gentile; **Local 40:** Karen L. Sherman; **Local 50:** Frances Stefanowicz; **Local 52:** Sharon L. Gjerset; **Local 63:** Rosemary B. Gonzalez; **Local 92:** Eva J. Nemyre; Margaret E. Booth; Blanche V. Sandberg; **Local 94:** Myra Orozco; Violet J. Moretti; **Local 98:** Geraldine Smith;

A Helping Hand...

...when you need it most. That’s what we’re all about. We are the representatives of the ILWU-sponsored recovery programs. We provide professional and confidential assistance to you and your family for alcoholism, drug abuse and other problems—and we’re just a phone call away.

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ILWU to Hold Secretary-Treasurers Conference in February 2026

The ILWU will host its Secretary-Treasurers Conference from February 15–19, 2026, in Portland, Oregon. This five-day event is designed for local union financial officers and will cover key topics such as union financial administration, election rules, and recordkeeping. The goal is to ensure compliance with federal regulations and internal union procedures.

Instruction will be provided by ILWU attorneys, union staff, and both International and local officers.

Each U.S. local and affiliate is invited to send two participants:

- The secretary-treasurer (or other officer responsible for finances and recordkeeping)
- The office manager or staff member who maintains financial and administrative records

Depending on available space, a limited number of trustees may also be allowed to attend.

Attendance is limited to individuals officially nominated by their local or affiliate.



An official announcement has been sent to all locals. Participants can register online at: <https://www.ilwu.org/2026-ilwu-secretary-treasurers-conference/>
Registration deadline: Friday, December 19, 2025