



# THE DISPATCHER



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The 2025 Women's Conference brought more than 150 ILWU members to celebrate the contributions of women, develop skills, and build pathways to leadership.

## ILWU Women's Conference celebrates trailblazers and paths towards leadership

More than 150 delegates and guests attended the Third Annual ILWU Women's Conference in Maui from September 27-29. The conference brought together women from across the ILWU's divisions to learn, build leadership skills, promote camaraderie, recognize the critical contributions women leaders have made to the ILWU, and discuss ways to create more pathways for women in leadership within the union.

Delegates also heard from women leaders inside and outside the ILWU, who shared insights into their own leadership journeys. In addition to delegates from the ILWU, there were five women from the International Longshoremen's Association from

ports on the East Coast and the Gulf of Mexico.

The conference was the result of a resolution passed unanimously at the 2021 ILWU International Convention. A committee of members from across the union worked with ILWU Education Director Robin Walker to plan the event.

**Warm Aloha**

The conference started with a brief evening program and a welcome from the ILWU's Titled Officers: President Bobby Olvera, Jr., Vice President (Hawai'i) Brandon Wolff, Secretary-Treasurer Ed Ferris, and Local 142 Officers: President Chris West, Secretary-Treasurer Michael Victorino, Jr., Eddie Hayashi, Hawaii Longshore Vision Vice Director, and Stephen West, Maui Division Director.

Secretary-Treasurer Ferris opened the conference and introduced Local 142 President Chris West.

West began with a moment of silence to honor the seven members of Local 142 Maui Division who lost their lives on August 8, 2023, during the devastating Maui wildfires. West also recognized the remarkable grit and determination of the 2700 ILWU members working in West Maui who continue to be affected by the fires.

West highlighted the important contributions women leaders have made to Local 142 and the entire ILWU. "When women lead, they lift all of us," West said. "This conference is our chance to carry forward that torch, to honor the sacrifices of those who came before us, and to recommit ourselves to building a future where fairness, opportunity, and equality are not the exception, but the rule."

President Olvera emphasized the Titled Officers' commitment to inclusion, empowering members,

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# ILWU-PCPA 56th Annual Convention meets in San Francisco

The ILWU-Pacific Coast Pensioners (PCPA) held their annual convention in September at the Westin Hotel in San Francisco. The event featured distinguished speakers, scenic outings, and perfect weather. The convention began at Local 10's hall on Sunday night. A Local 10 member prepared a delicious barbecue feast for everyone, and ILWU retiree John Fisher and his band performed as delegates and guests enjoyed a tasty meal.

On Monday, the convention heard from ILWU International President Emeritus Willie Adams, who welcomed all delegates and guests to San Francisco. Adams discussed his recent retirement and delivered an inspiring speech about the vital role pensioners play in the ILWU.

They also heard from Local 10 member and Oakland Port Commissioner Derrick Muhammad. He stressed the importance of having a voice not only on harbor commissions but also on our city councils. Delegates and guests enjoyed a fantastic harbor cruise of San Francisco and Oakland aboard a Red & White Fleet vessel operated by IBU members. The evening concluded with a reception hosted by the ILWU Credit Union, which was quite a spread, with food, drinks, and lots of camaraderie and stories swapped by old friends.

Tuesday was a full day of work. The morning speaker was Max Vekich, an ILWU retiree from Local 52 in Seattle, now serving on the Federal Maritime Commission. Vekich shared updates on developments in Washington, D.C., including outcomes of recently passed legislation regarding U.S. shipping and the administration's

efforts to build more American ships manned by American crews.

Next, delegates heard from ILWU Coast Benefit Specialist John Castanho, along with all the ILWU Area Welfare directors and the Benefit Plan staff, who shared important information about our plan's billing issues and chiropractic benefits. On the pension front, it was reported that the Longshore Division pension plan is doing very well.

After lunch, delegates heard from ILWU International President Bobby Olvera, Jr. President Olvera spoke about his mom, an ILWU widow collecting an ILWU pension, and the direction the ILWU is headed. The International Executive Board has been structured to be more active, with different committees set up to tackle current union challenges.

Tuesday night was the banquet, featuring a beautiful dinner and dancing to John Fisher's band. The convention paid tribute to past ILWU-PCPA Vice President Lawrence Thibeaux, a former President of Local 10 and an icon within the ILWU, who passed away unexpectedly while planning the convention. On Wednesday, Greg Mitre swore in the new officers of the PCPA, along with the Executive Board and all elected representatives.

"I want to thank the two remaining officers from Southern California, Yolanda Nuhi, recording secretary, and Chris Gordon, Treasurer, for their tireless work with me over the past 10 years. I also want to congratulate our new PCPA President, John Miken from Portland, Oregon, and our new PCPA Vice President, Rodney Rhymes from Tacoma, Washington. Additionally, I thank everyone who attended the convention; we had a great turnout of ILWU retirees from Canada, Alaska, Washington, Oregon, and California," Mitre said.

Next year, the PCPA Convention will be held in Seattle, WA.

— Greg Mitre



Josie Thibeaux, widow of Lawrence Thibeaux, submitted the text of her speech she had written for the PCPA convention, but was unable to attend the convention to deliver it in person. She submitted it to the Dispatcher for publication.

## Speech by Josie Thibeaux on the Occasion of Receiving a Posthumous Award in Honor of Lawrence J. Thibeaux, at the ILWU International Convention - San Francisco, CA, September 2025

I thank the ILWU Fraternity for the profound honor bestowed upon Lawrence, and for the kindness and support extended to me.

If I was my husband's first family, the ILWU was undeniably his second. We met in Nairobi, Kenya, in 1977 during an ILWU delegation visit, and a year later, we married, embarking on over 47 wonderful years together.

Lawrence was immensely proud to be associated with the ILWU because of what it stood for and what it had achieved for workers. Lawrence spoke with reverence about how the Union fundamentally transformed access to longshore jobs by creating the hiring hall system, which centralized dispatch, prioritized seniority, and eliminated favoritism. Through collective bargaining, the union established high standards and secured superior benefits, making longshore work more accessible to a stable workforce and less susceptible to outside influence. This was, to him, the righteous path.

Because of that, Lawrence was profoundly committed to the Union. From the moment he joined Local 10 as a 'B Member' in 1967, he dedicated 58 years of service to this organization. In fact, on June 3rd of this year, the very day he passed, he was preparing to go to work to help organize this Convention.

Lawrence understood that the integrity of the system the ILWU established, particularly the hiring hall, was paramount to the Union's survival. Without such integrity, he believed, as with everything else, human hearts are easily corrupted. He often spoke to me about the constant threats to the hiring hall's fairness by those seeking to unfairly advance themselves in accessing jobs, emphasizing that strict adherence to proper procedures was the only way the Union could endure and thrive.

Lawrence held a profound love for travel, fascinated by diverse cultures and, especially, the unique relationships that many rural communities shared with nature.

One interesting fact you may not know about Lawrence is that he was also an avid collector of knives, from large to small, exotic to modern. Perhaps this interest stemmed from his perpetual preparedness for potential dangers. While not obsessive, he was remarkably more prepared for disasters than the average person. Within our home, he kept several survival tools readily accessible: flashlights, home remedies for common ailments, power backups, knives, canned food, walkie-talkies, and even a wired telephone that is now a spam callers' playground.

Above all, Lawrence was my everything. We shared a deep, personal connection. Very often, there was no one without the other. As long as he was with me, I felt the whole world was with me.

After his passing, for the first time, I experienced a profound sense of loneliness and abandonment.

Lawrence was a humble and self-effacing man, never one to seek or relish the spotlight. Perhaps it is just as well that I am receiving the award on his behalf.

Thank you very much.

— Josie Thibeaux

ILWU President Emeritus Willie Adams welcomes the ILWU-PCPA Convention delegates to San Francisco. From left to right: President Emeritus Willie Adams, PCPA Recording Secretary Yolanda Nuhi, Southern California Pensioners President Greg Mitre, and PCPA Treasurer Chris Gordon.

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# People over Profit: Global anti-automation conference brings together maritime, transport workers for historic conference

Hundreds of dockworkers, seafarers, and transportation workers from over 60 countries gathered in Lisbon, Portugal, on November 5-6 for the “People over Profit: Anti-Automation Conference.” The meeting was organized by the International Longshoremen’s Association (ILA) and the International Dockworkers Council (IDC) to build a global alliance to oppose port automation that threatens jobs and communities.

The ILWU delegation, led by ILWU International Vice President (Hawaii) Brandon Wolff and International Secretary-Treasurer Ed Ferris, included members from the Alaska Longshore Division, ILWU Canada, the Hawaii Longshore Division, Locals 10, 13, 23, 40, 63, and the Pacific Coast Pensioners Association.

The conference opened with a welcome from José Monteiro, President of SEAL, the Portuguese longshore workers union.

ILA President Harold Daggett delivered the opening address at the conference, stressing an unwavering commitment to the fight against automation.

“We’re not just fighting for jobs, we’re fighting for our dignity, our community, and our future. We’ve always been the backbone of maritime commerce. We’ve always been the first

to show up and the last to leave. And we’ll be the last one standing when this fight is over,” Daggett said.

“We will never surrender. We will prevail. We will do it for the people who depend on us. We will win for our ancestors. And we will show this world a force like they’ve never seen before.”

Daggett was followed by Secretary-Treasurer Ed Ferris, who discussed the extensive negative impacts of automation and Artificial Intelligence on workers and communities, including the loss of millions of jobs. Ferris noted that according to a Goldman Sachs estimate, up to 50 percent of jobs could be automated by 2045.

“These statistics should motivate all of the working class into readiness and action,” he said. “We must resist. We cannot sit and watch good jobs be eliminated for profit and corporate greed. We must fight for ourselves and for future generations by standing up and speaking truth to power. This is all about greed; it’s not about efficiency, terminal throughput, or increasing worker safety. It’s an absolute farce.”

Dennis Daggett, speaking in his dual roles as Executive Vice President of the ILA and General Coordinator of IDC, echoed the sentiment that automation was not about efficiency but about eliminating jobs. “Let’s be clear —this isn’t about moving cargo faster,” Daggett said. “It’s about moving us out of the picture. It’s about cutting labor to pad profits. It’s about eliminating people, not improving performance.”



The ILWU delegation included members from the Alaska Longshore Division, ILWU Canada, the Hawaii Longshore Division, Locals 10, 13, 23, 40, 63, and the Pacific Coast Pensioners Association.

“This time, we call it what it is: a corporate strategy to erase working-class jobs and spin it under a feel-good word like modernization,” continued Daggett. “But we know exactly what it is - job-killing technology, plain and simple.”

Local 13 President Gary Herrera delivered the morning address on the second day of the conference, warning that automation threatens the existence of dockworker unions. He argued that employers mainly use technology to eliminate bargaining power, not to increase efficiency.

Herrera also pointed out that in the ports of Los Angeles and Long

Beach, 54 percent of Local 13’s members live within five miles of the ports, illustrating the community-wide stakes of job-eliminating automation. He emphasized that no tax dollars should fund automation that benefits corporate profits at the expense of jobs. Herrera also called for the creation of “worker impact” reports similar to environmental reports produced for construction projects.

“They have environmental impact reports, but they don’t have one for workers, because they don’t care how many jobs are lost. We need everybody to understand how many jobs are lost

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## White House tries to resurrect defeated ban on state AI regulation

The White House and congressional Republicans are trying to revive efforts to block state and local governments from regulating Artificial Intelligence. This summer, the ILWU and other labor unions successfully lobbied Senators to remove a similar provision from the GOP’s One Big Beautiful Bill Act, which would have prevented states from enacting common-sense laws to protect workers and the public from the potential harms caused by AI.

### Reviving ban on AI regulation

As the *Dispatcher* was going to press, multiple news outlets reported that the White House is drafting an Executive Order instructing the Justice Department to establish an “AI Litigation Task Force” to sue states that implement AI regulations. Additionally, President Trump posted on social media endorsing a proposal to attach a moratorium on state AI laws to the annual National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA).

### Growing public concern

There is increasing public concern about AI’s negative impacts, according to a recent Pew Research Center poll. Most people surveyed said they want more control over AI. The technology faces little oversight or regulation as it quickly and broadly expands into our daily lives, including social media, healthcare, workplaces, government, and corporate surveillance. Its potential harms include job losses, higher electricity prices due to the energy use of data centers running AI software, and the spread of fake videos on social media, which raises concerns about its use to spread misinformation and propaganda.

### Strong opposition

On November 19, ILWU International President Bobby Olvera, Jr. sent a letter to the two Chairmen and two ranking members of the House Armed Services Committee, expressing ILWU’s strong opposition to any effort to include an “AI moratorium” in the final Fiscal Year 2026 NDAA.

President Olvera’s letter read, in part: “Over the summer, Congress rightly rejected an AI moratorium

proposal in H.R.1, One Big Beautiful Bill Act, via the Senate reconciliation process after widespread, bipartisan concerns about its sweeping impact on workers, state authority, and the responsible state governance of emerging technologies. That provision looked to place a ‘temporary pause’ on any laws or regulations related to AI/Automation for ten years. The version now reportedly under consideration in the NDAA conference negotiations is no less dangerous – and no less of a federal overreach.

“A decade-long ban – or even a short-term one – on state regulation of AI and automation would tie the hands of governments at the very moment when AI is rapidly transforming jobs not just at ports, but in warehouses, hospitals, hotels, creative industries, transportation, and public-sector workplaces across the country. Stripping states of the ability to enact basic guardrails would leave millions of workers exposed to unregulated deployment of technologies that directly affect safety, job security, and civil rights.

“There is no national security justification for wedging this policy

into the NDAA, particularly in the final days of conference. Rushing a sweeping federal preemption provision into a must-pass bill at the eleventh hour is simply not sound policymaking. Attempting to move a provision of this magnitude under severe time pressure – and outside any transparent debate – only underscores how misguided and unjustifiable it is.

“Beyond that, it would trample state authority, sideline the workers who are living with the consequences of AI and automation deployment every day, and unravel the broad bipartisan understanding that this moratorium has no place in must-pass legislation.

“Given the accelerated timeline, I urge you to swiftly and decisively reject any attempt to insert an AI moratorium into the final conference agreement. Congress should not revive a proposal that has already been rejected 99-1 across party lines – especially one that compromises worker protections in every state.”

### Read President Olvera’s full letter





# ILWU Women’s Conference celebrates trailblazers and paths towards leadership

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and making sure the union's direction reflects the collective voice of its members through a democratic and transparent process.

Olvera shared his personal experiences of exclusion and resilience to highlight the importance of mutual support and encouraged delegates to be bold in envisioning the union’s future.

“We have to look at things differently and act on things differently,” Olvera said. “Let’s talk about the things in the past that were not right. Let’s talk about the things happening now that are not right. Let’s talk about the things we want to see in the future to make things right. Be brave and be bold. I can guarantee you that the International officers have your back.”

**Lt. Governor Sylvia Luke**

ILWU International Vice President (Hawaii) Brandon Wolff introduced the first speaker on the conference’s first full day, Hawaii Lt. Governor Sylvia Luke.

In his introduction, Vice President Wolff spoke about how strong women influenced his development as a union leader, sharing how he followed in the footsteps of his mother, a labor leader in UNITE-HERE Local 5.

“I watched my mom serve the rank and file. That’s where I get it from,” Wolff said. “I’m here today because my mom instilled that work ethic and those values in me.”

He described Lt. Gov. Luke as a “barrier breaker” and “changemaker” who influenced how he approaches legislative politics after he first met her during the COVID crisis.

Luke discussed the ongoing fight for women’s rights and labor rights, highlighting that they should not be taken for granted. She shared how recent many of these rights are by telling a story about receiving a \$500 scholarship from the Rotary Club in 1985 to help cover her first semester at the University of Hawaii. In her speech thanking them, she expressed her wish to someday become a member of the Rotary Club, unaware that women were not allowed to join. It wasn’t until 1987 that the Supreme Court ruled

that the Rotary Club would have to admit women.

“That was only 40 years ago. When I reflect on my life and how far we have come, I know for a fact how hard it was to win equal rights, how hard it was to have a place at the table, and that we must continue to hold dear and continue to fight for today.”

**Trailblazers**

A panel of pioneering ILWU women leaders was facilitated by Local 63’s Patricia Aguirre-Brown. It featured Local 63 pensioner Pat Miretti, the first woman to serve as a supercargo; Vannetta Hamlin from Local 10, the first woman elected Vice President of Local 10; Local 40 pensioner Dawn DesBrisay, the first woman to serve on the Coast Longshore Division’s Legislative Committee and past President of Local 40; and IBU pensioner Terri Mast, a longtime Secretary-Treasurer of the IBU and the first woman elected to a national leadership position in an ILWU affiliate.

The panelists discussed breaking barriers, solidarity, sisterhood, saying “yes” to opportunities, building coalitions and community, political engagement, and resilience, and the importance of education and mentorship.

**House Speaker Nadine Nakamura**

Speaker of the Hawaii House of Representatives, Nadine Nakamura, spoke to the delegates about her political career and leadership journey. In 2024, Speaker Nakamura became the first woman to serve as House Speaker in Hawaii and is the only Asian American in the U.S. to hold that position.

Nakamura acknowledged the groundwork laid by women activists over the past century that paved the way for her to become Speaker.

“Two key events had to happen before the first woman legislator was elected in Hawaii. First, in 1920, the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution that granted women the right to vote,” she said. “Then, two years later, in 1922, the Hawaii Organic Act had to be amended to remove the requirement that only males could be candidates for House and Senate seats.



*The women’s conference allowed members an opportunity to build networks and camaraderie across regions, divisions, and industries.*

Nakamura highlighted the pioneering work of Rosalie Keli’inoi, who became the first woman elected to the Hawaii Territorial Legislature in 1925.

She concluded with some advice for emerging women leaders, encouraging delegates to roll up their sleeves and do the hard work that “sometimes men only talk about, and to do it with aloha and respect.”

“Find the good in everyone. Be a good listener. Surround yourself with people with different approaches, not just clones of yourself. Take care of yourself so you can help others around you and your family.”

**Spotlight on organizing**

A panel on organizing, facilitated by ILWU Canada Organizer Genevieve Lorenzo with Local 5’s Myka Dubay, Local 63 OCU Vice President Dawn Feikema, and Local 142’s Neeve McGrath, discussed the lessons they learned from organizing victories and setbacks.

They emphasized that successful external organizing — bringing new members into the union — relies on strong internal organizing that builds unity and participation among current members. They shared practical ways to foster unity through intentional internal organizing and by promoting inclusive leadership that reflects the diversity of the membership.

Dubay explained how Local 5 negotiates contracts that include language addressing the needs of marginalized groups, such as bargaining for reproductive healthcare coverage and gender-affirming care. They also discussed Local 5’s community-building efforts, including regularly organizing social events that bring union members together.

Feikema explained how 63 OCU gradually built a strong contract over the years and how it serves as an external organizing tool—drawing interest from non-union shops that approach them about forming a union after seeing the pay and benefits Local 63 OCU members have won through their contracts.

McGrath discussed the campaign to organize restaurant workers at her hotel, her reasons for wanting a union, and the employer’s response. They hired an expensive union-busting firm that managed to divide workers by promising younger employees benefits if they voted against the union. Workers lost the union vote by 5 votes.

**Finding Your Voice**

Local 52 President Kesa Sten conducted a workshop on participating in union meetings, providing practical advice and encouragement to help members feel more comfortable speaking, along with a brief session on parliamentary procedure.



*More than 150 delegates and guests attended this third biennial Women’s Conference on the island of Maui*



Sten emphasized that becoming comfortable speaking requires practice and repetition, and even seasoned leaders can feel nervous. She highlighted that women's emotional intelligence can be an asset in leading meetings effectively and maintaining order.

"Your voice, your opinions, your input matter. At union meetings, on the job, in the hiring hall—I'm referring to a microphone, but also the broader idea of amplifying your voices and speaking confidently," Sten stated.

#### Women Make History

The day ended with a screening of the documentary *Ah Quon McElrath: The Struggle Never Ends*, followed by a discussion with the filmmakers, Victoria Kneubuhl and Joy Chong Stannard.

The film chronicles the life and legacy of the legendary ILWU leader and social activist, a powerful voice for the working class who dedicated her life to fighting for racial equality and justice. In 1946, Ah Quon volunteered to support ILWU members during the 1946 sugar strike, and in 1954, she was hired by Local 142 to provide social services to union members, a position she held until her retirement in 1981. Ah Quon was made an honorary member of the ILWU at the 2003 convention.

**"Justine Hansen explained that she ran for Vice President after being inspired at the 2023 Women's Conference by Local 54's Stephanie Flores' story about becoming the first woman vice president of her local. Her experience shows how hearing from women leaders can build confidence and inspire action."**

#### 'Be more than a bystander'

ILWU Canada Third Vice President Jessica Isbister and Local 502's Monica Appelt led a workshop on preventing workplace bullying and harassment. The session was based on ILWU Canada Longshore Division's *Be More Than a Bystander* program, which aims to create a respectful, safe, and supportive union workplace by addressing harassment, bullying, and violence through practical bystander interventions.

Isbister and Appelt emphasized that violence and harassment exist on a continuum where "small" disrespect normalizes and enables more serious harm; workplaces that overlook these issues become less safe and less productive. Addressing workplace violence requires teamwork and shared responsibility among workers, the union, and the employer, they said.

The workshop emphasized that bystander intervention is not about being a hero. They provided a range of practical, safe, non-verbal, and verbal strategies to de-escalate conflicts and support victims of harassment.

Appelt discussed how intimate partner violence is a workplace concern, noting that in the United States, 13,000 acts of violence are

committed by intimate partners against women in the workplace each year.

#### Self-care and Women's Health

The morning session concluded with two panels: one focusing on self-care with Area Welfare Directors Robin Leake and Andrea Stevenson; and ADRP Representatives Tamiko Love and Hunny Powell; and a second panel on women's health led by Nobriga-Petrichko from Kaiser Permanente.

The self-care panelists discussed the importance of estate planning and proactive preparation for major life challenges, actively managing mental and emotional health, and understanding and overcoming burnout. The panel emphasized that attending to your emotional, mental, and physical health is not an indulgence but essential to protect loved ones and sustain individuals in demanding leadership roles.

The women's healthcare session provided practical tips and resources to improve "healthspan"—not just lifespan through small, realistic changes and consistent self-care. The recommendations included appropriate health screenings, lifestyle foundations such as adequate sleep, physical activity, stress management, and nutrition.

#### Passing it forward

The final workshop, "Mentorship and Passing it Forward," featured Local 13 Vice President Brandi Good, Local 8 Vice President Justine Hansen, Local 40 Vice President Kathleen Harrison, Local 142 Business Agent Corin Keku, and was moderated by Terri Mast.

This session highlighted the journeys of women leaders, emphasizing that overcoming systemic barriers—such as limited representation and workplace hostility—requires proactive efforts to seek guidance and uplift others. Mentors help women understand union rules and processes, provide support, help them overcome barriers, and build a safer, more inclusive environment for the next generation of women. Visible women leaders inspire others and demonstrate that advancement is achievable.

Brandi Good distinguished between mentors—who guide and motivate—and sponsors—who advocate for you when you're not in the room and said she learned that leadership is about responsibility to members, not just titles.

Justine Hansen explained that she ran for Vice President after being inspired at the 2023 Women's



**Local 63's Patricia Aguirre-Brown (standing at the podium) facilitated a panel of trailblazing ILWU women (seated from left to right): Local 40 pensioner Dawn DesBrisay, Local 10's Vannetta Hamlin, Retired IBU Secretary-Treasurer Terri Mast, and Local 63 pensioner Pat Miretti.**

Conference by Local 54's Stephanie Flores' story about becoming the first woman vice president of her local. Although Hansen didn't win her first election, a letter she had written to herself as part of the Women's Conference motivated her to run again—and this time she won.

Her experience shows how hearing from women leaders can build confidence and inspire action.

"You don't always remember what people say to you, but you always remember how they made you feel, and Steph Flores made me feel like I could step up," Hansen said.

Kathleen Harrison drew inspiration from pioneering ILWU women, including Peggy Maher, Martha Hendricks, and Dawn Debrisay. Harrison advised women to be persistent, start running early, and not be discouraged by losses, because winning allows you to make a real difference.

Corin Keku said she faced hostility when she first ran for office, but refused to be deterred. She learned that no one should block your vision for making a difference. As a leader, Keku said she actively mentors women, telling them, "I'm training you to be my replacement," empowering them and ensuring the union grows with strong female leaders.

Following the panel, participants were encouraged to write letters to their future selves and to carry the conference's inspiration into concrete action in union leadership, inclusion, and advocacy. The letters were then collected and will be mailed to the participants in a year.

#### Sheroics

A key theme of the conference was the importance of women's leadership to the ILWU's strength. As reported in last month's *Dispatcher*, that was evident during the conference when Local 94 member Priscilla Appelt used her quick thinking and extensive first aid skills to help save a person's life after a drowning incident at the hotel pool.

#### Closing

Pres. Olvera and Sec-Treas Ferris concluded the conference by thanking the delegates and expressing hope that they would continue their leadership journeys upon returning to their locals.

"Our union is better when we have strong women leaders," Ferris said. "Get out of your comfort zone. Put yourself into leadership because our union needs you."

Olvera encouraged the delegates to return to their locals and begin the work necessary to uplift the union and overcome division. He advised them to begin introducing resolutions early in their locals, rather than waiting three months until the next ILWU Convention. He also emphasized the importance of increasing the number of women in leadership roles at both the international and local levels to better reflect the membership of the ILWU.

#### Conference reflections

Local 19's Chelsea Reissler expressed her gratitude to her local for giving her the opportunity to attend and spoke about discussed key takeaways from the conference. "Women have consistently been the backbone of the labor movement and the ILWU. From organizing soup kitchens during strike times to leaders like Ah Quon McElrath, who dedicated her life to educating ILWU members and advocating for all workers' rights, women have made significant contributions to our union," Reissler said.

"One of the key takeaways from the conference was the importance of tenacity and perseverance. We must be willing to endure setbacks and maintain focus on our goals. We must continue to rise and lift our sisters and brothers along the way to protect our union.

"I want to extend my heartfelt appreciation to Local 52 President Kesa Sten. Her exceptional workshop, 'Finding Your Voice,' was one of my favorite sessions of the weekend. I am incredibly proud of my sister after working together for 20 years in the industry."

Local 142's Doris Kalawaia, "The conference was very inspiring. I also have a leadership background. I'm a chef de partie at our hotel. I've met a lot of amazing women here and learned about what they have accomplished over the years and the challenges they've faced in some male-dominated industries. It was definitely empowering to see them continue to do what they do. They really can't count us out."



# 'First of many': Crystal Cruz, first woman president of Local 29, reflects on her journey to leadership



**C**rystal Cruz became the first woman president of Local 29 in San Diego after being elected in July. Cruz followed her father, Richard Cruz, into the longshore industry after spending her childhood on the docks.

"I spent my life on the waterfront with my father. We would go with him

back when you could just drive right onto the dock; He would let go of a ship, and then he'd take us out to dinner afterwards." Cruz also recalled hanging out in the Local 29 hall when her father was dispatching. "I would help out, erase the boards or write the jobs—never having a clue what I was writing, and now that's become my life."

Cruz began her career in the industry in 2006, when she started working as a casual at the Port of San Diego; it took her over 10 years to be elevated to her B-book.

In her first year as a Class A member, Cruz became active in the union on the local's Balloting Committee. The next year, she ran for the Executive Board.

"What really changed everything for me was the opportunity to go to the ILWU's 2022 LEAD training," Cruz said. "When the opportunity to attend came up, my now Secretary-Treasurer, Vienno Castillo, and I raised our hands immediately. We had no idea what this journey would be like for us when we got there. At LEAD, we really saw what it was to be a part of this union. We saw the bigger picture and brought that back to our local."

"I was so amazed at how many people are part of this union," Cruz

continued, "Hearing the passion from the speakers, from the young workers, from the members in Hawaii, how dedicated everyone is to the betterment of our union, our locals, and the working waterfront. It was really exciting. It expanded the feeling of pride in being a longshoreman to being a proud ILWU member."

Cruz eventually ran for and was elected Local 29 Vice President in 2023 before running for president this year. "I am just thrilled to be in this position to take what I've learned from childhood on and continue this journey."

She said that she received support from Local 29 leaders like Anthony Soniga and women from other ILWU locals, including Local 63's Patricia Aguirre-Brown.

Cruz was motivated to run for office after then-president Ray Leyba retired. "I saw that more people needed to step up and start helping out and taking on the leadership roles of our union." Other Local 29 LEAD alumni have also emerged as new leaders in the local, including Secretary-Treasurer Vienno Castillo, Vice President Gilbert Salgado, BA Michael Thomas, and LRC representative Henry Evans.

"Going to LEAD opened our eyes. After that experience. We couldn't just come back, work our jobs, and go home. We know that we have a responsibility to protect this union. It's something we have to fight for and also make sure the next group is trained up and understands that it will be their fight."

Cruz expressed her gratitude for the opportunity to be elected the first woman president of her local, but took greater pride in the growing opportunities for women in the longshore industry and in leadership roles in the union.

"I remember being on job sites where I was the only woman there. Now, I go to jobs where there is a full gang of women, from the crane operator to the boss to all the drivers. It's an amazing feeling seeing more women entering the workforce and realizing that we can do this job; we're just as capable. I'm very proud to be the first woman president of Local 29, but I believe it's about the movement and where we're headed. As more women join the industry, more women will step into these roles. So I like to say I'm the first of many."

## People over Profit: Global anti-automation conference brings together maritime, transport workers for historic conference

*continued from page 3*

when they do a project. If jobs are lost, then that project shouldn't go through," he said.

Herrera criticized the way employers are 'greenwashing' automation by using the language of environmental justice to eliminate jobs. He highlighted Local 13's efforts to counter this by partnering with environmental groups to create a zero-emission terminal in the Port of Long Beach, which will use human-operated zero-emission equipment.

"We need to start educating and organizing ourselves to protect the working class. We deserve it. We make the world a better place. Labor makes

our communities strong. They don't. We do," Herrera concluded.

Dane Jones, a member of Local 40 and chair of the Coast Longshore Division Clerks Technology Committee, participated in a panel discussion moderated by Sergo Sousa from the Portuguese Dockers Union, SEAL. The panel included leaders from dockworker and other maritime unions.

Jones emphasized that automation is not a single event but a process involving multiple technological systems implemented over time. He highlighted the importance of solidarity in fighting against automation: "We will either all hang together or we will hang separately. We need to have friends in

the city. We need to have friends on other docks in other countries. We need to have friends at the national level. We need to have friends all around the world. We cannot have too many friends in this. Because people with money don't like us. They don't like us, we don't care."

### Lisbon statement

The conference passed a resolution: 'Protecting Jobs, Communities, and Collective Bargaining Against Job-Killing Automation,' which was signed by representatives from the ILA and IDC.

The resolution stated that ports should be modern, green, and efficient, but technology must not come at the expense of jobs. The statement called on port authorities worldwide to "craft a formula for integrating dockworkers into their technological investments."

The resolution opposed automation that results in job losses, economic uncertainty, or violates collective agreements or workers' rights. It reaffirmed collective bargaining as the main tool for managing technological change at ports. The statement also emphasized that technology should serve workers and communities, not oppose them.

The document concluded with a pledge to unite efforts against any attempt to impose automated or semi-automated terminals without prior union approval.

Gary Herrera said the conference was a hopeful rallying point for maritime workers, uniting workers' voices to defend their rights and jobs against automation.

"The first 'People Over Profit Anti-Automation Conference' stands as a beacon of hope and a testament to our collective strength. At this crucial conference, we are witnessing an unprecedented movement where the voices of workers resonate powerfully in defense of our rights and livelihoods," Herrera said. "Together, we are not merely resisting change; we are advocating for a future that prioritizes people over profit. Our unity is our strength. As we navigate the complexities of an evolving labor landscape, I am optimistic that our collective efforts will pave the way for a better future for all workers in the world."

The conference marked a first step toward building a global alliance so that opposition to automation is not fragmented into local resistance but instead forms a coordinated international strategy, said Jordi Aragunde, IDC International Labor Coordinator. "If the employers' strategy is global, ours must be too. Wherever there is a port, there will be an organized union, and wherever a worker is threatened, there will be international solidarity," he stressed.



Local 13 President Gary Herrera led conference delegates in a chant with solidarity fists raised in the air.



## In Loving Memory of Hopena Pokipala, ILWU International Rep.

**W**e are heartbroken over the passing of our brother, Hopena Pokipala. Hopena was known and loved across Hawai'i, through paddling, hula, surfing, his time at Kamehameha Schools, and most of all, through the kindness and aloha he gave so freely. Everyone who knew him remembers the same thing: he was a light, joyful, generous, and full of love for his people and his home.

Hopena was also a proud longshoreman, a member of the ILWU Local 142-Hawaii Longshore Division - Unit 4201-01 Hawaii Stevedores, Inc. He was one of the ILWU's newest and brightest organizers. Working closely with International Vice President (Hawaii)

Brandon Wolff as an International Representative, Hopena helped workers find their voice and their strength.

Though his time with us was far too short, he left a lasting impact on his union family, on the working class he championed, and on the many lives he touched. His longshore 'ohana sent him off with a tradition unique to the docks, shutting down work, gathering together, and letting the horns wail in remembrance.

We extend our deepest condolences to his "oma," his mother Heather, his wife Allie, his family, and all who were lucky enough to know him. We will carry his light forward in our work and in our lives.

We will miss you, brother.

— Ilima Long



## Local 142 welcomes newest unit: the ILWU Credit Union, Honolulu Branch

**I**LWU Local 142 is proud to welcome its newest unit: the ILWU Credit Union, Honolulu Branch.

Although the unit is small, with just three members, its significance is large, bringing into the union family an organization that has long stood side-by-side with ILWU members.

The ILWU Credit Union was founded in 1954 to serve the financial needs of ILWU members and their families.

Over the decades, it has become a trusted resource, offering affordable loans, financial services, and community support rooted in union values. Its staff have always been close partners with the Local, present at events, conferences, and gatherings to support members with financial tools. Now, with union representation of their own, they have taken the next step in fully joining the ILWU ohana.

spirit. But now, I'm really a part of it. I can stand with members not just as their credit union rep, but as their union sister. That means so much to me."

ILWU Local 142 leaders emphasized that creating the unit is about more than just numbers. It symbolizes the principle that union values — fairness, dignity, and collective strength — belong in every workplace, no matter the size. When organizations closely tied to the ILWU embrace unionization for their own staff, it reinforces the broader message that workers' rights and union power are for everyone.

As the newest unit in Local 142, they will now have the same protections and voice at work that they have long encouraged others to pursue. Their decision reflects the belief that solidarity is not only something to support from the outside but something to live from within.

**"I've spent years attending Local 142 events, helping members with their financial needs, and sharing in the union spirit. But now, I'm really a part of it. I can stand with members not just as their credit union rep, but as their union sister."**

"Even though I've always felt like part of ILWU through my work with members, becoming a union member myself feels different — in the best way," said Jackie Dun, longtime credit union representative and now ILWU member. "I've spent years attending Local 142 events, helping members with their financial needs, and sharing in the union

With this addition, Local 142 continues to grow not only in membership but in the breadth of organizations that embody the spirit of unionism in Hawai'i. The ILWU Credit Union has always been here for members. Today, its workers at the Honolulu Branch are officially members themselves.



From left to right: Local 142 President Chris West, Local 142 Organizer Ron Clough, Jackie Dunn, Destiny Teo, and Jayson Semetara celebrate the first contract for the ILWU Credit Union's Honolulu Branch.

Join your unionized union credit union!

Unlike a bank, ILWU Credit Union membership provides value, support, and personalized service for the unique needs of union workers and the Longshore community. Membership is open to anyone who is a member of ILWU Locals in California, Local 142 in

Hawaii, the ILWU Alaska Longshore Division, and Alaska locals 200 and 2201.

For more information visit:  
[ilwucu.org/membership](http://ilwucu.org/membership).

— Ilima Long



LETTERS TO THE *DISPATCHER*

Dear Editor,

Robert “Bob” Sharp, born on May 15, 1934, passed away peacefully on October 17, 2024. He became a Local 10 longshoreman in 1967, co-founded the ILWU Federal Credit Union in 1975, and retired from the waterfront in 1992. He was preceded in death by his beloved wife, Hideko, with whom he shared 55 years of marriage.

A Letter to the Editor from Don Wallace that was published in the April 2013 issue of *Dispatcher* details an important and proud time in his life as he worked to build and grow the ILWU Federal Credit Union. Mr. Wallace’s name, and the others he mentioned, were as familiar to me as my own family. And my own life, far removed from the docks, is still strongly colored by my memories: of my parents working at the credit union while I napped or played under my mother’s desk, on tip-toes giving the teller dad’s member number to collect his check then walking with him to Red’s for a Double Dog, and hour upon hour at the Hall where my vocabulary really developed. Even today, wherever I go in the world, I have a deep feeling of love, admiration, and fond memories when I see those cranes hovering over their container ships.

He led a life filled with challenges, adventures, and complexities. He was always vague when asked his profession in retirement and might have just responded with “teacher” or “writer”—glossing over career after career as he reinvented himself: Korean War veteran, long haul truck driver, longshoreman, banker, entrepreneur, political campaigner, minister.



He was a man of strong will and stronger opinions, but his presence was felt deeply by those who knew him. All who knew him will have a story to tell. Thanks for the memories.

Crystal Naomi Crosby (née Sharp), Bob’s daughter  
Fairfax, VA

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



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Let’s PACK the PAC!

“There is a weapon we can fight with.  
That is the weapon of political action.”  
-Harry Bridges



PASSWORD: ILWU

\*Disclaimer\* The ILWU PAF is a political action committee that is connected to the ILWU and is established for the benefit of political candidates and activities on a state and national level. You have the right to refuse to contribute. Any suggested amount is only a suggestion. There is no minimum contribution requirement, and you may give more or less than the suggested amount. Any contribution amount, or decision not to give, will not create a benefit or disadvantage to you. Contributions are not tax deductible. Only members of the following restricted class are allowed to make contributions: Local Union members and their families, Executive and Administrative personnel of the local union and their families; Class B workers and Pensioners and their families. The political purpose of the ILWU PAF is to make political expenditures to protect and advance the interests of ILWU members and their families.

TRANSITIONS

NEW PENSIONERS:

**Local 4:** David G. Frasier; **Local 10:** William D. Palmer; Gregory A. Payne; Arnold Zevallos; **Local 13:** Mariano G. Alcalá; Bill L. Beckman; Charles S. Butler, Jr.; Ruben N. Campos; John D. Eicholtz; Amador C. Huizar; Charlotte R. Lowe; Denis A. Mardesich; Lucy N. May; Arthur B Ragudo; Pete B. Robberstad; Larry J. Rysewyk; Mark E. Williams; **Local 18:** Clifton D. Emmens; **Local 19:** Robert M. Freedman; Wayne G. Little; Michael J. Nichols; **Local 23:** Cory D. Bourn; Edward W. Larson; Nicholas C. Sawyer; **Local 24:** David A. Heiny; **Local 29:** Gilbert M. Noriega; **Local 34:** Joe A. Thomas; **Local 52:** Steven M. Wintermute; **Local 63:** William T. Chavez-Feipel; Craig R. Jones; **Local 63 OCU:** Kent Hayes; Gregory Portnall; Aida Santana; Sandhra Vohra; **Local 75:** Russell H. Ard, Sr.; J essie D. Dunbar; **Local 91:** Chuck F. Foreman, Jr.; **Local 92:** Jeffry K. Scott; **Local 98:** Melvin E. Carlson;

DECEASED PENSIONERS:

**Local 10:** Charles D. Harlan; **Local 13:** Zoila V. Camas; Memo L. Gutierrez; Cassandra L. Hynes; Gery Javier; Bruce Krieger; Raymond C. Martinez; Pilar R. Ortega, Jr.; David D. Peterson; **Local 19:** Rodney Liverman; Stan A. Paddock; **Local 23:** William V. Mc Michael; **Local 34:** Frank A. Cresci; Anthony R. Gasperov; **Local 40:** Verl H. Green, Sr.; **Local 52:** David B. Chaddock; Charles D. Tom; **Local 63:** Marjorie L. Bellhouse; **Local 94:** Johnny L. Berg; John A. Devlahovich; Frank J. Ravalli; **Local 98:** Robert M. Welch;

DECEASED SURVIVORS:

**Local 4:** Rachel A. Forbes; **Local 8:** Patricia A. Freeman; Carla M. Renick; **Local 10:** Olga Ballardó; Merian M. Givens; **Local 13:** Cynthia Wade; **Local 19:** Marilyn S. Bowmar; Judy Brittain; **Local 21:** Constance L. Dunivan; **Local 34:** Marjorie Reynolds; **Local 40:** Rebecca Turner; **Local 52:** Bernice Velategui; **Local 63:** Iva J. Roberts; **Local 92:** Freda J. Everdell;

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