

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Retired and active members: Please write in if something in *The Sparkplug* makes you happy or mad or inspires you to action. All letters from members will be used, space permitting. They may be edited for length or grammar, but not for content. Letters may be submitted as follows:

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SPARKPLUG

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Debra Chaplan, Managing Editor

UNION PEOPLE

District 190 hires new staff to replace those ready to retire

—New Business Rep Eric Banh

Meet Eric Banh. As of July 1, he is District 190's newest Business Rep working primarily for Local 1414. He will take over many of the shops that Pedro Mendez, who is soon retiring, has served for the past 27 years. "Pedro will mentor me for the first six months, and introduce me to all of the members and managers so that I'm ready to hit the ground running when he leaves," Eric said.

A Local 1414 member for the past eight years, Eric has been working for the San Francisco Metropolitan Transit Agency as an automotive machinist. "I rebuild engines, transmissions and components for buses."

Eric started with the City in 2017 as an apprentice. "It was my first, and so far only union job. I turned out as a journeyman in 2022." Along the way, Eric went to a leadership training at the William Wimpisinger Training Center, joined the "Young Machinists" organization, came to union



Eric Banh — Business Rep

meetings, and twice served on the SFMTA union negotiating committee.

Eric, who turns 30 in August, has a seven-month old baby. Born and raised in San Francisco, he moved to San Bruno in 2024. He got his AA in business administration in community college and hopes to go back to school to complete his Bachelor's degree.

"I hope to bring some youth and continuity to the job. Many people are retiring and taking their knowledge with them. The

membership doesn't always see the behind-the-scenes work, but I think it's important. I know I have a lot to learn to master this position and best serve my fellow members."

One of Eric's top priorities is the apprenticeship program. "Right now at SFMTA, they haven't hired any apprentices. I want them to bring in more, and then get them involved with the union so they can become the next generation."

—New Organizer Will Uthman

Meet Will Uthman. As of August 1, this four-year IAM member, who has worked as a Quality Control Specialist at MGM Brake in Cloverdale, will become District 190's new full-time organizer.

"I took over as shop steward about three years ago and immediately fell in love with the solidarity, the connection, and the motivation to provide a fair day's pay for a fair day's work," Will says. "I just have a passion for this."

Will started spending time at union meetings and getting connected. "Soon, I started producing results as a shop steward, and that felt good. The district sent me to the Wimpisinger Center, where I learned about the union's history and its inner workings. All of that lit a fire under me. I have attended every meeting; I also serve as a delegate to District 190 and the North Bay Labor Council. Last year, I started attending political drives for pro-labor politicians."

Before working at MGM Brakes, Will started his career in the military and then spent 15 years as a bartender. "I love people and service." He became an educator and communicator for Local 1173 because he wants to spread the word and encourage people to get involved. "This work brings together the two sides of my world: machining and production with connecting to individuals and the group effort of working together."



Will Uthman — Organizer

Will says current Organizing Director Jesse Juarez inspires him. "He's very powerful—and is definitely a presence when he enters a room."

"I've been lucky," Will adds. "The IAM creates an incredible environment to learn and grow. It's inspiring to see what's possible through just a few people's hard work and how we can make a difference for thousands, if not millions, of people."

Will says he wants to help improve people's lives through the union. "We all deserve fair pay; we are the lifeblood of America. If every worker were treated better, we'd have a brighter future for the next generation. My goal is to leave this world in a better place for my young daughter, and I hope to achieve that through this position."

Although Will officially begins on August 1, he'll immediately head back to the Wimpisinger Center for organizer training. "I hit the pavement on August 11."

Will lives with his family in Cloverdale, about four blocks from MGM Brakes. "I walk to work now and will have a much longer commute with the new position. But I look forward to the opportunity to improve the future for workers and for my family."

Silgan rolls on

Continued from Page 1

Waid, who's been on the negotiating committee twice, says he thinks the most recent contract is more beneficial than any before. "A large majority of people here agree that it's a great contract, that's why most of us voted for it. We got a few things that we didn't have before and removed some bad things." He adds, "We did well on the insurance, and the general wage increase finally addresses inflation. The company accepted what we came up with. It was good for morale and it's

been a long time coming. We set ourselves up well for the next contact."

On a personal basis, Waid feels that the contract finally recognized the important work that the two millwrights do. "Before, our title was maintenance mechanic...which is viewed as doing simple fixes. In the last 5-6 years, I've been allowed to show what I'm capable of and I've done some major installs and repairs at this plant. I'm just happy that the company recognized that."



IN THE NEWS

The impact of the new Republican budget bill

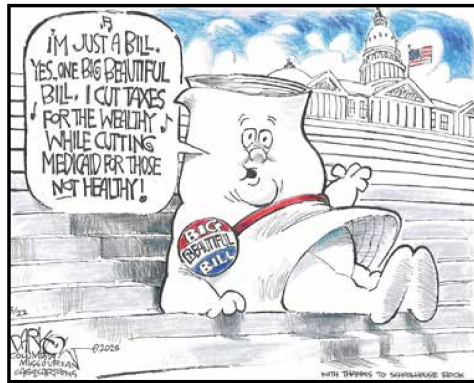
The recently passed Republican budget bill, dubbed the "One Big Beautiful Bill Act" by President Donald Trump, has sparked significant controversy due to its drastic redistribution of wealth and extensive cuts to welfare programs. According to the Congressional Budget Office (CBO), the bill will result in a 4% decrease in household resources for the poorest 10% of Americans, while the richest 10% will see a 2% increase. The bill is expected to add \$3.8 trillion to the deficit over the next decade.

The bill's provisions include massive cuts to Medicaid, the Affordable Care Act, and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), which will result in millions of Americans losing their health care coverage and food assistance. Additionally, the bill cuts funding for student loan aid plans and environmental investments, while funneling \$150 billion to the Pentagon and increasing funding for Trump's mass deportation agenda.

At the heart of the bill is a significant tax cut for corporations and the wealthy, including an extension of the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act. Research indicates that the richest Americans will gain tens of thousands of dollars in tax savings each year, while the bottom 20% of Americans will see their taxes increase. This bill is expected to exacerbate the existing wealth gap, with U.S. billionaires having already doubled their wealth to a collective \$5.8 trillion since the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act.

The bill has faced strong opposition from various groups, including the AFL-CIO, which has labeled it the "worst job-killing bill in American history." Critics argue that the bill will cause significant harm to the economy and the well-being of U.S. families, with the harshest impacts being felt by low-income Americans and people in rural communities, who have already started to experience hospital closures.

Despite the bill's passage, its most severe provisions are strategically delayed until after the 2026 midterm elections, making it harder for voters to hold politicians accountable.



Expected cuts at the Department of Labor

President Donald Trump wants the Department of Labor (DOL) to do less. A lot less.

According to *Politico*, in June, the Administration proposed eliminating the Women's Bureau, the Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs and Job Corps, while moving the Bureau of Labor Statistics into the Commerce Department.

DOL would reduce its staffing to about 10,800, down more than one quarter from the nearly 14,800 staffers at the end of the Biden administration. Several agencies within the Department of Labor would lose from 10-38% of their funding, including the Bureau of International Labor Affairs, the Wage and Hour Division, and the Mine Safety and Health Administration.

The one branch that would be unaffected by the cuts is the Office of Labor-Management Standards, which imposes reporting requirements on labor unions.

Outside of DOL, both the National Labor Relations Board and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission would also get less funding, but their cuts would be smaller. And at Health and Human Services, "The Trump administration has taken a wrecking ball to the collective labour rights of workers and brought anti-union billionaires into the heart of policymaking," states the International Trade Union Confederation's 2025 *Global Rights Index*.

CALIFORNIA IAM

California Conference of Machinists meet in Sacramento

By Shelley Kessler



Women at the Cal Conference

The California Conference of Machinists held their annual meeting just after the legislative conference of the California Federation of Labor Unions. Both took place in May in Sacramento.

Bobby Martinez, General Vice President for the IAM Western Territory, spoke about the need for us to work and protect against the anti-union attacks on our democratic institutions and on workers' rights. "The ongoing violations demand that we stand up against the stripping of our hard earned benefits," he said.

The most vulnerable are targeted while the rich get tax cuts. Medicaid cuts mean that millions will lose their health coverage. "Our unions are the only structure that can fight back nationally to ensure that every human gets the dignity and value they deserve," he added.

"No matter what party you belong to, you simply cannot deny that unions improve wages and benefits for all workers, not just union members. They help reduce income inequality by making sure all Americans, and not just the wealthy elite, share in the benefits of their labor."

Hassan Solomon from the IAM's Political Department spoke about how our losses are also lessons. "When our union was formed in the 1940's, union organizing was happening across the nation. MLK stated that without job income, people could not have life, liberty and the pursuit of justice; that's why we must protect our jobs," Solomon said. "Today, the 3 G's are not Gays, God and Guns, they are Gas, Groceries and Grandma."

He reminded us that we have to be involved to protect our rights. Otherwise, we will get pink slips while the rich get golden parachutes.

SHOP TALK: How do you like the union and your new contract?



Nick Benham
Silgan Riverbank
Local 1528—20 years

"It's a lot better than it has been, and it certainly could be worse. We got a good wage increase in the last contract."



Cho Vath
Silgan Riverbank
Local 1528—30 years

"It's our best contract so far. We got a significant spike in the insurance and the raise barely covers it."



Victor Jacou
Silgan Riverbank
Local 1528—3 years

"My job is to move all the pallets. Yes I'm happy with the latest contract. The union offers good benefits. I want to stay here until I retire - that's my goal. We should have a decent retirement package."



Gilbert Vargas
Silgan Riverbank
Local 1528—24 years

"So far, it's been a good experience, especially with the top union rep that we have. I thought they did a phenomenal job of getting the contract done."



Matthew Miller
Silgan Riverbank
Local 1528—23 years

"Everything we have here is because we have a union. It would be a much worse place without the latest contract. It was a rough road, but we got there. Over the three years, it'll be the best rate I've ever seen in 23 years. Being on the negotiating committee was an enlightening experience."