



# CONNECTIONS

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*Teamsters buck the trends, again*

## Moving to expand prevailing wage



*Teamsters from Local 853 are joined by those from other Joint Council 7 Locals, as well as the State Building Trades and California Labor Federation to lobby Assembly members at the state capitol to support AB219 and expand the prevailing wage.*

Across the country, governors and state legislators are doing what they can to repeal the prevailing wage, but here in California, the Teamsters are bucking that trend and spearheading the effort to expand it. And so far, AB219, the bill that will close a loophole in prevailing wage law to cover ready-mix drivers on public works projects, is moving through the legislative process, having passed in the Assembly and in its first Senate subcommittee.

What's at issue? If a company has a batch plant on the site of their construction job, that work is covered by the prevailing wage. But if the concrete is driven from an off-site facility, the driver doing the very same work is not eligible to be paid the prevailing wage. Known as the "material provider exemption," this carve-out has ensured that Teamster employers who always pay the higher wage due to their union contract are at a disadvantage to non-union employers.

"When the Teamsters see a problem, we try to fix it," says Secretary-Treasurer Rome Aloise. "Sometimes we take to the streets. In this case, we needed a legislative fix. This is another case that proves how important it is for us to be active politically."

After enlisting Assemblyman Tom Daly (D-Orange County) to introduce a bill, the Teamsters are working closely with the State

Building Trades Council and the California Labor Federation to get AB219 passed.

"We visited the capital in May," says Local 853 Business Agent and Northern California Construction Committee chair Stu Helfer. "Teamsters lined the hallways and talked with dozens of Assemblymembers. We convinced them to support AB 219, which will help our drivers in the ready mix industry and level the playing field for our contractors who have to compete with lower-paying non-union companies."

After that visit, the Assembly passed the bill in a partisan vote of 52-27, with all Democrats supporting it and all Republicans opposing it.

On June 24, the California State Senate

Committee on Labor & Industrial Relations voted 4-1 to pass AB 219. The bill is now at the Senate Appropriations Committee before being heard on the Senate floor.

"This has been an uphill battle," adds Aloise. "The contractors and even the public agencies lie when they say how much the increased wages will cost them. Our job is to tell the truth. Workers are wrongly being denied the prevailing wage. When this bill passes, it will raise the standards for ready mix drivers across the state to where they should be."

"We expect that we have the votes in the Senate to pass it," says Helfer. "Then we'll just have to make sure that the governor signs it."



*Teamsters were back in the Capitol in June to make sure that the Senate Labor Committee passed AB 219...and they did.*

## Thank you, Antonio

A Teamster for 45 years and an officer with Local 853 for 23 years, Antonio Christian has not only retired from the Local, but he's moved out of California. "I've loved working with Local 853's staff and membership," he says. "This Local has always been at the forefront."

Antonio joined Teamsters Local 278 in 1970 when working for UPS in San Mateo as a delivery driver; he soon became shop steward. When he took a job at Price Club, in 1992, he joined Local 853. "I was a shop steward and helped to negotiate the contract. That's when I first started to work with Rome. With his leadership and guidance, I was able to find my own niche and started to represent the members," Antonio recalls. He served as a Trustee and Vice President before becoming Recording Secretary. As a Business Agent, he represented the members at Price Club/Costco Wholesale, plumbing houses, Morton Salt, Federated (which is the warehouse for Macy's), and a few others.

In 1999, he was appointed to the IBT's Human Rights Commission, serving as a board member and later, as Assistant Director. In 2006, he was named Director.

Antonio also served as Chair of the TAP board, which was a great honor for him, and he represented Teamsters on Oakland's Private Industry Council, as well as doing political and community service around the area.



*Antonio Christian takes the minutes at his last membership meeting in June.*

"I've always been a very religious person," Antonio says. "That's all about taking care of the membership—both in the religious world and in the union. There's an answer to all things—just keep searching. I look back at the simple things, like fixing a member's pension, so instead of collecting \$200 a month, he was able to collect \$2,500. That's the kind of thing where you can see that you really helped a member. It seemed like there was no hope, but I was able to help."

"The Teamsters union has provided a good living for me and my family. I've met a lot of good people and made good friends."

In June, Antonio and his wife moved to Louisiana, where his wife is from. He's from nearby East Texas. "I'll continue to Chair the Human Rights Commission for the International, just from a different location," he says. "I'm sad that I have to leave good people but I'm looking forward to a new chapter."

## Building Trades honors Local 853's Stu Helfer

"I might have thought that they only honored me because there was nobody left to honor," says Stu Helfer about being named Delegate of the Year by the Alameda County Building Trades Council at its event in June, "but it's only their second year of holding awards, so I must be doing something right."

Actually, Stu has done a lot right for the members since he started as a Teamster in 1979.

Soon after taking his first Ready Mix job, he got involved with Teamsters Local 291. In addition to being a steward at Berkeley Ready Mix, he was elected first to be a Trustee of Local 291, then Vice President and finally President of the Local. When that local merged with Local 853 in 1998, he became a business agent. Stu was elected Chair of the Teamsters Northern California Construction Committee in 2014, and in 2015 was appointed to serve as Local 853's Recording Secretary.

Stu has worn many other titles and has



*Local 853's staff is there at the Alameda Building Trades Council's Awards Celebration to root Stu on.*

held many positions, all with an interest and passion for Teamsters and the improvement of the quality of life for the membership and all members of organized labor.

"As the Beatles say, sometimes people need a little help from their friends to get by. When people band together and come to the union, the union is the friend that they need."

As for his award, Stu is quick to share the honors with Rome Aloise. "He taught me all I know. And, of course, it's great to have the membership behind me. This is an award for everybody here," he says with pride.

## Upcoming events

### Local 853 Member Appreciation Day

Saturday, November 14  
9:00 a.m.

John Muir Middle School  
1444 Williams Street  
San Leandro

*Hear the latest news about the local and win prizes. Everybody leaves with cool gifts. Always a good time!*



*Join the 853 crowd!*



## Saving jobs and negotiating the best contracts

By ROME ALOISE

Our Local never is satisfied with sitting still. There's always something going on, and 2015 has been particularly busy.

We have been involved in many negotiations and contract ratifications, most of which have gained great improvements for our members. You can read stories about some of these contracts elsewhere in this newsletter, but I wanted to give special mention to the Gillig Corporation situation. In business for 125 years, Gillig is the last company in the U.S. that makes buses from start to finish. As a young organizer, I brought them into our Local and negotiated their first 10 contracts. Vice President Bo Morgan recently negotiated a significant contract extension to go along with the company building a new plant in Livermore.

This is momentous for a number of reasons. First, Gillig is successful in a marketplace where all of their competitors are foreign companies, with much cheaper labor costs, and in many cases, government subsidies. Gillig has flourished because our members are highly-efficient and productive, and work hard to turn out a superior product each and every year. Upon announcing that they needed a new factory, the company got offers from all over the country, many offering attractive deals that would relieve them of taxes, provide free land, and in one case, refund the cost of building the factory. On our end, we used our Local's political clout in the state, county and city of Livermore to

obtain tax incentives and waivers if Gillig stayed in California and Alameda County.

I am pleased to say that Gillig decided to stay local; the compelling reason was our members! The company knew they could not duplicate either the quality of work or the loyalty of our members throughout the last 38 years. Additionally, our members just ratified a seven-year extension creating job security for them, and a secure environment for the company going forward.

This is yet another example of how Local 853 has been able to successfully work with many employers to save jobs and make our contracts the best in the country.

### The battle in Sacramento

We are involved in another legislative battle in Sacramento, which I am pleased to say, that unlike our brothers and sisters in many other states, is not about fighting off some anti-worker initiative, but rather trying to improve another aspect of our members' lives and improve the competitive advantage for our unionized ready mix companies. We have been pushing a bill through the state legislature to make ready mix workers a prevailing wage rate category. Almost all contractors and construction associations are opposing the bill and it has been an epic battle so far. We have won other hard fights, and we will prevail on this one. I thank our members who came up to the Capital during various committee meetings; that makes all the difference with our elected representatives.

### Comings & goings

On a bit-tersweet note,

Antonio Christian, our long time business agent and Recording Secretary has retired from the Local and moved to Louisiana with his wife. He will still be working in the capacity of the IBT Human Rights Director, so we will still have him working with us—but from the National level. He was a credit to our union, serving our members very well for more than 23 years and distinguishing himself and our Local on a National level. We will miss him.

Stu Helfer has been appointed Recording Secretary and John Thomas, long time VWR member, and now *SF Chronicle* member, has been appointed to our Executive Board as Trustee. I am sure both will do a great job for our members.

On a very sad note for me personally, and for many members who over the years had the good fortune to work with him, my good friend and longtime Business Agent and retired Recording Secretary, Jerry Carbone passed away. Jerry was one of the brightest officers ever to hold office in Local 853, and in retirement he agreed to stay on and represent our Liquor salespersons. He was smart, loyal and friendly to everyone with charm that overtook everyone who met him. Jerry was one of a kind and he will be missed.

## Announcements

### WCT Pension Plan Q&A

On the second Wednesday of every month, a representative from the WCT Pension Trust Fund comes to Local 853's San Leandro office to answer your pension questions. Call 510-895-8853 or 800-400-1250 for an appointment.

### SIP 401(k) enrollment

Most Local 853 members are eligible for the SIP 401(k) Plan. If you are not yet enrolled, or wish to increase your pre-tax deferred amounts—check with your business agent, your company's HR department, or call 1-800-4-PRETAX [1-800-477-3829].

### Check out Local 853's website

Go to [www.teamsters853.org](http://www.teamsters853.org) to see what the Local has been up to between newsletters. Also get business forms and other union resources.

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**Members:** Send address changes and comments to the above address or e-mail us at [connections@teamsters853.org](mailto:connections@teamsters853.org)

### Charge your union dues

In our continuing effort to make dues payments easier and more convenient, Local 853 is now offering monthly credit card payments for your dues. For more information on this program, please contact the Local Union office at 510-895-8853.

### Monthly union meetings

Local 853's membership meetings are held the second Thursday of each month at 7:00 p.m. at the union hall: 2100 Merced St., San Leandro, **Note:** Sisters in Solidarity (Local 853's Women's Committee) meets before the meeting, at 6:30, every other month.

## Using political strength to get a good contract

Bargaining with a city contractor can be tricky, because while the union wants better wages, benefits and working conditions for our members, the contractor may be locked in as to how much they can pay based on their agreement with the city. That's when Teamsters get creative.

Local 853 represents about 145 paratransit drivers and bus aides for the City and County of San Francisco. For many years, they worked for MV Transportation. However, in August, 2014, the city brought on TransDev to replace MV as the paratransit contractor. The union contract carried over to the new employer, but was due to expire at the end of the year.

"We started bargaining with TransDev in November," says Business Agent Efren Alarcon. "We were talking on a regular basis, and the company was willing to make some needed changes in the contract. But by April, they were only agreeing to increase the wages by 1%."

"As a result, the union hired a lob-

bying group and we got involved politically," Alarcon says. "We met with the Metropolitan Transit Agency (MTA), because that's where the money comes from. We also met with San Francisco Mayor Ed Lee and several supervisors, asking for their support with the MTA."

After several marathon negotiating sessions from April into May, that political work paid off. They agreed to an \$8 raise over the five-year course of the contract, which represented a 44% increase. They were also going to increase paid days off from 12 to 25, and cover five paid holidays, up from zero.

Even with all those changes, the members overwhelmingly rejected the contract by a vote of 90-3. But once some key changes were made to the disciplinary and attendance policies and an employee match was allocated to the 401K plan, the members voted by 91-2 to ratify the contract.

"A lot of the credit for the complete 180 on the vote is due to Shop Steward Aiesha Jackson," Alarcon explained. "She has a strong influence over the members."

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## A solid contract at Rock Transport

Local 853 Vice President Bo Morgan was pleased to report that the 16 members at Rock Transport got a lucrative three-year contract.

Rock Transport, located in Oakland, was recently purchased by US Concrete, which also owns Central Concrete. "Frankly, we were concerned about maintaining the employment of the 16 drivers," Morgan explains, "because there's so much non-union competition for material haulers. There's no denying that the labor costs for non-union haulers is cheaper. But what we offer is the professionalism of our Teamster drivers. Also, the company can have the security of controlling their destiny by hauling their own material."

Morgan credits the fortitude of shop steward Pam Gaskill for enabling the team to hammer out a solid contract that the members unanimously ratified in May. "When we started, the company wanted to eliminate the health and welfare plan and freeze wages," Morgan says. "But Pam worked hard with me on the numbers and in the end, we got a three-year contract that provides a 95 cents/hour increase each year for wages, pension, and health and welfare."

"In the end, the company still has to stay financially competitive," Morgan adds, "but they'll certainly do that if they tally in the talents of their employees."

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## Increased wages—start of a trend?

The 80 drivers who work at Reliable Trucking, hauling material from LA to Seattle and east to Nevada, ratified their new three-year contract. They'll get an extra week's worth of pay, an option to be paid by the hour or by tonnage rate—whichever is greater. They also got

improvements in medical coverage and paid time off.

"Construction, pipeline, and lumber drivers have all gotten good increases this year," says Business Agent Stu Helfer. "We're hoping that this uptick in construction wages is the start of a trend."

## Quickest organizing drive ever



In April, Business Agent Stu Helfer got a tip from a signatory company that a \$250 million project, the Broadway Plaza Shopping Center in Walnut Creek, was being renovated, and all the workers were in a union except for the drivers.

After visiting the site and seeing all the work going on, Helfer checked to see if this job was governed by a Project Labor Agreement. He learned from the Contra Costa Building Trades Council that it was not, but that the property owner wanted this job to be all-union.

"We paid a visit to the General Contractor, who played like he didn't know anything about it. So we gave him a copy of the letter from the owner confirming that this would be an all-union project. We pointed out that this is a commitment and reminded the contractor that we could strike the job if we saw non-union truck drivers coming in and out of the job."

The contractor asked for some time. He went to the owner who passed the word down to the general contractor, the excavating company, and the trucking company: all of the truckers would have to be union.

"Then our phone started ringing and I couldn't answer it fast enough," Helfer says. "Every driver on the job wanted to join the union."

Helfer credits Local 315 and the owner for helping to sign up as Teamsters close to 130 new end and super dump drivers in a three-day period.

This lightning fast organizing wasn't a fluke. Teamsters Local 853, has been in the forefront of organizing in construction. Local 853's program has taken years to develop, involving endless job site visits, phone calls, demands for certified payroll, PLA negotiations, pre-job conferences, legislative efforts, and on and on.

The situation in Walnut Creek is simply proof that persistence, cooperation and knowledge - and a friendly tip - can lead to some pretty spectacular results.

# New facility and seven year contract extension at Gillig

When a company is successful and grows, that's great for the union, because it generally leads to increased hiring and more union members. But when that growth might entail building a new facility, that can be fraught with danger, as cities and states will spend big bucks to lure new manufacturing plants. That's just what happened at Gillig. Fortunately, instead of moving to Texas or Nevada or even Southern California, Gillig will leave their home of 80 years in Hayward and move up the road in Alameda County to Livermore.

For nearly 40 years, Teamsters Local 853 has represented the members at Gillig, a 125-year old, family-owned company that is the last start-to-finish bus manufacturer in the U.S. (Others assemble their buses here but build them elsewhere.) Gillig's success has grown, especially since Teamster allies convinced AC Transit, the local bus company, to purchase locally-made buses. A backlog of orders had convinced the company that they'd outgrown their Hayward facility, launching them on a national search for a new site.

## Using political clout

And that's where the Teamsters came in. The company garnered generous offers from other states, but, Joint Council 7 Political Director (and Local 853 member) Doug Bloch was able to help them raise enough money and concessions from the City of Livermore and from Alameda County to convince them to stay local.

Building big with an eye for continued expansion, Gillig will relocate to a half-million square-foot manufacturing and office facility on a 38-acre site at



*Gillig members pack the house as they review their new 7-year contract extension.*

the new Oaks Business Park near the Livermore Municipal Airport. They will build a nearly 600,000-square-foot main facility, as well as two smaller structures—a 50,000-square-foot building used for fabrication and assembly and a 27,000 square-foot facility to prepare the buses for delivery.

## The value of our members

"It wasn't just the money that enticed them to stay in this area," says Local 853 Vice President Bo Morgan. "It was our members and the company's strong relationship with our union." Even though there was still 18 months left on the current agreement, the company asked for a seven-year contract extension to 2023.

The agreement averages \$2.26/year for seven consecutive years in the economic package that includes health and welfare, pension and wages. "The members can allocate that increase where ever they choose," Morgan explains. "We also got the employer to pay the 13-19 cents/hour restoration surcharge that the AI Pension is demanding of each member."

"We're so glad that the company is staying in Alameda County. We don't know how the move will play out, but the company had been clear that they didn't want any labor unrest during that process," Morgan explains. "If we had been without a contract during the move, it could have been a difficult transition."

Ultimately, Morgan believes that doing the extension was prudent. The membership at Gillig agreed, as they ratified their new contract by a 85% margin.

"In 1976, Gillig was the lowest-paid manufacturer in Alameda County. Now they're the highest paid in the country," Morgan says. "By 2023, they'll be at \$40/hour with two pension plans and a 401K."

Morgan wanted to be sure to thank all the shop stewards: Jose Tejada, Joe Bulhouse, Robert Kerry, Joel Bellison, and Lupe Pinedo. "They were involved in supporting it, getting it out on the floor, and explaining it to the members."

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## Taking the long view with Silicon Valley tech organizing

When Local 853 organized the Facebook shuttle drivers, they took the first step to changing the face of the tech industry in Silicon Valley.

"We lit a fuse," says Organizer Rodney Smith. "As soon as we got a contract at Facebook, we started hearing from drivers at all of the shuttle companies. We quickly had an election at Compass, the shuttle service for Apple, Genentech and several other high-tech companies, and those drivers voted for union representation. Stacy Alvelais and Rome Aloise are heading up those contract negotiations now."

In addition to old-fashioned union organizing, the Local is using other tactics. "First, we're getting the San Francisco

Metropolitan Transit Authority to drive out bus companies that are not union-friendly. Second, we're getting so much positive press that the shuttle companies can't just dismiss our efforts, as they try to do in other industries."

The challenge is when shuttle companies start raising wages as a way to deflect the union. "In these cases, the workers think they've gotten the benefit of a union without having to pay the dues. So, we back off for a while," Smith says. "But then when the company starts to renege on their promises, or when the workers realize they don't have the other benefits that being in a union brings—like a grievance process, retirement, paid days off and health care—then they come back to us. We'll be patient."



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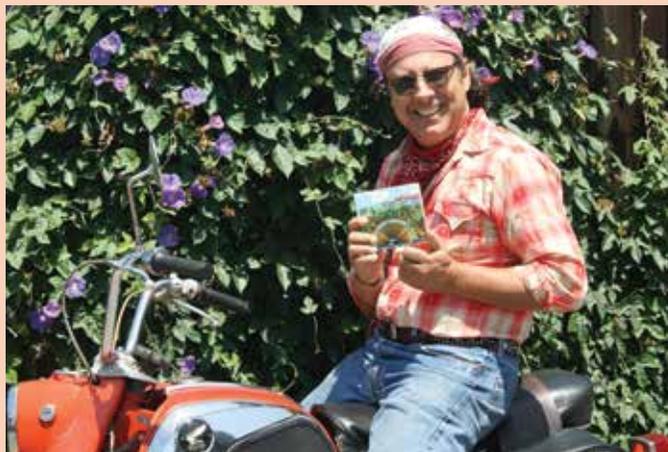
## Local 853 – organizing and building a stronger union

### Teamster Steward John Joseph releases new CD

What do you get when you cross a hard working shop steward with a singer/songwriter and throw in a little twang? You get a singing Teamster troubadour!

John Joseph has been a member of Local 853 for 32 years. For all but four of those years, he has represented the Cost Plus stores as a Chief Steward. “I have always enjoyed representing our membership for better pay and fairness in the workplace,” he says. “It has been a personal goal of mine to encourage more participation in our union.” Recently John and another steward have launched a campaign to recruit more women to serve as shop stewards. “They are an underrepresented sector and we want them to feel welcome to leadership roles,” John adds.

Another great passion for John is songwriting and performing. In April, John released his latest CD — *Wonders, Worries and Woes* — on Lil Red Pony Records. “My songs tell stories about work and love.” Song titles include *Almost Gone, Army of*



Teamster and song-writer John Joseph displays his new CD

*One, and Outlaws, Criminals and Thieves.* “You can’t go so wrong with subjective and topical songs of work and play,” John says.

The CD took over a year to complete. John says he put lots of consideration into the arrangements, sound quality, and choice of voicing. “I wanted an old timey feel on some it. I also used the best musicians I could find for the genre, such as bluegrass players and a good boogie-woogie piano man.”

John also put a lot of thought into the artwork. “We made the CD cover look like an old-fashioned album cover, with lots of handwork, creative color and lots of footnotes.” He even incorporated the Teamsters logo on the back. “I am very grateful to our union for enabling me to take the time I needed to complete this project without constantly worrying about having enough time off for it.”

You can hear the CD on iTunes and CD Baby, or you can purchase it for \$10 from John at [johnjoseph1@sbcglobal.net](mailto:johnjoseph1@sbcglobal.net)