

## **Being a Building Rep in a Virtual World**

PAT Building Reps have always played a critical role in our union, but now more than ever our colleagues are relying on us to assist them as they face a life-threatening pandemic and are trying to do the best job they can in an uncertain, radically changed learning environment.

As we start the new school year, it is crucial that Building Reps create intentional spaces for members to connect with each other, to identify problems stemming from comprehensive distance learning, to help enforce the PAT-PPS Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) we are currently negotiating around distance learning, and to make sure our organizing and communication structures are working well and everyone is engaged and informed. An active membership, even in COVID times, is the only way we can build power of the PAT..

## **We Still Have Rights, Even in a Pandemic**

All our basic rights, as PAT members and as Building Reps remain in effect, despite the pandemic. As an Association, we have the right to bargain over changes in our workplaces that affect our health and safety, pay, benefits, and other working conditions.

And while we are seeking to finalize negotiations of an MOU on safety protocols and working conditions under comprehensive distance learning, we also retain our rights under the PAT-PPS contract. There are also many state and federal regulations, guidelines and laws that we can use to protect ourselves and our students. As always, it remains up to us as a union in our buildings and communities, to enforce our contractual and legal rights by keeping members informed and making sure administrators do not violate the rights of members.

## **Be the Best Representative Possible**

Now is the time for Building Reps to embrace our role as union communicators and educators.

- Make sure to communicate regularly with members in your site and hearing from the PAT Reps on a regular basis in a time of uncertainty will give members more confidence in union leaders.
- Make sure you have good contact information for your fellow PAT members.
- Make time to listen to your coworkers' concerns so that you can communicate these effectively to other union leaders and to administrators in your regular monthly meetings or as needed.

## Hold Regular Virtual Membership Meetings

For regular PAT membership meetings, we recommend using video conference technology, such as [Zoom](#). You can create a free account, which will allow you to host meetings for up to 45 minutes. As in normal in-person meetings, make sure you prepare in advance to have an agenda, one rep facilitating the meeting, one person taking notes, and perhaps one person keeping an eye on the chat. While not necessarily prohibited by the district, we do not recommend that you use any of the platforms provided by the district to do union business (e.g. Google Meets), **except during your regular 10 minute PAT meeting that is connected to staff meetings.**

## Help Members Navigate New Resources

The federal government has passed a number of bills to address this pandemic, and there will be more in the future. Be sure to check [OEA's webpage](#) on COVID-19 resources for educators and up-to-date information:

Benefits available to many workers now include [expanded leave](#) and unemployment benefits under federal law, so please speak with a UniServ Consultant for additional information or review the PAT website for the most updated information.