Dealing With Operator Assaults
(pg. 13)

Brian Pollitt: Chargeable Accidents
(pg. 14)

Labor Against Midvale Madness
(pg. 24)

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE...
- SEPTA General Rule
- Remembering Daryl Mack
- Welcome New Hires
All Great Empires Crumble From Within

Dear TWU Local 234 Members,

For years, we have all heard the phrase “all great empires crumble from within” and that “history repeats itself.” With the emergence of social media and the recent Supreme Court decision in the Janus case which is meant to cripple public sector unions across the country, those two old phrases have new meaning for the labor movement.

Organized labor is being made the whipping boy for everything negative as far as the economy in this country is concerned. With social media, big business and billionaires like the Koch brothers, they can promote negative images of labor into main stream media in a matter of seconds. In order for the Janus decision to have the desired destructive impact that the anti-union billionaires have in mind they will need the help of union members to make it happen.

Throughout history the best way to conquer any group is to sow division in their ranks which is commonly known as the divide and conquer technique. Once the division starts to spread like a cancer throughout the labors’ ranks the members begin to cannibalize their own unions. This makes no sense for the members of the union.

Time and time again unions across this country have proven their worth. Unions have been the voice for the lower income earners and under privileged – under represented people for more than 100 years in this country. At a time when we should have some appreciation for our unions, big business has cleverly come up with a plan to make a few money earners and under privileged – under represented people for more than 100 years in this country. At a time when we should have some appreciation for our unions, big business has cleverly come up with a plan to make a few

As property values rise, I have heard from many residents who feel they can’t afford property tax increases and are at risk of being forced to sell their homes. In response, I have passed legislation to provide property tax relief programs for residents across the city.

In April 2018, the Mayor signed my bill to eliminate the 10-year limit on the Longtime Owners Occupants Program (LOOP). The law protects over 4000 longtime homeowners who were going to face significant property tax increases at the 10-year limit.

When property values in Philadelphia were reassessed in 2013 for the first time in decades, thousands of residents faced unexpected property tax bill hikes. LOOP was introduced to cap property taxes for residents who’d lived in their home for more than 10 years and saw their properties increase 300% in value in one year. The average LOOP participant is a senior citizen on a fixed income who bought their house in the 1970s or 1980s. I am proud that a Federal Reserve study has stated that LOOP has helped prevent displacement in Philadelphia.

I recognize that paying a lump sum amount can be a burden on some of my constituents, so I partner with the Revenue Department to enroll homeowners in OOPA payment plans so property taxes can be paid in installments.

Thank you for your continued support. We have a long way to go, but don’t because of the structure of the co-op property tax bill, will be soon able to enroll to freeze their taxes in Fall 2018.

Sincerely,

Willie Brown
President
TWU Local 234

Property Tax Legislation Saves Homes

Kenyatta Johnson

The City of Philadelphia is growing, the 19146 zip code is one of the hottest real estate markets in the country. That’s why I’m working to ensure new residents and old residents both have the opportunity to stay in their homes. I believe diverse communities are strong communities but they won’t stay diverse unless we prevent property taxes from making housing unaffordable.

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The goal of all these programs is to help keep people in their homes— that’s why we encourage people to enroll. If you are worried about how you will pay your taxes in the future or are behind already, please call my office at 215-686-3412 and I will see what can be done to help.
Automation is Killing Transit Jobs, not China

The fight against automation is going into full combat mode. SEPTA has taken a shot over the bow. For years, Local 234 has been fighting to protect and preserve the jobs of our members. However, SEPTA’s recent decision to make the AT&T Transportation Center, the old Patterson Station on the Fern Rock line, 95 percent automated is a real threat to the job security of Local 234 members, especially cashiers.

The AT&T Transportation Center is one of the busiest in the entire system. It is used for all the city’s major professional sporting events and most major concerts. This station has historically serviced thousands of passengers an hour with cashiers and other Local 234 members collecting the fares and directing passengers, as outlined in Section 401 of the labor agreement.

Adding fuel to the fire of distrust between the union and the Authority, SEPTA is organizing “new runs” for the cashiers, and there is a not so subtle message in the new schedules. SEPTA intends to run the Market and Broad Street stations in full automation mode when the cashier who works the station takes a scheduled lunch or break. Thus, SEPTA is sending the message that the Authority has the ability to operate the stations with or without a live body, i.e. with or without a cashier in the station. This is SEPTA’s solution to what management considers an attendance problem among the cashiers.

We don’t buy your attendance excuse as a reason to eliminate cashier jobs. If there is an attendance problem, we will try to correct it if possible. However, let it be known that the harder SEPTA works to automate the stations, the Union will fight a thousand times harder to protect our jobs. As far as Local 234 is concerned, when SEPTA attacks one group of our members they are attacking us all.

SEPTA’s attempt to automate fare collections is not a cashier problem. It’s a Local 234 problem. We will not be divided. The cashier’s jobs will be maintained and protected even with automation. If the Authority forces us to go to war over this issue, we will not go to war as cashiers but we will go to war as a united union.
SEPTA General Work Rule

There is talk around SEPTA about revisiting/recapturing and enforcing an old rule that has been tucked away in the rule books for years. This rule refers to employees not being allowed to work for any company that is in direct competition with SEPTA. Most people do not realize what they are doing. Uber and Lyft compete for the same customers as SEPTA and Local 234. Since the emergence of these two companies, there has been a double digit decrease in ridership at SEPTA. On the flip side, if you are working not only for Uber/Lyft but any job that may interfere with the prescribed recommended rest period by the Department of Transportation and you are involved in an accident you could be putting yourself and your family at risk.

Social media has become SEPTA’s main source of gathering information to use against our members. If they can't find out who works for the competition through social media the next best thing to do is to walk through the locations parking lots. It appears that half the vehicles in the parking lots have either an Uber or Lyft symbol in the window.

If you have any questions or concerns about this feel free to ask your staff representative or call the Union Hall directly. If need be ask to speak to our president directly or if he is not available request a call back from the president.
With the mid-term elections fast approaching for the U.S. Congress and Senate in November of 2018, organized labor has a momentous survival task near at hand.

The task is particularly personal and immediate for public sector unions like Local 234. Things started going downhill with the dismantling of public sector unions in Wisconsin, under Governor Scott Walker. In 2016, the country went on to elect the anti-union President Donald Trump who claimed to support “working class people.” Soon thereafter, Trump appointed an extreme, anti-worker Supreme Court Justice, Neil Gorsuch and has now appointed Brett Kavanaugh.

As a result of Trump’s election, there is a movement around the country, led by wealthy business interests, to turn back the clock to a time when public sector unions had no voice or power and were some of the lowest paid workers in the country, with few if any benefits.

In order to stop this onslaught, we need to get more involved in the mid-term elections to make sure the people we elect are truly committed to representing interests of working class men and women in Washington.

Local 234 will be reaching out to our union brothers and sisters to volunteer to play a role in saving organized labor from destruction at the hands of the “profit before people” business tycoons and their political allies.

We will need volunteers to help with our member-to-member phone bank operation out of the Union Hall. Using the phone bank, we can work to make sure that our entire membership is registered to vote in November. We understand that we have a difficult task at hand, but together we will succeed.
The City works when SEPTA runs, and SEPTA runs when TWU works.

In 2008, as a freshman Councilmember, I was appointed Chair of City Council’s Transportation & Public Utilities Committee and I had the opportunity to be a part of conversations that brought together SEPTA and the Transit Police. A part of my responsibility in this endeavor was learning the interlocking relationships of SEPTA’s workforce and its management, and their contributions towards the viability of Philadelphia.

We often take for granted SEPTA’s efficiency—because like clockwork, it runs. But when, for whatever reasons, it stops running, we find it is the heartbeat of our city. During big events, such as the Democratic National Convention, the visit of Pope Francis or the Eagles Super Bowl Championship Parade, when vehicular traffic grinds to a halt, we count on SEPTA and mass transit to move the masses.

During my tenure as Chairman of the Transportation Committee, I was shocked I discovered the wages that were paid to CCT drivers, and the grueling schedules and expectations demanded of them by management. SEPTA paratransit provides transportation for elderly and people with physical disabilities. It creates a semi independence to go shop, attend medical appointments or handle financial business, such as banking. We were able to work with SEPTA management and they now provide a livable wage for drivers.

Another aspect of SEPTA is providing transportation for our workforce in Philadelphia, not just for jobs within the city, but also for places of employment located in surrounding counties, which created the concept of “Reverse Commute,” meaning people who live in Philadelphia, but work beyond Philadelphia, such as King of Prussia and elsewhere. For many individuals employed outside of the city, SEPTA is often the only way they can get to work on a regular basis. For these important linkages, we thank SEPTA and we support keeping our transportation system viable. Transit oriented development is here to stay and it reduces our need for individual vehicles to be able to participate and ride on a safe, affordable and predictable system.

TWU Works.

Curtis Jones, Jr.

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I was blessed and privileged for being raised by a union mother. With four young girls to support, she struggled with her wage, her leave and her rights; she couldn’t fight the battles on her own, but her union was there for her.

Labor unions have helped women of all backgrounds close gaps in pay and career advancement. Today, with the Supreme Court rolling back laws that require government workers to pay union fees/dues, directly affecting labor institutions across the country, stifling their growth and ability to fight for fair rights.

The Janus v. AFSCME ruling will have an impact on all public-sector workers, but women of color, who constitute the most vulnerable group in the labor market, will be hit the hardest.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, black workers are 30 percent more likely than their white counterparts to belong to a labor union. And it’s black women who make up the single largest demographic among public union workers, accounting for more than one in every six, according to Economic Policy Institute.

Unions have been the vehicle for women of color to gain access to the middle class. Unions lifted my mother and many other women who came before us out of poverty. It is our duty today to continue the fight against powerful corporate special interests.

Corporations are trying to undermine the achievements we have made in recent decades. And they may be able to make unions smaller at this time in history, but we will ensure they become stronger than ever.

I am working on legislation that would require employers, with existing unions, to grant these unions at least 30 minutes to present orientations to all new employees. Our local unions fight for the hardworking people of Philadelphia, protecting some of the most vulnerable people within the workforce, and it is time we get in their corner.

There are ways to fight back in the legislative arena. Teachers, police, firefighters, nurses, school district workers, social workers and numerous other government employees who serve and protect us every day are counting on us.

The Union and SEPTA have been working jointly to try and eliminate assaults and violent crimes on SEPTA property. Assaul.ts on transit workers around the country have increased in the last decade. Both our members and the riding public are entitled to a safe work and riding atmosphere. Instead of standing on the sidelines and waiting for a solution to fall out of the sky, the Union and SEPTA agreed to sit down and think outside the box. Here are a few of the ideas that we will be going forward with in the near future:

1. We will use social media – news outlets and other forms of communications to get out news of assaults or crimes that have occurred.
2. We will use the cameras on the vehicles and around the property to apprehend assailants.
3. There will be a cash reward offered to help in the apprehension of the assailants.
4. If you are assaulted there will be an officer assigned to your case to do follow up with you and help apprehend the suspect.
5. SEPTA is installing retractable shields on the buses to separate the driver from potential assailants as much as possible. We realize these changes won’t eliminate assaults, but we feel they represent a move in the right direction.
This year the Supreme Court will decide the case brought by Ohio’s chapter of the A. Phillip Randolph Institute (apri) challenging a procedure the state uses to remove voters from the registration rolls based on their failure to vote.

- If a registered voter does not vote or update their registration during a two-year period, the county Board of Elections will send a postage pre-paid notice to the voter asking them to confirm their registration at that address.
- No response results in the voter being removed from the rolls—a move that violates federal law.
- The Sixth Circuit agreed with apri that Ohio’s removal procedure violates federal law and the Secretary of State asked the Supreme Court to weigh in.
- The afl-cio filed an amicus brief in support of apri, together with the Democracy Initiative, aarp, Advocates for Basic Legal Equality, seiu, the National Coalition for the Homeless and its Columbus, Ohio chapter, and the Miami Valley Voter Protection Coalition.
- The case is set to be heard on January 10, 2018, and a decision will likely be announced in June.

On January 10th, on the steps of the Supreme Court, there will be a rally to make sure the court hears the message loud and clear that we must protect the right to vote and eliminate illegal voter purges. Please join us and stand with the voters of Ohio and apri to say no more voter purges. We need your voices to be heard loud and clear on this issue!

#HustedvAPRI #1uvote

Hypocrisy is defined as the practice of claiming to have moral standards or beliefs to which one’s own behavior does not conform. TWU members are subject to some of the most hypocritical standards imaginable when it comes to accidents and customer complaints. No TWU member wants to be involved in an accident or incident, no matter how minor. Yet as hard as we try to avoid accidents, the reality is that accidents are an inherent part of operating a public transit vehicle.

Over the years, the union has worked with SEPTA to try to reduce the number of accidents, without pointing fingers or playing the blame game. Recently, however, it appears that SEPTA has changed its position and they now want to place the members on trial and impose the death penalty for every incident or accident. With a new breed of managers sitting behind the decision making desks, our members have to defend every move they make.

(continued on page 20)
On Monday, June 4, 2018 the Local held its 10th annual golf scholarship event. This year’s event was emotional for a lot of members and others who participated because it was our first golf event since the passing of one of the event’s original organizers, Vice President Daryl Mack. To make matters more emotional was the fact that the event was held less than two weeks before we reach the one year anniversary of his untimely passing. Keeping in the spirit of giving and “Taking Care Of Our Own,” this year we were once again able to provide ten members or members of their immediate family scholarships to continue or further their education or trade. We would like to thank the Mack family and everyone else who worked so hard to make this year’s event a success. Congratulations to this year’s winners.
Working to Prevent the Spread of Mortgage Foreclosure

Cherelle Parker

In April, City Council adopted a bill that I introduced to help prevent the spread of reverse mortgage foreclosures by closing a loophole used by some lenders when a homeowner is in a payment agreement.

The legislation states that a homeowner who is in a payment agreement for real estate taxes on their home shall be deemed not in default on his or her real estate taxes, matching new Philadelphia Department of Revenue regulations that went into effect earlier this year. A requirement of reverse mortgages is to remain current on your real estate taxes, and the legislation, which amends the Philadelphia Code, provides further clarification to lenders on a homeowner’s payment status.

I know all too well the scourge that reverse mortgages have been on certain neighborhoods in the City. Unfortunately, it has been quite common for reverse mortgage lenders to swoop in and pay off any remaining real estate tax balance of homeowners even if they are in a payment plan and not delinquent, and then use this as an impetus to foreclose on these homeowners. I want to thank housing advocates, such as Community Legal Services, for first raising this issue, and commend Revenue Commissioner Frank Breslin and his team for making the change.

A recent report by the California Reinvestment Coalition and Jacksonville Area Legal Aid indicated that reverse mortgage foreclosures in the U.S. increased by an astronomical 646 percent in 2016 as compared to the previous seven years.

It is my hope that these new regulations and my accompanying legislation will protect homeowners by finally putting an end to some of the more unscrupulous practices we have seen from reverse mortgage lenders.

WE WILL. WE MUST. LOCAL 234.

I’m Honored to Serve

the hardworking members of TWU Local 234 in Philadelphia.

If my office may be of any assistance to you, please don’t hesitate to give us a call at (215) 686-3450, or connect with me on social media.

We’re here for you!

Derek S. Green
COUNCILMAN AT-LARGE

Councilman Derek Green  @Councilmanderek

The Office of Councilman Derek S. Green
Room 594, City Hall
Philadelphia, PA 19107
Phone: (215) 686-3450
Califorina’s Brown Raises Prospect of Pension Cuts in Downturn

by Romy Varghese

January 10, 2018

NATIONAL EVENTS AND UPDATES

(continued from page 15)

It is shameful that “SEPTA” managers who have never operated a vehicle larger than a station wagon, can sit in front of our members as prosecutor, judge and jury. “These” new managers have a “them against the members’ mentality and treat every complaint, accident, or incident as if our members have committed a crime, just short of murder. This overzealous new breed of manager watches video, or rummages through a customer complaint trying to find a way to make whatever happened the fault of our members and discipline them for it.

If this were the private sector most of these managers would not have a job. Part of the blame however lies with Local 234. Think about this for a minute, how is it that a manager can comb through a video looking for ways to discipline our members for a chargeable accident and then expect them to testify in court on behalf of SEPTA?

From this point forward, here’s what you need to do.

If you receive a chargeable or preventable accident and are subpoenaed to testify on behalf of SEPTA, you should base your testimony in court around the accident classification. In other words, if you are called to testify do not perjure yourself on the witness stand. If you received a chargeable, let it be known that the accident was totally your fault and you have a work record with a chargeable accident to prove it. Same goes for a preventable accident, let the court know that you could have prevented the accident and again refer to your work record to show that SEPTA determined that the accident could have been prevented.

That’s the Union tip of the day.

Local 234 was successful in negotiating a new three year contract for our brothers and sisters at MV paratransit. The contract has improved working conditions and wage increases in each year of the agreement. The contract ratification vote was held on Friday June 29, 2018 and was ratified by an overwhelming margin of 10 to 1. We have come a long way at MV Paratransit and we understand that we have a long way to go in gaining respectability for the entire paratransit industry.

We can take a few seconds to enjoy our success while simultaneously preparing to continue the fight.
TWU Welcomes New Members

UNION MEMBERS

Russell E. Gardner 05/04/1970
EF Sinclair 05/16/1972
Rogie L. Peek 05/01/1972
Louis L. Casta Jr 06/11/1973
Robert Colburn Jr. 06/11/1973
Warren H Luterman 07/09/1973
Michael J Zappone 11/05/1973
Chris C. Salter 01/28/1974
Byron S. Lockett Sr. 03/18/1974
William E. Wilson 04/08/1974

Woodland Section Officers with BA Paul Southard

Top Seniority TWU Local 234 Members
TWU Local 234 is taking action to support the appeals challenging the air permit for the gas-fired power plant at Midvale Depot, and urgently requested the city issued permit be revoked.

The existing air quality in Philadelphia, and specifically in the neighborhoods surrounding the Midvale Depot, is already unhealthy. Air pollution in the community impacts the health of SEPTA workers as well as the health of community residents. Approximately 700 of our members work at Midvale Depot. The union takes a variety of actions to protect the health and safety of all its members, and we are also deeply concerned about the well-being of SEPTA riders and members of our communities.

On January 23, 2018, at SEPTA’s monthly Joint Health and Safety Committee (JHSC) meeting, the Union raised serious and legitimate concerns about potential health impacts of the proposed gas-fired power plant at Midvale Depot. At that time, the Union requested that SEPTA conduct a full health impact analysis, using an approach such as Cumulative Impact/ Cumulative Risk Assessment (CRA), focused on the potential impact of air pollution emitted by the plant on SEPTA workers at the Depot.

Unfortunately, SEPTA refused to conduct a CRA, stating that “the project has already gone through permitting and the City of Philadelphia has recently issued SEPTA the air permit…”. Additionally, SEPTA’s Chief safety official stated there will be no more follow up on this topic.

Following that meeting, it became clear that Air Management Services did not properly evaluate the impact of pollution when the agency considered SEPTA’s permit application.

As a result of this egregious disregard for human health by SEPTA, and the failure of Air Management Services to protect the health of Local 234 members and community residents, the Union has recently sent a letter to the License and Inspection Board requesting the stated appeals be granted by revoking the permit for this facility to pollute the air. This is in addition to several other letters sent to SEPTA and L&I in opposition to the gas plant from elected officials such as Senators Sharif Street and Art Haywood, State Reps. Rosita Youngblood, Christopher Rabb, Stephen Kinsey, Isabella Fitzgerald, and City Councilwoman Cindy Bass.

For the last 2 years more than 50 local organizations have endorsed the opposition to SEPTA’s gas plant at Midvale. Local 234 joining the fight is an expression of our longstanding commitment to defend workers’ rights of health and safety and protect the community we serve. The move by Local 234 also strengthens a national social movement of labor and environmental coalitions that are demanding renewable sources of energy and resisting the construction of fossil fuel infrastructure as a way to mitigate the worst impacts of climate change and create jobs for the future.

For more information on the campaign please visit 350Philadelphia.org
We Will.
We Must.
Local 234.

the local.
MEET THE PARTNERS OF MARTIN LAW.
Your New Local TWU 234 Workers’ Comp Firm.

(left to right: Matt Wilson, Joseph Huttemann, George Martin, Al Carlson, John Dogum, Amit Shah)

Martin Law has been helping injured Pennsylvania workers get the benefits they deserve for nearly 40 years. We are proud to represent the dedicated members of Transport Workers Union Local 234. All six partners are certified as a specialist in the practice of workers’ compensation law by the Pennsylvania Bar Association’s Section on Workers’ Compensation Law, as authorized by the Pennsylvania Supreme Court.

If you get injured at work, we’re here to help. Call Martin Law – the in-person consultation is always FREE.

MAIN OFFICE:
Philadelphia • 1818 Market Street, 35th floor
Offices in: Malvern, Reading, Bristol, Allentown and Sunbury

WORKERS’ COMPENSATION • SOCIAL SECURITY DISABILITY • LONG-TERM DISABILITY • VETERANS BENEFITS