

LIFELINES

Unions Provide a Competitive Edge
for Contractors

UCOR's Mental Wellbeing Center
Is Leading the Way

Illinois Law Protects Workers from
Federal Rollbacks

MESSAGE FROM THE CO-CHAIRMEN



Brent Booker

LIUNA General President
and Labor Co-Chairman



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LIUNA General Secretary-Treasurer



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Affordability Crisis Takes Center Stage

Across working class communities, among Wall Street bankers and in the halls of Congress, one word is echoing louder than all the rest—affordability. The cost of groceries, childcare, housing and healthcare have stretched millions of people to the breaking point.

Consider that the wealthiest 10 percent of Americans now make up half of all consumer spending. Meanwhile, the administration's aggressive tariff policies are contributing to high prices, sticky inflation and growing uncertainty around the job market.

While working class families are feeling the sting of an economy that doesn't seem to be working for them, optimism over AI continues to drive the stock market to near all-time highs, delivering incredible wealth to those at the top of the ladder. The top one percent of earners in the U.S. now control 30 percent of the wealth, while the bottom 50 percent only have 2.5 percent. Affordability was also at the center of the longest government shutdown in U.S. history, with Democratic lawmakers seeking to keep healthcare costs from rising for 22 million Americans.

This affordability crisis is why it's so important for construction projects to keep running smoothly and for LIUNA members to stay on the job. When projects get halted due to economic pressures, or when funding gets pulled from politicians playing games, it's LIUNA members and other workers who pay the price.

That's why LIUNA was so vocal in opposing the current administration's halting of the Revolution Wind project in the Northeast, which put the jobs of 1,000 union workers in limbo. That's why LIUNA so strongly opposed the administration's move to cancel \$18 billion in funding for New York's Gateway Tunnel Project. These examples and others put a strain on the signatory construction firms that employ LIUNA members and the project owners who are seeking stable projects to invest in.

Shutting down projects shuts down LIUNA members' ability to put food on the table, to pay for housing, to get out of debt and to achieve the kind of financial stability that we all deserve. The superior wages, health and retirement benefits and safe working conditions provided by signatory contractors and earned by the hardworking men and women of LIUNA truly do have the power to protect.

LIUNA and its signatory partners allow everyone across the LIUNA network to afford a better life for ourselves and our families. That is a tremendous opportunity—and it's our job to share that message far and wide so that workers, project owners and politicians all feel the power of LIUNA.

When the safety, health and financial security of working people is at stake, we cannot afford to do anything less.

From all of us here at the Laborers' Health & Safety Fund of North America, we wish you and yours a very happy, healthy and safe holiday season.

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Unions Provide a Competitive Edge for Contractors

By Hannah Sabitoni

Some employers and politicians claim that unions lead to higher costs and more red tape. What they're missing is that when workers have a voice on the job, workplaces are safer, turnover is lower and productivity improves. These factors benefit both workers and employers in the long run.

The LHSFNA's joint labor-management model means we take the business owner's perspective into account and work toward safety solutions that benefit both sides. In fact, being signatory with LIUNA offers significant, often undervalued, advantages for employers, including access to a more skilled workforce, better projects, free health and safety services and increased competitiveness in the market.



The union safety advantage for workers is well-documented, but the benefits for contractors often go unrecognized. Instead of viewing unions as an obstacle, we want employers to see us as a strategic partner for long-term success.

Brent Booker

LIUNA General President and LHSFNA Labor Co-Chair

Access to a Superior and Stable Workforce

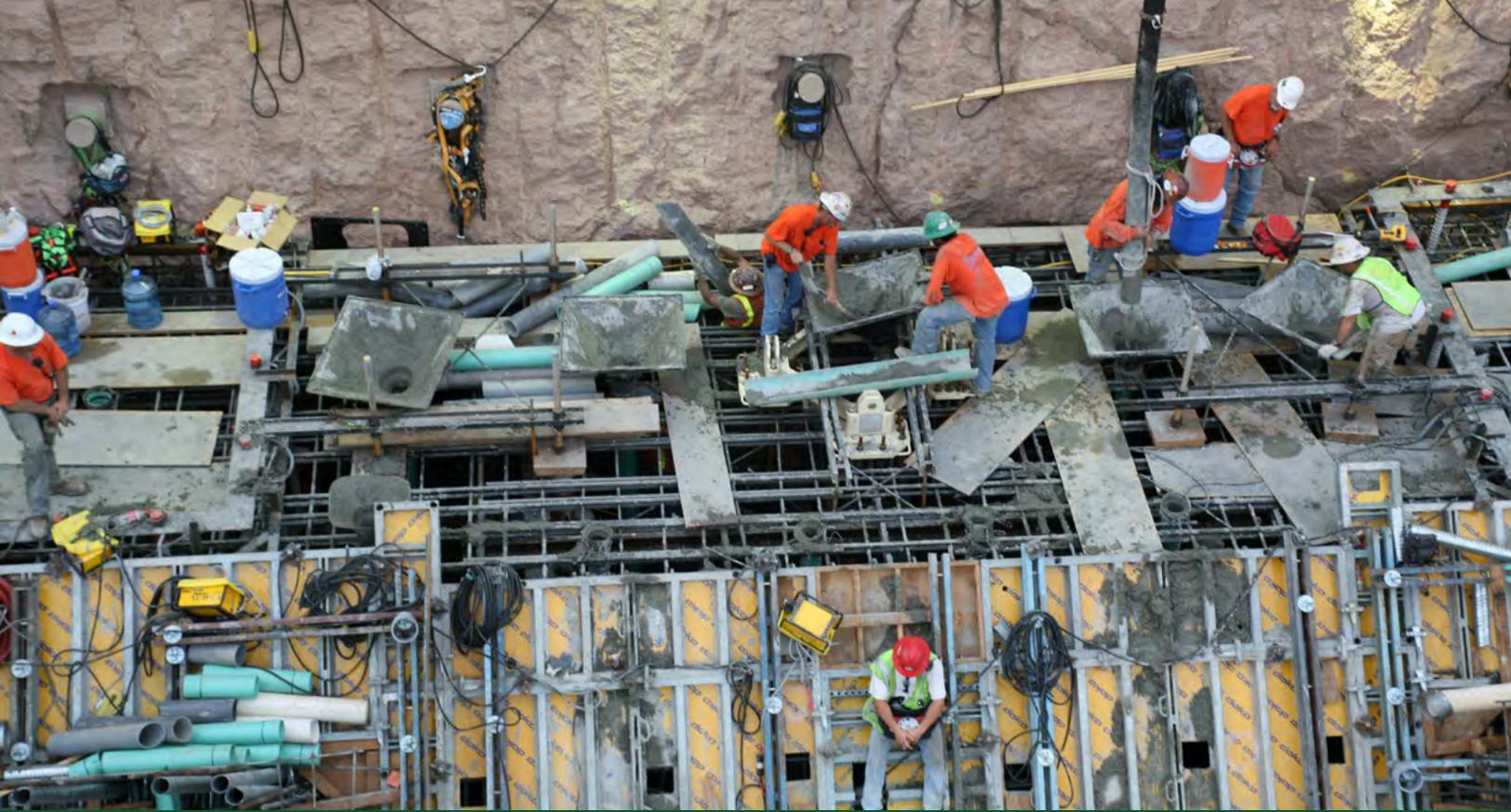
Being signatory with LIUNA ensures access to a highly qualified and reliable labor pool, which is critical for meeting project timelines and quality standards. The Associated General Contractors of America (AGC) reported that union contractors are 21 percent less likely to experience delays due to a shortage of workers and are 14 percent less likely to report difficulty in filling positions. And not only are there more workers available, but they tend to be better trained and more skilled too.

A survey conducted by Independent Project Analysis (IPA) found that contractors are more likely to rate union workers' skill level as above average or highly skilled, compared to nonunion workers. For example, 75 percent of project owners rated union pipefitters as above average or highly skilled compared to only 63 percent for open shop labor.

Complimentary Safety Services that Protect Your Bottom Line

Having access to highly skilled workers also contributes to a safer work environment, which leads to lower costs. That's because worksite injuries and illnesses are expensive and incur substantial direct and indirect costs. Some of the direct costs associated with safety violations and injuries are obvious: workers' compensation costs, medical expenses, legal services, OSHA fines and potential lawsuits. However the indirect costs such as lost productivity, administrative time for investigations, time spent hiring and retraining replacement workers and damage to a contractor's reputation can be even more significant.





Union-affiliated services—such as those offered by the LHSFNA—help control these costs and protect employers. These comprehensive safety and health services include benefits like:

- ▶ **On-Demand Safety Visits:** The Fund’s OSH Division staff visit worksites to observe conditions, evaluate hazards and check for regulatory compliance, offering written recommendations for safety and health interventions to protect workers and improve the company’s safety performance. This service can cost thousands if obtained from an outside organization, but comes free of charge from the LHSFNA.
- ▶ **Regulatory Compliance Assistance:** The LHSFNA assists with navigating OSHA investigations and citations, a service that can cost between \$500 and \$5,000 from outside consultants. We also answer regulation and enforcement questions, which can start at \$150–200 per hour externally. Noncompliance can lead to a poor company reputation and limit the ability to bid for more work.
- ▶ **Safety Training:** Union training funds such as the LIUNA Training and Education Fund develop and provide health and safety courses to complement skill and leadership training, assisting with training safety officers and supervisors in general safety management or site-specific hazards.

Enhanced Business Competitiveness

Beyond an improved workforce and safety record, unions also give contractors access to better jobs and fundamentally improve their credibility and reputation. For example, union jobsites have a verifiably better safety record than their nonunion counterparts. One study found that union jobsites were 19 percent less likely to have health and safety violations than nonunion jobsites. And when safety and health violations were present, OSHA inspectors issued 34 percent fewer violations per inspection on union sites compared to nonunion sites.

Having a reputation for being a safe and effective employer can open up doors for your business, as evidenced by Cincy Cuts, one of LIUNA’s signatory employers. After working with the LHSFNA to update their health and safety programs to meet the stringent requirements of a General Electric project, the contractor secured the contract. This partnership not only helped them win the job but also positioned them for additional opportunities that were previously out of reach.

“Working with the LHSFNA was a game-changer for Cincy Cuts,” said Josh Kilgore, Cincy Cuts partner. “Their partnership didn’t just help us secure a highly coveted contract; it fundamentally positioned us for better, larger opportunities that were previously unattainable. We truly value the support and expertise the LHSFNA provided.”

By actively partnering with unions, employers can transform their businesses to be inherently safer and more efficient. This collaboration drives down costs and maximizes the value of their best asset: their workers.



UCOR's Mental Wellbeing Center Is Leading the Way

By Nick Fox



United Cleanup Oak Ridge LLC is the lead environmental cleanup contractor at the Department of Energy's 32,000-acre Oak Ridge Reservation in east Tennessee. Tasked with performing some of the most high-hazard cleanup work in the U.S. on a 15-year, \$8.3 billion contract, the company has made it a priority to build a world-class safety culture that protects its workforce and helps attract and retain top talent.

That effort has paid off—this LIUNA signatory contractor has won USA Today's Top Workplaces USA Award three years running. When workforce surveys revealed that employees wanted more resources around mental health, it's no surprise that UCOR took action to ensure their teams stayed mission-ready. The company launched its Mental Wellbeing Center—a dedicated space with full-time staff that employees could visit during work hours.

"An 'all injuries are preventable' safety philosophy has always been at the core of UCOR's Cleanup Today for a Nuclear Tomorrow™ initiative, so we've expanded that emphasis to include a mental health component with onsite staff and resources," says UCOR President & CEO Ken Rueter.

Nearly a year after the Center opened the doors, we sat down with Navigate Program Manager Graeme Parsons and UCOR Wellbeing Counselor Kenneth Williams to find out what they've learned and how the initiative has grown.

"The response has been incredible. There are so many different life challenges that affect how we show up at work," said Parsons. "We have people coming in to talk about marital issues, about their grief after a loved one's passing. The Center gives us a way to engage with workers on their terms."

Early Successes & Strong Utilization

UCOR has a 2,500 person workforce (around half of which is skilled labor), and since the Center opened in February, about 115 different employees have attended more than 430 sessions. The Center's utilization rate of 6.5 percent is about five times the rate for the Employee Assistance Plan (EAP) available through UCOR workers' health benefits.

One of the reasons utilization is so high is that UCOR has built the Center around the realities of shift work and the needs of its workforce. That includes after-hours availability, no need to file a claim with insurance and the ability to receive up to seven sessions per life event.

"We try to help workers learn to cope with life, learn to focus on the moment and give them a sense of hope," said Williams. "The first step is knowing they can say anything in this room and won't be judged. Many of us may not have a place in our lives where we can do that. The Center gives workers that space."

UCOR's metrics show the Center is delivering a 4:1 return on investment through worker retention and recouping lost productivity. Direct impacts also include:

- ▶ Providing crisis intervention for six workers
- ▶ Preventing eight workers from being terminated
- ▶ An 89 percent reduction in lost productivity from presenteeism

Most importantly, 100 percent of visitors report improved wellbeing after their session.

Building Trust with the Workforce

One of the most impressive aspects of the Center is how quickly UCOR built trust with its workforce. We know that reducing the stigma of asking for help can be tough. How did UCOR get workers to actually show up to its new Wellbeing Center?

"We had around 30 face-to-face meetings across the entire reservation," said Parsons. "We explained how the Center would work, along with time for questions about concerns such as privacy and confidentiality. We knew safeguarding confidentiality was critical to building trust and worked hard to ensure utilizing the Center was kept secure and private."



Workers safely maneuver the former Low Intensity Test Reactor for safe disposal.



Kenneth Williams (right) meeting with a UCOR employee.

UCOR also took steps to make workers comfortable visiting the Center by locating it near their medical facilities on its main campus, and having a separate entrance and exit so workers don't pass one another as they're coming in for a session.

UCOR's Focus on "Mental Wellbeing" over "Mental Health"

According to Parsons and Williams, another part of reducing stigma around using the Center was a subtle but powerful choice in the language being used. Instead of calling it a mental health center, UCOR emphasized it as mental wellbeing.

"Mental wellbeing is not about diagnosing illness, it's about coping with life," said Williams. "That concept gives workers more leeway to be honest. They don't come in saying 'I'm depressed.' They come in saying 'I feel off' or 'I can't focus at work.' We start the conversation from there and talk about their goals. There's a lot you can do in seven sessions."

The result? Employees are reporting better wellbeing and a newfound appreciation for a company that genuinely cares about them.

"People come in for the first time and they say, 'Why in the world does my job care about my marriage or my kids?'" said Williams. "It's part of UCOR's Culture of Caring. And it goes a long way with workers to see that."

What's Next for UCOR's Mental Wellbeing Center?

Going forward, UCOR is already considering adding a second counselor. That would allow the Center to expand its group-based sessions and to continue hosting workshops, which they've recently added and received positive feedback on.

"We started a six-week support group on grief, and another on elder care," said Williams. "We're able to lead the discussion and let the group talk openly, surrounded by their peers going through a similar experience."

Beyond growing support group and workshop offerings, UCOR is also exploring options to add telehealth and offer services to workers' family members. They're also fielding requests from other DOE sites interested in bringing similar programs to their own workforce.

A Blueprint for an Industry in Need

Organizations looking to bring similar wellbeing support to their workers can learn a lot from UCOR, even if they don't have the resources for full-time staff or a static location to open their own Center.

Consider these core principles:

- ▶ Listen to workers and let their feedback shape the program
- ▶ Reduce stigma by normalizing conversations about everyday life challenges
- ▶ Provide flexible access to care that aligns with workers' schedules
- ▶ Take steps to embed wellbeing into the workplace culture

If UCOR has proved anything, it's that workers will show up when the support is authentic, accessible and free of stigma. And once they show up, UCOR is there to help—one conversation at a time.



New Data Links Extreme Heat to Thousands of Excess Workplace Incidents

By Hannah Sabitoni

The fact that extreme workplace heat can be incredibly hazardous to workers isn't news. However, new data reveals that the true cost of working in these conditions is even higher than we thought. A recent study, "A Nationwide Analysis of Heat and Workplace Injuries" led by researchers from Harvard University and George Washington University found that high heat contributes to at least 27,953 excess workplace injuries every year. And these aren't cases of heat stroke or heat exhaustion; they're the "hidden toll" of excessive heat that flies under the radar.

In discussions of heat in construction, heat stress usually takes center stage. But for the first time, this study shows how extreme temperatures don't just make workers sick; they also increase their risk of making mistakes, which can result in workplace incidents. This is because prolonged exposure to elevated heat significantly impairs both physical and mental function, leading to worsened judgment, reduced attention span, slower reaction time, muscle fatigue and reduced hand-eye coordination. All of this can lead to an increased risk of slips, trips, falls, cuts and other occupational injuries.

Simply put, a worker who is overheated is a worker who is far more likely to make a mistake, leading to an injury that could have been prevented by simple heat safety measures and that may not even be categorized as "heat-related."

The study also suggests these effects worsen as the temperature increases and improve with cooler temperatures.

While this may seem obvious, there has been controversy over trigger temperatures in heat standards and whether they're necessary. This study shows they do actually matter, which can help state legislatures create more effective heat rules that better protect workers. According to the research:

- ▶ Injury risks begin to rise when the Heat Index reaches around 85°F and increases sharply after 90°F
- ▶ On days where the temperature index hit 105°F to 110°F, the odds of a work injury were 15 percent to 20 percent higher compared to a day at 80°F

The Urgent Need for a Strong OSHA Heat Standard

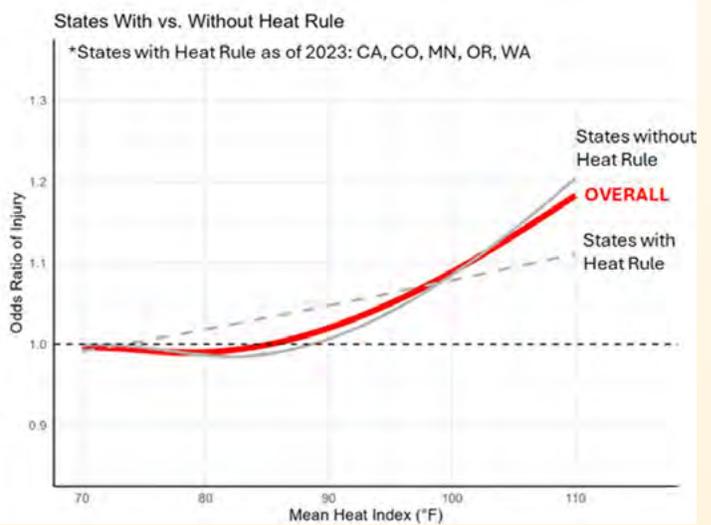
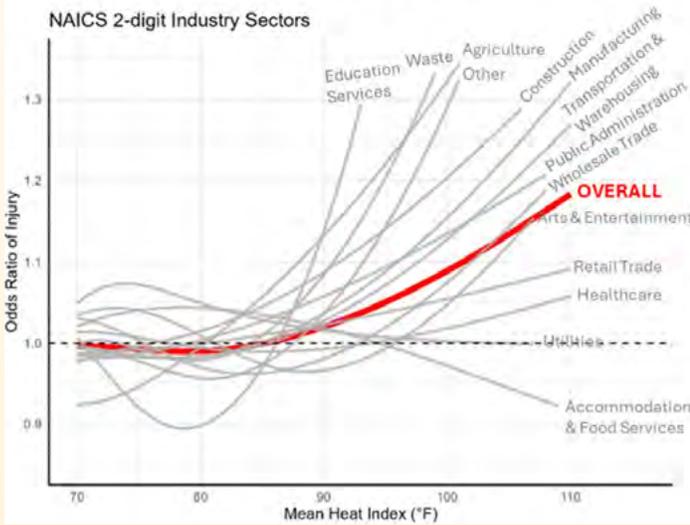
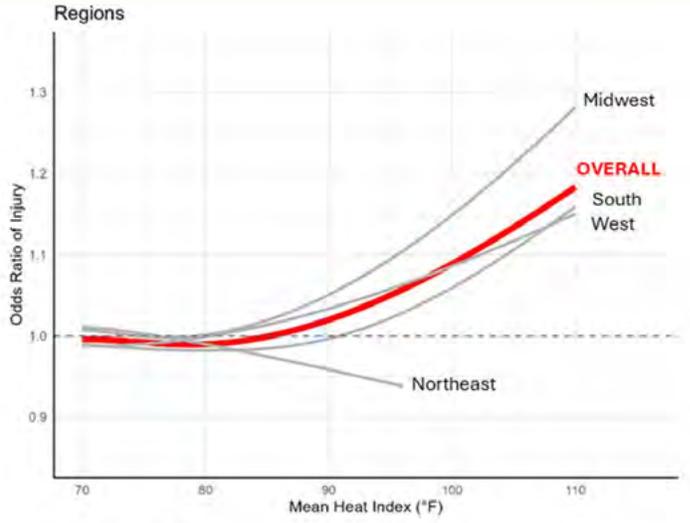
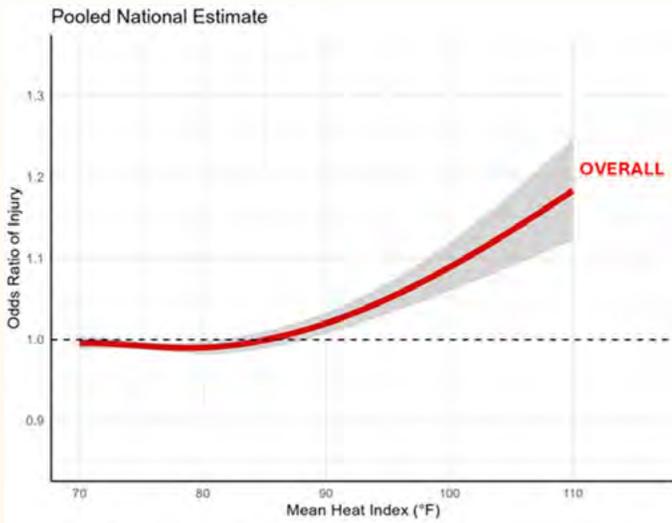
In states that have implemented their own workplace heat exposure regulations—such as California, Oregon, Maryland and Washington—employees have a lower risk of injury on hot days. California's standard, for example, has been shown to reduce heat-related injuries by 15 to 27 percent in high-hazard sectors like construction and agriculture. The beneficial effect is strongest at higher temperatures.



For the first time, we have indisputable, concrete evidence that protective heat standards work, but there aren't enough of them. Implementing a national heat standard is the only way to safeguard worker health, reduce the "hidden" cost of these injuries, set clear expectations for employers and ensure that no one is injured or killed simply for doing their job.

David Rampone

LHSFNA Management Co-Chair



A growing body of evidence is affirming what we've been fighting for: we need comprehensive, science-based regulations in order to effectively protect American workers from heat—an issue that isn't going away anytime soon. OSHA must implement a national standard that requires employers to provide mandatory water, rest, shade, acclimatization plans, training and clear emergency response procedures that are based on science.

Moving Forward

As our nation continues to grapple with frequent extreme weather events, the LHSFNA will continue to advocate for the working men and women who build this country and fight for the most protective standards possible. For more information, LIUNA affiliates can order our heat illness prevention publications and reach out to our Occupational Safety & Health Division for any direct support.



Medical Professional Spotlight



Meet Della Duran, LVN

Over the past decade, Licensed Vocational Nurse (LVN) Della Duran has become a familiar and trusted face at Health Fairs across the Pacific Southwest Region. Her warm approach and genuine passion for helping Laborers take charge of their health have made her a favorite among members and their families.

Her favorite part about participating in these events? Meeting members and their families year after year. "It's beyond rewarding when members come back and say, 'I followed up with my doctor and I'm getting my health on the right path,'" Duran shared.

Sometimes it's the little changes that can make the biggest difference. One of Duran's most meaningful memories came when a longtime attendee returned to thank her for her guidance. "He said if it wasn't for the screening and advice I had given the previous year, he may have had a heart attack or stroke. It warmed my heart to know what we do makes a difference for our members."

For Duran, that's what makes health fairs so valuable—they give workers a chance to check in on their health and recognize when it might be time to make a change. And when that time comes, she offers simple, realistic advice: "Making changes doesn't happen overnight, but small, consistent steps toward your goal will get you there."

Duran entered the health and wellness field with one goal: to make a difference, even a small one, in helping others reach their health goals. Through the Health Fair program, she's been able to live that mission for over ten years.

Outside of work, she and her daughter stay active by mixing fitness with fun—axe throwing and visiting the archery range whenever they can.



LEAN LIUNA Level 3: Part-Time or Volunteer Staff



By Nick Fox

The LHSFNA's LEAN LIUNA—Laborers Escaping Adversity Now—initiative is bringing the power of peer support directly to LIUNA members and their families. Built by Laborers, for Laborers, these programs help LIUNA members and their families:

- ▶ Take full advantage of the healthcare benefits available to them
- ▶ Navigate coverage-related issues and get connected with the right provider and resources for their needs
- ▶ Stay engaged with fellow Laborers who support their recovery and well-being

Level 1 lays the foundation by gathering and distributing available resources to members. Level 2 uses peer support groups to reduce stigma and let members know they're not alone. A Level 3 LEAN program utilizes Peer Support Specialists who assist on a part-time or volunteer basis to engage with members and their dependents in need. This may be in addition to their regular job duties.



Level 3 brings a more formalized type of peer support to members looking to volunteer to assist working families in need. Whether it's through Level 3 or another level of LEAN LIUNA, there are actions you can take to make a difference in the lives of members and their families. When we talk about looking out for our Brothers and Sisters, we're talking about programs like LEAN LIUNA.

Michael F. Sabitoni

LIUNA General Secretary-Treasurer and LHSFNA Trustee

Level 3: Flexible Options in a Formalized Program

A Level 3 program is a flexible alternative when resources for a full-time program are unavailable or when geography makes a full program unfeasible. Some program options include:

- ▶ **Volunteers:** This could be someone who is already providing informal peer support or is the “go to” person on their jobsite or within their LIUNA Local.
- ▶ **Part-time peer support:** A part-time role or stipend may allow someone to be fairly compensated for their time when funding for full-time staff isn't practical.
- ▶ **Phone hotline or email:** While it's preferred for peer support to be available 24/7, an 800 number with a voicemail and a dedicated email inbox can also be used to receive requests outside of work hours.

Level 3 Program Benefits and Considerations

The flexibility of Level 3 allows for robust peer support even when full-time funding isn't available. Due to its low cost, this type of program can also scale more easily. However, there are some potential challenges to plan around when considering a Level 3 program.

- ⚠ **Burnout risk:** setting clear boundaries can help a Level 3 peer specialist balance their normal workload and LEAN LIUNA duties.
- ⚠ **Conflicts of interest:** Peer specialists with dual roles may find it difficult to maintain boundaries.
- ⚠ **Training needs:** Volunteers or part-time staff may lack formal training initially, so providing training resources will be crucial for success.

If you're interested in learning more about LEAN LIUNA or starting a program in your area, reach out to us at lifelines@lhsfna.org or contact the Fund at 202-628-5465.

Become a LEAN LIUNA Ally

Everyone in the LIUNA family has a part to play in making members feel supported, and creating real change takes all of us.

Show your support for LEAN LIUNA and help end the stigma around asking for help by taking the LEAN LIUNA Ally pledge at lhsfna.org/about-lean-liuna. Once you do, we'll add you to our map of Allies so fellow LIUNA Brothers and Sisters can see that we're all in this together. As a thank you, every Ally can opt-in to receive a LEAN LIUNA Ally hardhat sticker sent by the LHSFNA.

2025 Highlights

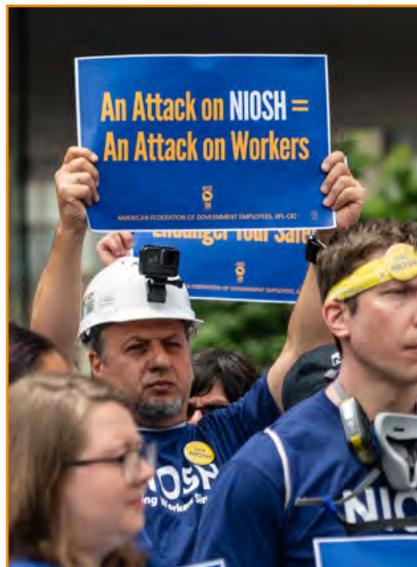
By Hannah Sabitoni

This year brought significant changes, some challenges and several wins to our industry. We were called to stand shoulder to shoulder with our Brothers and Sisters and continue fighting for the rights and protections of all working men and women. **Join us in taking a look at this recap of just some of the year's highlights.**

The LHSFNA: A Year in Review

Campaigning for a National Heat Standard

The OSH Division advocated tirelessly for OSHA's proposed Heat Injury and Illness Prevention standard. Throughout the year, the Fund testified in front of Congress and, in partnership with LIUNA, submitted comments in support of the rule. Together, we garnered 6,400 signatures from LIUNA affiliates and members nationwide to make our voice heard.



Fighting to Save NIOSH

The Fund played a major role in an industry-wide effort to protect and restore funding and staffing for the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH). Our staff advocated on the public stage: attending rallies, signing onto letters and submitting comments to the Department of Health and Human Services. Ultimately, the agency was partially restored.



Promoting Wellness through Blueprint for Balance (B4B):

The LIUNA family continued to find balance in their busy lives with assistance from the LHSFNA's B4B program. Participants built community through engagement events, health challenges and a growing library of wellness resources such as workout videos and healthy recipes.



Advancing Mental Health through LEAN LIUNA

Since its launch, the Laborers Escaping Adversity Now (LEAN LIUNA) program has grown considerably. Over the course of the year, new programs were put into place and LIUNA Regions laid the groundwork for more in 2026, 300 allies pledged to be a safe and supportive space for their Brothers and Sisters and a collection of new mental health and suicide prevention resources were distributed to the field.



Message from the Executive Director:

I couldn't be prouder of the significant strides the Fund made this year in the fight for our working men and women. From tirelessly campaigning for a national heat standard, to bringing support directly to members through LEAN LIUNA, 2025 was a year of profound wins. I look forward to carrying this momentum into 2026 as we continue to build on these crucial initiatives and expand our support for the LIUNA family.

Lisa M. Sabitoni

Executive Director, Laborers' Health & Safety Fund of North America

Securing Healthcare Savings for Members

The Fund negotiated a new LaboreRx contract and coordinated a partnership expanding the coalition by 45,000 covered lives, two moves securing even more savings for LIUNA members covered by participating health and welfare funds.



Supporting Signatory Contractors

The Fund continued to provide customized support to ensure our signatory employers remain competitive and in compliance. At every turn, our staff helped develop site-specific safety plans, audited jobsites for hazards and helped navigate the shifting regulatory environment. In some cases, this support allowed our contractors access to better projects.



Bringing Health & Safety to Laborers' Front Door

Through our various programs and services, the Fund provided assistance to LIUNA affiliates across the nation. This year, we supported 70+ health fairs, distributed over 450,000 Sun Sense Plus products and sent out over 40,000 publications on a variety of health and safety topics.



Standing in Solidarity with our Trades Sisters

The LHSFNA was proud to join 6,000 union sisters for the 2025 Tradeswomen Build Nations Conference in Chicago, where we heard empowering stories from inspiring women, paraded our LIUNA pride down the streets of Chicago and led discussions on mental health in the construction industry.



Illinois Law Protects Workers from Federal Rollbacks

By Hannah Sabitoni

In a big win for working people, Illinois has passed Senate Bill 1976 (SB 1976), a new law designed to secure crucial worker protections in the state. This legislation is a clear message from Illinois: even if federal laws get weakened or repealed, the state will maintain strong safeguards for its workers. As the federal government pursues a deregulatory agenda—which threatens federal OSHA and its existing health and safety standards—a law like this is crucial now more than ever.

Since the president took office this January, there have been significant changes to the regulatory landscape with respect to occupational safety and health. The Department of Labor (DOL) proposed to rewrite or appeal more than 60 workplace regulations, cut OSHA's budget by eight percent, reduce penalties for workplace safety violations and effectively end NIOSH in its entirety. All of these actions impair the government's ability to adequately protect working people.

What's in the Bill?

This new law, championed by State Senator Robert Peters, takes effect January 1, 2026. Its core purpose is to prevent state agencies from adopting any new rules that are less protective than the federal laws that were in place as of April 28, 2025—before any rollbacks or reductions in force took effect. The law specifically requires the Illinois Department of Labor (IDOL) to restore any repealed federal occupational safety rules that aren't already covered by state law.

This proactive measure ensures that Illinois workers won't see their rights vanish due to changes made at the federal level. It also allows workers to take legal action against employers who violate these reinforced state rules. Essentially, the law acts as a backstop, guaranteeing the state maintains strong protections for wage standards and occupational safety and health, even in the absence of federal regulations.

As Senator Peters said in a press release, "This law sends a clear message that in Illinois, we fight for working people, and we will not back down."

Why This Matters

The Fund is dedicated to protecting the health and safety of workers and their families and we see SB 1976 as a critical and necessary step in safeguarding health and safety. When federal OSHA can't effectively deliver on its mission to protect workers, the burden falls to the rest of us—unions, employers and state legislatures—to step up.

The LHSFNA commends Illinois for taking decisive action to guarantee worker safety and well-being, regardless of changes in Washington D.C. This move secures peace of mind for employees and their families, ensuring their basic rights to a safe job and fair compensation are protected by state law.

"It's refreshing to see the state take such decisive, proactive action," said Nate Schreiber, Industrial Hygienist with the LHSFNA. "We fully support Governor Pritzker's leadership in establishing a regulatory backstop, because without this, our members could potentially lose their protections overnight."

We at the LHSFNA hope to see more of this kind of proactive, worker-first legislation across the country and encourage other states to take similar action. State-level efforts like SB 1976 are vital to maintaining and strengthening a safe and healthy environment for all working people. However, even in the absence of regulation, employers can take proactive steps to protect their workforce. The LHSFNA is here to help any signatory contractor develop job-specific, evidence-based safety and health programs. Check out lhsfna.org/occupational-safety-health for more information.

Guide to Capturing Jobsite Photos & Videos



We all want to capture LIUNA members at their best—strong, skilled and safe. This guide highlights key conditions to watch for so your photos and videos promote safe practices and set a good example for current and future members. When visiting a construction site, you should also protect yourself by wearing PPE as well.



Head (*Hard Hat or Safety Helmet*):

- ✓ Worn forward, level, secure
- ✓ Chin straps fastened
- ✗ Worn over hoods, beanies or baseball caps
- ✗ Missing suspension or worn backwards without adjusting suspension

Face (*Face shield and Respiratory Protection*):

- ✓ Face shield and goggles worn while chipping, grinding or when flying debris/sparks are present
- ✗ Respiratory protection worn with facial hair/beard

Eyes (*Safety Glasses*):

- ✓ ANSI-approved safety glasses
- ✓ Side shields cover eyes completely
- ✗ Regular glasses or sunglasses

Ears (*Ear protection*):

- ✓ Visible when working with loud equipment
- ✗ Ear protection falling off or out of ears

Hands (*Gloves*):

- ✓ Gloves are present when working with or around cut, chemical or impact hazards
- ✓ Gloves are free from visible damage including holes, punctures or wear

Feet (*Shoes*):

- ✓ Boots are either steel or composite toe

No worker should be pictured wearing broken, damaged or missing PPE.

Face shields, safety glasses and high visibility safety gear should not be excessively dirty.



Garry Ero's Path to Balance: Tracking, Training and Transformation

By Natalie Kulick

For LIUNA member Garry Ero, hard work has never been the problem.

Since joining the union at 20, he's worked his way from the field to leadership—first as a pipe layer, then in concrete and later as a Field Representative for LIUNA Local 190 in Albany, New York. Today, he serves as the Assistant Director of Training for the Eastern New York Laborers Training Center. But while his career thrived, his health quietly slipped to the bottom of his priority list. That is, until one night forced him to make a change.

"I've always been a big guy. I'm six foot five," Garry says. "When I graduated high school, I was 320 pounds. I stayed around that weight for most of my career because I was active in the field

and burning a lot of calories. But once I became a Field Rep and spent more time behind the wheel—or now in my current position behind a desk—the weight steadily crept up."

By the summer of 2024, Garry weighed roughly 370 pounds. One night, while lying in bed, he felt something that stopped him cold and became the turning point in his health journey.

"I felt like I was having a heart attack," Garry remembers. "I wasn't sure what was happening, but I didn't feel right. I lay there just hoping I would wake up in the morning. When I did, I knew something had to change."



Healthy Habits, Not Quick Fixes

To stay consistent, Garry built a meal prep routine that makes healthy eating automatic. “I meal-prepare everything for the week on one day on the weekends,” he says. “All my food is portioned into containers, ready to grab before I head out for the day.”

He focuses on whole, minimally processed foods: ground turkey, sweet potatoes, avocado and homemade snacks like granola bars made from rolled oats, raw honey and nuts. “I make everything from scratch that I can,” he says. “I cut out seed oils and processed ingredients. Even my peanut butter is just peanuts and salt.” His family’s meals don’t always match his schedule—especially since he’s an early riser—but he’s learned to make peace with that. “I eat at different times, but we still sit down together when we can,” he says. “This is something I needed to do for me, and my family understands that.”

Doing It for Himself

That mindset shift—doing it for himself—is what Garry says made the difference this time. “Before, I was losing weight because everyone else was trying to do it. It was a fad or a challenge, but not something I was fully, 100 percent in on,” he says. “This time, I told myself, I’m not doing this for anyone but me. I want to be around for my kids. I don’t want to be 400 pounds at age 50.”

Since losing the weight, Garry has been able to come off blood pressure and cholesterol medications and no longer struggles with the leg swelling that once required a stent procedure. “My confidence is back. I feel so much better,” he says. “I’m not claiming to be fully ready to go shirtless at the pool, but I’m closer than I’ve ever been.”

Now he’s focused on maintenance and chasing what he calls an “almost impossible goal.”

“I want six-pack abs,” he says, grinning. “But honestly, I’m looking forward to keeping up with my new lifestyle. I proved to myself that I can do it—and that’s what keeps me going.”

A Plan That Could Last

Garry’s weight had fluctuated before. He’d tried diets or joined coworkers in weight-loss challenges, but nothing stuck. He’d lose 100 pounds one time, 90 another, but the weight always came back. “I had no real plan or direction,” he says. “I’d just eat fruits and vegetables, basically feel like I was starving myself, and then rebound hard.”

This time, he knew it had to be different. “I told myself, if I’m going to try this again, I need a plan I can sustain.”

That plan started with tracking his food intake using the MyFitnessPal app, a tool he’d used in the past but that he now uses with more discipline. “I literally measure everything,” Garry says. “When I compared what I thought was a serving size to the actual measurement of what I’d grown accustomed to eating, I realized I’d been eating four times the amount I should have been. It was a real eye-opener.”

He committed to portion control, calorie tracking and movement every single day. He set a realistic calorie goal based on his weight and tracked his progress weekly. “My Apple Watch syncs with MyFitnessPal, which makes it easy to track my steps and calories burned throughout the day,” he explains. “That combination is a game-changer. It takes all the guesswork out.”

Building Momentum

At first, Garry started small with lightweight strength training and short walks between sets. “Nothing heavy—just 50 pounds or less, lots of reps, lots of sets,” he says. “Between sets, I take a lap down the basketball court and back. Those laps alone during my workouts give me 5,000 steps.”

As he built consistency, he increased his activity. “Now I hit 20,000 steps a day and aim to burn about 1,600 calories through movement,” he says. “It sounds like a lot, but once you build the habit, it’s just part of your day.”

When an unexpected shoulder injury forced him to pause weightlifting, Garry didn’t let it derail his progress. “I hurt my shoulder on a water-park ride, so I couldn’t lift for a while,” he says. “But I figured, I don’t need my arm to run. So I started running instead, sometimes up to 11 miles a day, just to stay on track until I healed.”

Finding workarounds when obstacles appeared became a theme of his journey. “It’s not about perfection,” Garry says. “It’s about staying consistent and adapting when life happens.”

The result? In just seven months, Garry lost 153 pounds and has kept that weight off for more than a year.

Health and Safety Headlines



Popular Menopause Treatment Will No Longer Carry Certain Warning Labels

The FDA recently announced plans to remove the "black box" warnings from many hormone therapy (HRT) drugs used to treat symptoms of menopause. The agency stated that the severe warnings about risks like heart attack, stroke and breast cancer are based on outdated science from studies performed over two decades ago. This reversal aims to encourage wider adoption of HRT, which updated data suggests may offer protective effects against cardiovascular diseases, Alzheimer's and bone fractures. However, the warning for endometrial cancer on estrogen-alone products remains.

Occupational Heat Exposure Linked to Chronic Kidney Disease in Workers

New research finds a link between chronic occupational heat stress and the development of chronic kidney disease (CKD). Researchers are calling CKD the first chronic illness tied directly to climate change, with workers who perform heavy manual labor outdoors—such as those in construction, agriculture and landscaping—at the highest risk. Repetitive episodes of acute kidney injury, caused by repeated dehydration during hot conditions, can lead to the loss of kidney function over time. Simple interventions like water, rest and shade are proven to mitigate this threat.

Immigration Crackdown Chills Construction Labor Market

Federal immigration crackdowns are sending a "chill" through the construction industry, creating fear among Latino and immigrant workers. Reports indicate that large numbers of workers are being detained or are choosing to stay home, fearing arrest and deportation even when performing essential work. Industry leaders warn that the construction sector—which already faces a significant workforce shortage—could be severely impacted by these actions and make it difficult to complete necessary infrastructure projects.



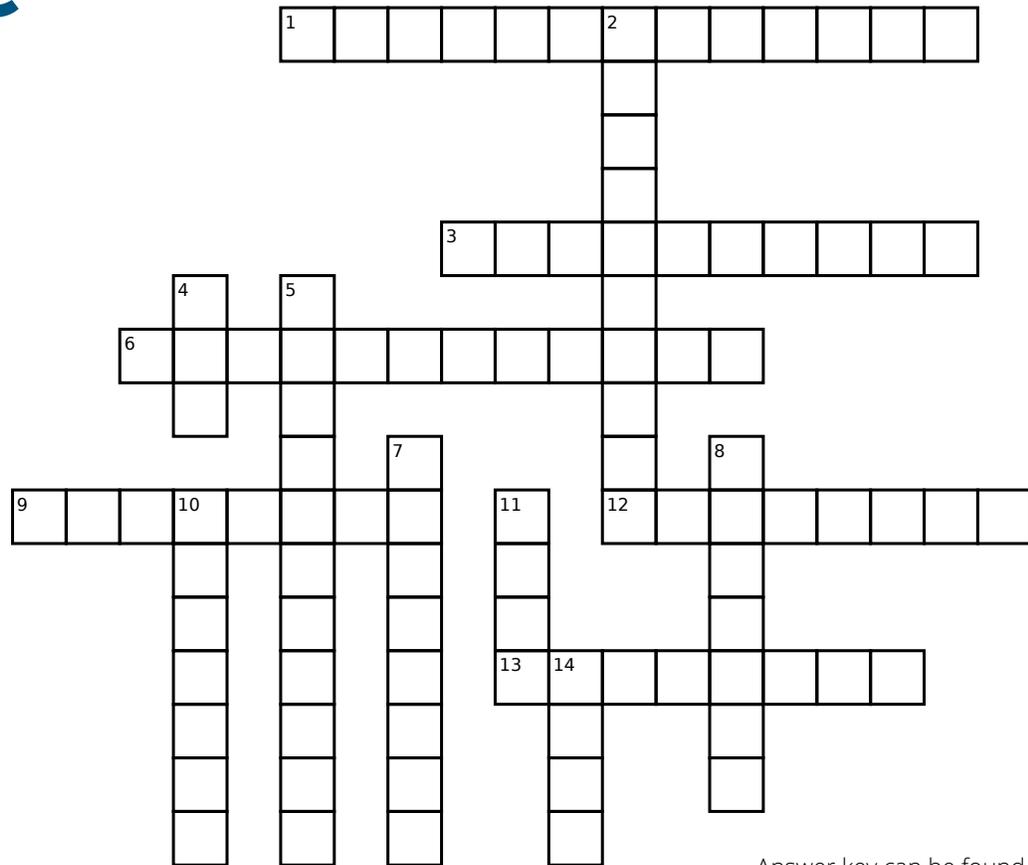
Survey Shows Weight Loss Drugs Are Bringing Down the Country's Obesity Rate

The U.S. adult obesity rate has declined for the first time in years, dropping from a record high of nearly 40 percent in 2022 to 37 percent in 2025. This significant decrease, which represents an estimated 7.6 million fewer obese adults, coincides with a sharp rise in the use of GLP-1 drugs like Ozempic. Gallup's data shows the percentage of adults using these medications has more than doubled since early 2024, reaching 12 percent in 2025.

By Hannah Sabitoni

Crossword Puzzle

Put your health and safety knowledge to the test with this LIUNA-themed crossword! All clues relate to workplace safety, wellness and the work we do at the LHSFNA. **Can you get them all right?**



Answer key can be found on the back.

Down:

2. A jobsite practice meant to prevent strains and sprains
4. Many LIUNA members have access to free therapy and counseling through this benefit
5. This is the core of the LEAN LIUNA model
7. This state just passed a law to protect health and safety regulations for workers
8. The organs recently discovered to be impacted by climate change and extreme heat
10. A common pain reliever that's been the subject of recent headlines
11. Providing this LHSFNA service after a traumatic workplace accident is crucial—some might even say critical
14. The best way to control the flow of construction vehicles, equipment and workers in a highway work zone

Across:

1. Tanks, vaults, manholes and tunnels are all examples of this
3. This injury is why it's important to keep your feet warm and dry
6. According to recent studies this head covering is more protective than a hard hat
9. Otherwise known as the stress hormone
12. Slope it, shore it, ____ (trench safety adage)
13. This prevalent disease comes in two forms and affects almost 12 percent of Americans



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Crossword Answer Key: 1. Confined space, 2. Ergonomics, 3. Trenchfoot, 4. EAP, 5. Peer support, 6. Safety helmet, 7. Illinois, 8. Kidneys, 9. Cortisol, 10. Tylenol, 11. CISD, 12. Shield it, 13. Diabetes, 14. ITCP

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