

# FIRST LOCAL NEWS

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June 2021



Thousands in Missouri  
to lose jobless  
benefits | p6

Semiconductor  
shortage lay off  
continues | p9

Local 249 members Jay Bosler and Erica Eckart were presented with the James "Frog" Moran Solidarity Award at the May membership meeting for volunteering to help laid off members with unemployment and sub pay issues during the shutdown. Photo by Don Lehman.

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*Shane Thompson, left to right, and Jerry Wood of Teamsters Local 955 joined Local 249 members Shirley Mata, Gary Thomas, Greg Smith, Austin McFarland and Luke Taylor to demand that Gov. Parson and the state legislature fund Medicaid expansion in Missouri. Voters approved Medicaid expansion in the state in the last election, but Republican politicians refuse to carry out the voter's will. Also attending, but not pictured, were Jessica and Aurora Bertocci and Chris Thornberry.*



*New members are sworn in at the May membership meeting. Photo by Don Lehman.*



*UAW Local 249 and 31 activists turned out in big numbers May 19 to support a strike by low-wage workers in Kansas City demanding \$15 an hour and a union. Photo by Don Lehman.*

## First Local News

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**Photographer** Don Lehman

### UAW Local 249

8040 NE 69 Highway  
Pleasant Valley, Mo. 64068  
816-454-6333

### Officers of Local 249

**President** Jason Starr  
**1st Vice President** Tony Renfro  
**2nd Vice President** Tom Carr  
**Recording Secretary** Shirley Mata  
**Financial Secretary** Dana Davidson  
**Treasurer** Chrissy Kline  
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**Sergeant at Arms** Leon Allen  
**Guide** Gary Thomas  
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**Team Solutions Bargaining Chair** David Norris  
**Retiree Representative** John Lowe

The Regular Membership Meeting of United Automobile Workers Amalgamated Local Union 249 is held on the third Sunday of each month at 2:00 p.m. in the local union hall, 8040 NE 69 Highway, Pleasant Valley, Mo. The Executive Board Meeting is held at 1:00 p.m. prior to the Regular Membership Meeting.

### UAW-Ford Joint Programs

#### Apprentice Training

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#### Benefits

Steve Hibbs, Derron Joyner and Jason Hartman 816-454-6333

#### Employee Involvement

Chad Troncin 816-459-1372

Darroyce Thornton 816-459-1490

#### Employee Support Services

Kenny Alexander 816-459-1226

#### Health and Safety

Ed Samborski 816-459-1210 • Terry Tharp 816-459-1407

Ulysses Bales 816-459-1605 • Joe Camper 816-459-5559

Dave Sambol 816-459-1223

#### Quality

Kelly Loveall and Jeff Wright 816-459-1232

#### Dealer Rep. Danny Mata

#### Job Sourcing and Production Standards

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### Helpful Numbers

**Quality Hotline** 1-866-723-3937

**Employee Health Services** 816-459-1226

**National Employee Service Center** 1-800-248-4444

**Blue Care** 816-395-2700

**Blue Cross PPO** 1-800-482-5146

**Preferred Care Blue PPO** 816-395-3193

**Child Care Referrals** 866-327-7952

**UNICARE Life Insurance** 1-800-843-8184

**UNICARE Medical/Disability Leave Claims** 1-877-475-9652

**Delta Dental (Active)** 844-223-8520

**Delta Dental (Retired)** 800-524-0149

**United Concordia Dental Plan** 1-800-937-6432

**Ford A,X,& Z Plan** 1-800-348-7709

[www.fordvehicleprograms.com](http://www.fordvehicleprograms.com)

**UAW-Ford Legal Services** 800-482-7700

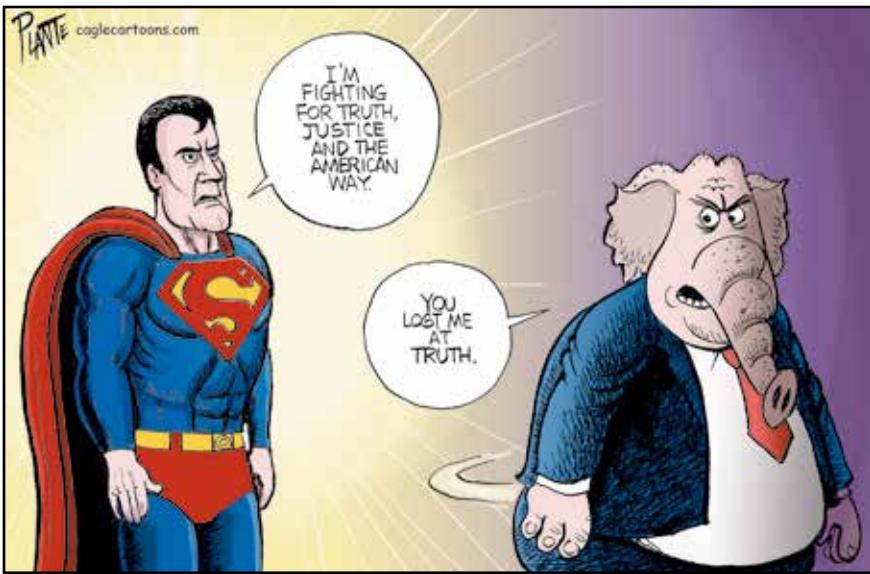
**UAW-Ford TESPHE** 1-800-248-4444

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## UAW ethics reforms update

By Rory Gamble

**S**ince November of 2019, our union has taken many significant steps forward in moving past this dark chapter in our history and rebuilding trust with UAW members. I have said from my first days in this office that I would be transparent and share all that we are doing on behalf of this great union of ours to move our union forward.

We stated when we began this process that the International Union would seek to recover any misused funds or monies owed to the union. I have been very clear about this and, along with the IEB, have worked to aggressively pursue restitution. I am pleased to tell you that restitution orders have been entered by the United States District Court in Detroit against former UAW personnel who have been convicted of crimes, requiring them to repay the UAW for misused funds. By way of example, an order of restitution to the UAW in the amount of \$300,000 was issued by the court against former UAW member Nick Robinson. More restitution orders are being sought against others who betrayed this union and their members, including Gary Jones and Vance Pearson.

In the matter of former president Dennis Williams, the International Union recently received \$132,000 as restitution of union funds he misused for personal lodging, golf, meals and liquor. We are currently in discussion with lawyers who represent former UAW vice president Norwood Jewell and former UAW presidents Dennis Williams and Gary Jones and their insurers concerning repayment to the UAW of legal fees previously expended by the union on their behalf.

Also, the sale of Cabin #4 at Black Lake Conference Center is proceeding, and we anticipate the closing of that transaction within the next month or so.

Since 2019, the UAW has proactively weeded out individuals who put their personal interests above our members' interests and who abused

their positions of trust to defraud our union and our membership, with those individuals being investigated and charged internally by the UAW, permanently expelled from the union and, in several cases, criminally prosecuted.

We have engaged nationally recognized financial and compliance experts to assist us in a top-to-bottom review of our financial, accounting and ethical policies and controls. We are implementing deep changes to strengthen those systems at every level.

Last March, we established an Ethics Hotline to provide a confidential system for members to submit any concerns they have about misconduct. We hired an independent Ethics Officer and retained a third-party compliance firm dedicated to investigating allegations of financial or ethical misconduct. In February, we announced the establishment of the Member Advisory Committee on Ethics. The members of this committee are rank-and-file active UAW members who were selected through a blind draw by our Ethics Officer.

Finally, we entered into an agreement with the U.S. Attorney's Office last December that provides for the appointment of an Independent Monitor who, for a period of time, will provide an extra and independent set of eyes on our union's financial and disciplinary processes and provide complete assurance to our members that the reforms we have initiated take permanent root. We anticipate the federal judge overseeing the agreement will appoint the Independent Monitor later this month.

## Labor News From the World Wide Web

# The Picket Line

## UAW willing to fight GM to unionize 2 new battery plants

**T**he UAW is prepared to battle General Motors at two new battery cell factories if the automaker won't allow a simplified process to organize workers there.

"If they choose the low road, we'll fight," Cindy Estrada, UAW vice president and director of the Organizing Department, told the Free Press this week.

At issue in the new plants, which are under construction and are joint ventures that aren't automatically UAW-represented, is a process that would allow workers to check a box on cards to allow them to organize, versus a drawn-out, traditional vote process. The UAW prefers the simplified process because a vote allows for counter-campaigning the union views as unfair. — *Detroit Free Press*

## UAW moves closer to vote with court order

**M**embers of the United Auto Workers will get the chance to vote this fall on changing the way the union's top officers are selected.

The referendum to alter the union constitution must be held by Nov. 12, which is exactly six months after an order signed by U.S. District Judge David Lawson. The ruling enforces the consent decree the UAW negotiated with the U.S. Department of Justice in the wake of a scandal that led to criminal charges against a dozen UAW officer and staff members.

Former TARP watchdog Neil Barofsky got court approval to become the union's monitor for the next six years.

Lawson's order also named Neil Barofsky as the Independent Monitor of the UAW, which is also part of the terms of the Consent Decree.

Barofsky will provide oversight of the union for a period of six years. He also will oversee, with the Department of Labor, a binding and secret-ballot referendum of the UAW's membership to determine whether to change the organization's elections from the current delegate system to a direct election model, for the UAW President and members of the UAW's Executive Board. — *The Detroit Bureau*

## Ex-UAW President Williams Sentenced in Corruption Probe

**F**ormer UAW President Dennis Williams will serve 21 months in prison for conspiring with other union officials to embezzle money from the auto-workers union.

Williams, 68, becomes the first president of the UAW – which over the years had cultivated a reputation for integrity – sentenced to prison for his conduct as a union officer.

U.S. District Judge Paul Borman also fined Williams \$10,000 and ordered him to make \$132,000 in restitution to the UAW during a sentencing hearing held this week on Zoom. Borman says he will recommend Williams serve the sentence at a minimum-security prison in Mendota, CA. — *Wards Auto*

## Biden forms White House task force to encourage union membership

**P**resident Joe Biden issued an executive order establishing the White House Task Force on Worker Organizing and Empowerment to improve the federal government's policies and practices so that more workers have access to unions and can bargain collectively with their employers.

The task force will be chaired by Vice President Kamala Harris and vice-chaired by Labor Secretary Marty Walsh. Members of the task force include more than 20 cabinet members and agency heads. — *AGFE*



Local 249 member Darryl Stewart is a dedicated union man and a member of the local's Chaplaincy Committee which helps members in crisis.

# A community within a community

By Chrissy Kline

Darryl Stewart has been a member of Local 249 for 20 years now and currently hangs his hat in Transit MP&L. Outside of work he has completed school as a barber and has become quite the handyman who enjoys carpentry and working with his hands. He is a dedicated union man and member of the Local 249 Chaplaincy Committee, one of the standing committees that has been providing support and outreach to our members for many years. The committee has been holding bible studies in the plant for more than 10 years now and has been working to expand their reach in recent years as our membership has grown both in numbers and need.

Stewart is no stranger to hardship and the tragedies that life can throw at you. Having lost both a young son and his wife exactly one year apart, down to the very day, he has been through experiences that would make even the strongest of us feel weak. The loss of his son and wife prompted a study into the medical history of his family, leading to a lifesaving surgery for another son. Stewart stated, "Our health is vital. We need to take care of ourselves, mind, body and spirit and be aware of our genetics and what we may be carrying with us through life."

When he was asked how he made it through those difficult years Stewart

said that the UAW was by his side all the way. His UAW family surrounded him with the love and support he needed, and to this day he still has many of the gifts, cards and letters that were given to him during those dark hours. He had the support of his union brothers and sisters and was able to lean on them in his time of need, take time away from work and put himself back together. Something he aspired to do for others when he joined the Chaplaincy Committee four years ago is to provide the same kind of service and support.

"We need you on Chaplaincy, you could really reach so many people," Derrick Reed and Shane Coon told him.

"We have been called upon to answer the call of need," says Stewart. "Whether it be injuries, home life issues, deaths or suicides, our job is to mentor, do prayer chains, food drives and provide a sense of community." The Chaplaincy Committee is like a small community within a community in the sense that they look out for one another so that they can respond to the needs of the larger community in the plant as a team.

"What I want the membership to know is that we are here, you can come and talk to me and it will always stay confidential. You just need to open up and talk, we all need to be open minded and transparent with one another." Stewart mentioned that even he had learned you never know what someone is going through or who your story could help if you shared it. Stewart who has since remarried stated, "It's like my wife says all the time, she's a counselor so she knows what it's like, you just gotta talk to me, to open up. Sometimes I think we hold onto our pain and hurt too long and just need to

let it go. I truly believe there is nothing we can't do together," he said.

The Chaplaincy Committee has room for more, and you can contact them for anything you need help with, they are there to help in any way they can, even if it's just to listen or a shoulder to cry on. All faiths are welcome as they build the committee, it is not exclusively for Christianity and having an open mind and heart is needed if we are to accomplish what we are meant to. "We just gotta get busy," in the words of Darryl Stewart.

If you are in need of prayers, spoken or unspoken, are interested in leading a Bible study, sharing your faith with others or just lending a helping hand where needed then don't hesitate to contact the Chaplaincy Committee. The best way to get in touch is to contact the union hall at (816)-454-6333 and leave a message to be put in touch with one of the members. Together we can accomplish great things 249, we only need to reach out and be the vessel for the changes we want to see.



Kansas City trade unionists, including Front row left to right, Mike Sawior, Reginald Jackson, Jeanette Eagan, Veronica Boyd, Charles Eagan, Anita Myers-Pickens, Bruce Drew, back row left to right, Leighton Moses, Neal Byers, Zokie Simien-Jackson, Donna Birks and Herb Pickens rallied on May Day in downtown KC to demand that the Senate pass the Pro Act and send it to President Biden for his signature. Photo by Shirley Mata.

## KC unionists call for passage of the Pro Act

**By Shirley Mata and Pat Hayes**

**T**rade unionists — including a large contingent from UAW Local 249 — rallied in downtown Kansas City May 1 to demand the Senate pass the Pro Act and send it to President Biden to sign into law. The law prevents employers from interfering in union elections. It also prohibits employers from requiring workers to attend meetings designed to persuade them against voting in favor of a union.

The U.S. House of Representatives has already passed the Pro Act and sent it to the Senate. In his State of the Union Address on April 28 President Biden called for the passage of the Pro Act and for a \$15 federal minimum wage.

Speakers at the rally reflected the widespread support among union members for passage of the Pro Act. They include Andy Mack of SMART Local 2, Fran Marion of Stand Up KC, Melissa Stiehler, of the Kansas ACLU, Donna Birks of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists, Sarah Lebarre of the KC AFL-CIO, Sharon Aluqdah of the

American Postal Workers Union, AJ Herrera from IUPAT Local 2012 and Stephen Webber representing the Missouri AFL-CIO.

The bill has the support of 47 of 50 Democratic senators, but no Republicans. President Biden has pledged to sign the Pro Act into law when the Senate passes it.

Activists are organizing to persuade hold out Democratic Sens. Mark Kelly and Kyrsten Sinema of Arizona and Mark Warner of Virginia to back the bill. Sen. Joe Manchin of West Virginia said recently that he will support the bill.

Participants at the KC rally put pressure on Missouri Sen. Josh Hawley, whose official Senate biography somewhat dubiously claims he has "earned a reputation for taking on the big and the powerful to protect Missouri workers and families," by chanting, "Hawley, Hawley, Hawley Can't you see? The right to organize protects me."

Hawley and Missouri's other Senator, Roy Blunt, both have said they will vote no on the Pro Act, as have both Kansas Sens. Jerry Moran and Roger Marshall — all Republicans.

"In the United States we value freedom," Fran Marion of Stand Up KC told the crowd. "We pride ourselves on being a free country. We stand on the principles of 'life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.' But we don't have enough liberty when it comes to our jobs."

Marion got a knowing laugh from

the crowd when she added, "and I don't know about you guys, but the way I get treated at work has very often denied my ability to pursue happiness."

In calling for passage of the Pro Act, President Biden noted, "All of us deserve to enjoy America's promise in full — and our nation's leaders have a responsibility to deliver it. That starts with rebuilding unions."

Biden believes, "The middle class built this country, and unions built the middle class. Unions give workers a stronger voice to increase wages, improve the quality of jobs and protect job security, protect against racial and all other forms of discrimination and sexual harassment, and protect workers' health, safety, and benefits in the workplace. Unions lift up workers, both union and non-union. They are critical to strengthening our economic competitiveness."



# Thousands in Missouri to lose jobless benefits

By Jason Starr

**M**issouri Gov. Mike Parson has directed the state to end participation in six COVID-19-related unemployment programs funded by the federal government on June 12.

Parson's hard-hearted move could potentially affect Local 249's members if the semiconductor shortage that shut down production at the Ford Motor Kansas City Assembly Plant is extended. Up to 144,000 Missourians who were collecting unemployment in April could also lose benefits.

Missouri is one of nine states — Iowa, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, North Dakota, South Carolina, Alabama, Arkansas and Tennessee — under Republican control refusing to provide federal unemployment benefits authorized under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act to their out-of-work citizens. The CARES Act currently provides benefits to those affected by the coronavirus pandemic through September.

As many as 900,000 people may lose benefits in the nine Republican-controlled states that are stopping participation in the federally funded Cares Act jobless aid programs.

"It is time that we end these programs that have incentivized people to stay out of the workforce," Parson told reporters at a news conference in Jefferson City.

Gov. Parson's cruel decision ignores the many reasons keeping people out of the workforce. For single mothers, the state's minimum wage doesn't pay enough to cover childcare. Many of the jobs available do not pay a living wage and have few or no benefits.

"Starvation wages forced me to live in my car with my two babies," Missouri Congresswoman Cori Bush noted in a Tweet. "Starvation wages left me making decisions between keeping the lights on and food on the table. Stop blaming unemployment benefits for worker shortages and start paying people a livable wage."

In fact, Missourians who get the \$300 federal unemployment supplement are pumping money into the economy and supporting jobs, accord-

ing to many economists. Ending the jobless aid, as Parson has done, will hurt the state's economy as a result, economists argue.

Anti-Worker Missouri Republicans — who have held supermajorities in both houses of the legislature since 2003 — have been trying to cut unemployment benefits for years. In 2015, Republicans passed HB 150 cutting unemployment benefits from 20 weeks to 13. Although that law was ruled unconstitutional it did not stop them from giving initial approval to a bill that would have reduced the number of weeks for unemployment compensation in the current session of the legislature.

In 2017, Missouri Republicans overturned minimum wage increases approved by voters in Kansas City and St. Louis. In the 2021 joint session, Republicans worked to overturn the will of Missouri voters by introducing legislation to eliminate state minimum wage increases that were overwhelmingly approved in 2018.

Taken together, the actions over many years by Gov. Parson and Republican legislators to keep wages low and cut jobless benefits, demonstrate

beyond a shadow of a doubt exactly who they are working for. They are not for the hard working people of the state, but for the business owning class, the rich, the well-connected, and the corporations who lavishly fund their dark money political action committees.

Parson has made it abundantly clear that the exploitation of labor in the pursuit of profit is far more important than providing real leadership that promotes growth and security for the working class and all Missourians.

This simple, undeniable fact is further confirmed by their refusal to fund voter-approved Medicaid expansion, their determination to enact restrictions on the right to vote, impose "right to work" and make it harder for voters to amend the state constitution.

Missouri Republicans are marching in lockstep toward a future where the dictatorship of money rules, working people are chained to their jobs by poverty, and democracy is a distant memory. They must be stopped and will only be stopped when the working class unites to exercise our power through direct political activism and votes their asses out of office.



Volunteers Jay Bosler, left, and Erica Eckart, right, help Local 249 member Shellie David, center, file for unemployment and sub pay. The semiconductor shortage has shut KCAP and other auto assembly plants worldwide and the union has stepped in to help members get their pay. Photo by Don Lehman.

## Local 249 helps members with unemployment

By Erica Eckart

**A**s if being laid off for the global chip shortage wasn't enough, members of Local 249 are having to deal with troublesome inconsistencies pertaining to unemployment. Over the last few weeks members have been dealing with a multitude of issues when trying to file for unemployment benefits including but not limited to, resident Alien Statuses, holds pending ten days AIC, overpayments, people being denied for filing from out of state and a handful of other issues that we haven't had to deal with before now.

One of the most frequently asked questions has been "what has changed that we're having so much trouble all of a sudden?"

The answer is complicated, but it all goes back to Governor Parson and his decisions to put state budgets over the working class people of Missouri. He has significantly cut budgets for state programs and underfunded the unemployment office to the extent that the unemployment office is both understaffed and ill-equipped to deal with the new set of stipulations pertaining to how and where you file from.

One of the many new stipulations that affect Ford workers is the fact that they are now pinging the cell tower you file from. If you are not in the state of Missouri when you file, you are now being denied benefits.

This provides a problem for Ford workers that often must file the second week of the July or Christmas shut-

downs, or any instance where we've received a return-to-work date from Ford. The state will deny benefits because you can't be "available for work" if you are out of town even though you have a return-to-work date for Ford and don't need to be "available for work."

Another decision made by Governor Parson, is to cut the extra unemployment funds that were specifically sent to the state of Missouri by the Federal Government, to help working families who are unable to work due to pandemic related issues.

Most of our members are either full time or in progression and won't feel the pain of only getting \$320 a week because of our UAW negotiated SUB pay benefits, however, our temporary workers, Team Solutions, and most of our suppliers don't get those benefits and will face significant struggles.

To add to insult to injury, Ford Motor Company has dropped the ball yet

again by showing lack of competency when it comes to their contractual responsibilities.

SUB pay issues continue to plague the membership, a situation we continue to have to deal with despite Ford knowing we do this every shut down and have for many years.

The Bargaining team as well as the office staff and volunteers have worked diligently to assure that all our members get SUB pay. Thanks to the Bargaining Team and Local 249 President Jason Starr, they figured out early on that the unemployment office was no longer reporting waiting weeks or excessive earnings to Ford.

Without the confirmation from the unemployment office, Ford didn't know who was paid and who wasn't in order to generate SUB pay correctly. The Union Hall stepped up once again and was able to take on the responsibilities of both the unemployment office and Ford.

They ordered several laptops and printers so they could handle the magnitude of members needing to print off their waiting week, or just deal with unemployment issues in general. Our Bargaining team worked tirelessly to get everyone's printouts taken over to Ford for processing, taking trips with stacks of waiting week

printouts every couple of hours.

Our President Jason Starr worked to develop relationships with the local Full Employment Council to help with the difficult random resident Alien statuses. Some of our members had to provide proof of identity to the unemployment office despite being on record and working at Ford for upwards of 40 years in some cases.

Those that think the "hall" doesn't do anything for the membership clearly have never volunteered their time and witnessed how the union hall will jump in and work together as a team to do what it takes to help our membership.

We as the membership should give a big thank you to Jim Fisher, the Bargaining team, Jason Starr, Dana Davidson, Shari Phillips and the rest of the Union Hall staff for them tirelessly working hard for the benefit of the membership and diligently working to fix all unemployment and SUB pay issues that have and may continue to affect our membership.

Together the team has collectively processed over 7,665 pay adjustments for SUB pay. Thank you to the Local 249 membership for their patience and understanding throughout this entire difficult process.



*Coalition of Black Trade Unionists members Bruce Drew, UAW Local 31 Civil Right Chair, left to right, Shirley Bell, UAW Local 249 retiree, Neal Byers, UAW Local 249, Charles and Jeanette Eagan, Teamsters Local 41 retirees, Donna Birks, UAW Local 31 retiree, Tony Pryor, UAW Local 31, Zokie and Reginald Jackson, UAW Local 31, Shawana Woods, UAW Local 31 and Pat Jones-Macklin, AFT retiree & APRI and Congressman Emanuel Cleaver turned out on May 8 to demand the passage of HR1, the For the People Act.*

# UAW activists rally for voting rights in KC

**By Neal Byers and Pat Hayes**

**T**rade union activists from across the KC metro — including many UAW members — turned out May 8 at the Bruce R. Watkins Cultural Heritage Center as part of the National John L. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Day of Action, to demand that the U.S. Senate pass the For the People Act.

"The ability of our citizens to exercise their right to vote is a critical act that defines the United States as a constitutional democracy," Congressman Emanuel Cleaver told the crowd.

The voting rights actions, held across the nation May 8, were held to raise awareness, and create energy to protect the right to vote by supporting the passage of federal legislation to restore the Voting Rights Act of 1965 — specifically the For the People Act and HR4 The John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act — statehood for the District of Columbia, and the removal of obstacles created by the filibuster, according to organizers.

"Passing these two Acts will overturn voter suppression laws on the

state level," said Rev. Rodney Williams, President of the NAACP in Kansas City.

HR1/S1, the For the People Act, has been passed by the House and is awaiting a vote in the Senate.

It would set national standards to ensure that all eligible voters can vote without the threat of voter suppression tactics, make voter registration automatic, provide access to the ballot box through vote by mail and early voting, restore the right to vote for returning citizens and bolster election security and confidence in our elections.

House Resolution 4 would overturn the Supreme Court *Shelby v. Holder* decision, which invalidated parts of the Voting Rights Act and prevent states like Georgia from passing laws that have a

racially discriminatory effect.

Activists at the rally also support House and Senate resolutions to make Washington, D.C. the 51st state. Under HR 51, D.C. residents would have full representation in Congress and equal voting rights.

"This issue is not only a voting rights issue but also a racial justice issue as D.C. has a majority Black & Brown population, yet their voices are suppressed," according to rally organizers.

Rev. Williams told rally participants that the filibuster — a tool used to block or delay legislative action in the U.S. Senate — has a racist history. It was used during the Jim Crow era to block civil rights legislation.

In response to the 2020 election, Republican legislators across the country have introduced legislation on the state level to make it harder to vote for Black, Hispanic and working people.

Missouri and Kansas, where Republicans hold supermajorities in both houses of the legislature, have intro-

duced a number of bills that overturn the will of the majority of voters and make it harder to vote and file citizen initiative petitions.

In the final session of the Missouri Senate, Republicans refused to fund the Medicaid expansion approved by the voters in the last election.

One bill in the Missouri House imposes discriminatory photo ID requirements to vote by eliminating non-photo forms of ID voters currently use such as voter cards from election authorities or a student ID.

More than 200,000 registered voters in Missouri lack a non-expired Missouri state issued ID. This disproportionately impacts voters of color, young voters, voters with disabilities, and seniors to name a few, according to rally organizers.

Calling it vital to combating a wave of restrictive voting proposals around the country the Rules Committee voted to send the For the People Act to the full Senate May 11.

# Semiconductor shortage lay off continues

By Jim Fisher

**S**ince mid-April the Kansas City Assembly plant has been on layoff due to the global semiconductor shortage. At this time there is no official announcement from Ford on the future schedule for KCAP.

There has been some progress in getting the plant ready to resume production. On Monday May 24 our skilled trades returned to the plant to begin some preventative maintenance procedures.

For the week of May 31 and June 7 the Transit Day Shift will return to work on a 5-day pattern mainly for the TT Build of the Transit. To ensure all TT work for the Transit is completed on time, KCAP will also schedule Day Shift Transit for Super Production on Saturday June 12.

I want to remind everyone that there are a lot of rumors out there about when the shifts return to full production. Once something becomes official it will be posted from Ford, shared on the Local 249 media sites, and ROBO calls will come from the plant. We remain optimistic that all five shifts of production will resume sometime between mid to late June.

As with any layoff most of our members qualify for Supplemental Unemployment Benefits. Unfortunately, members who are in TFT status or have less than 1 year as an In-Progression member don't qualify for SUB Payments. For those members that do qualify for SUB Payments it's the sole responsibility of KCAP Labor Relations to process and submit to payroll those payments in a timely fashion.

Thanks to the Local 249 Bargaining Committee running random audits and members contacting us stating they weren't receiving their SUB Payments it has been discovered that KCAP's Labor Relations Department was not submitting our members information to Ford's Payroll Department.

The Bargaining Committee has been able to identify the issues with SUB and take steps to rectify the situation. First, the lapses were reported to KCAP's HR Department and Ford's management team in Detroit to begin the process of getting our members the pay corrected.

Then the local had KCAP send out a statement stating Labor Relations had made an error and would be working to make the necessary corrections. However, even then, KCAP's labor relations department continued to fail to send information to the Ford Payroll department in a timely fashion.

This leads me to believe that Labor

Relations either is unaware, incompetent, isn't trained on the process properly, or did this intentionally. Due to KCAP's inability to pay our members on time our Bargaining Committee is now meeting with KCAP Labor Relations multiple times a day and running daily audits on SUB Pay and will continue to until this layoff is over.

It is completely unacceptable that the union needs to audit the company to make sure their pay process is being followed, but having members waiting three or four weeks to be paid won't be tolerated.

We do believe that most members have been caught up on their SUB Pay. If any member thinks they are missing payments, they need to print out their "View Claim Status" page from the Missouri Unemployment office and take it to Labor Relation or the Union Hall.

If any member needs help the Union Hall has computers and printers available. Members also need to be checking their pay stubs. During these audits Ford had to correct mul-



Local 249 Bargaining Chair Jim Fisher addresses questions about the lay off at KCAP due to the worldwide semiconductor shortage at the May membership meeting. Photo by Don Lehman.

tiple weeks of checks that showed up in members checking accounts as one deposit. In some cases, members thought that this was one check, but it was several checks being lumped into one deposit.

On a positive note, during the

month of May, an additional 10 members have been converted from TFT to In-Progression status. There have now been 155 members converted to In-Progression status so far this year. We would like to congratulate those members.



First place in the 12th Annual Kendal Bailey Crappie Tournament at Truman Lake was won by Noah Carlton and Leon Carlton. The Big Crappie of the tournament was landed by Jerrod Ballard. Second place went to Dylan Corbitt and Luke Bailey. The event was sponsored by Local 249's Recreation Committee and open to UAW members.

# When politicians pick their voters

By Jason Starr

**H**ere's a question for you: Why would the Missouri Republican Party which holds every state office with the exception of one and exercises unchallengeable power through supermajorities in both the state house and senate need to gerrymander the state's voting districts to make it tougher for voters to elect a small number of Democrats who don't support their anti-working-class agenda?

Here is the straight answer: Missouri Republicans are controlled by their rich campaign contributors and they know the big business policies they enact are unpopular, even with the voters who vote a straight Republican ticket. They know this because Missouri voters, even in very conservative rural counties, voted to repeal the Republican's cherished right-to-work law. They know it because voters turned against them to expand Medicaid, raise the minimum wage, legalize medical marijuana and eliminate partisan gerrymandering.

The importance of manipulating electoral districts to the Republican Party's continuing control of the state was vividly illustrated by a deceptively worded ballot initiative written by Republican legislators in 2020. Republicans fooled voters into eliminating the nonpartisan state demographer and reverting to a commission appointed by the governor.

Bills to limit voting rights and make it harder for citizens to petition for change introduced in the last session of the state legislature make it clear that

Republicans intend to hold on to power no matter the will of the voters.

With the completion of the 2020 census, electoral districts across the state will be redrawn to reflect shifts in the population. In Missouri, electoral district boundaries are drawn by the state legislature. These lines are subject to veto by the governor. There is every indication that Republicans plan to use the redistricting process to further cement their power. This creates a situation where politicians choose their voters rather than voters choosing the elected officials.

"Circumventing the will of the voters leads to extremism," John Bowman, a retired UAW member from Local 110 at the Chrysler plant in Fenton, Mo. told me.

Bowman is also the president of the St. Louis County NAACP and continues to serve the UAW as a Region 4 Midwest State CAP Missouri Legislative consultant. He served as a state representative from Missouri's 70th House District. He has been nominated to serve on the commission that will draw the maps for house and senate districts



Local 249 President Jason Starr reports on steps the union has taken to assist members in getting state unemployment compensation and SUB pay at the May membership meeting. Photo by Don Lehman.

over the next 10 years.

"Only 10% of the house and senate districts in the state have competitive races for public office," says Bowman. "In the last election, only one Senate seat and five House seats changed parties. That's bad for democracy."

Bowman believes that if fair maps were drawn in the redistricting process Democrats could pick up as many as 17 house seats and 2 or 3 senate seats over the next few election cycles. That's not enough to win a majority. It's not even close, but it is enough to

force Republicans to negotiate with Democrats and make the voice of the working class heard.

That's why it's important for UAW members to pay attention to the redistricting process. The pay to play culture in Jefferson City, where a tiny circle of wealthy contributors turns elected officials into lapdogs won't end until elections become more competitive in the state. That will require that maps that are fair to both parties are drawn during the upcoming redistricting process.

## NEED HELP?

Are you worried about money? Do you have problems on the job? Is someone in your family ill? Has a loved one passed away? Have you been physically or mentally abused? Are there drug or alcohol problems in your family? Having thoughts of suicide?



The UAW Chaplaincy Committee is here to listen or to offer spiritual advice. Call the Union Hall at 816-454-6333 and the Local will put you in touch with one of our caring Chaplaincy Committee members.



# Parson ends federal COVID unemployment pay

By State Rep. Wes Rogers

The 2021 Missouri legislative session is officially over. Unfortunately, during this year's session, the state government continued its attack on workers, notably by narrowing unemployment benefits in several different ways.

Governor Parson ended all federal pandemic-related unemployment insurance programs

On May 11, Governor Parson announced that he directed the Missouri Department of Labor and Industrial Relations to end its participation in all federal pandemic-related unemployment insurance programs.

The Governor made this decision because he believes people would rather stay at home and collect unemployment benefits than go back to work. In fact, he said, "While these benefits provided supplementary financial assistance during the height of COVID-19, they were intended to be temporary, and their continuation has instead worsened the workforce issues we are facing. It's time that we end these programs that have ultimately incentivized people to stay out of the workforce."

Many Missourians are currently receiving \$620/week in unemployment benefits instead of the usual maximum of \$320/week. The \$300 supplement from the federal government will end on June 12 and the maximum will go back to being \$320/week.

This decision by the Governor was wrong and it will hurt working families trying to get by as the economy opens back up.

## Failure to forgive unemployment overpayments

When the unemployment rate was at a record high at the beginning of the pandemic and throughout 2020, more people than ever before applied for unemployment benefits.

Because the state changed the eligibility guidelines, it was unclear who was eligible to receive unemployment benefits and who was not. Even though it was unclear, the state government and many elected officials encouraged people to apply for benefits if they were not sure whether or not they were eligible. This was especially true for independent contractors and gig workers. People were struggling and most of the money paid by the state was immediately used by these folks on basic things like utility bills and groceries.

When the dust settled, the state determined that it had overpaid about \$150 million worth of unemployment benefits to Missourians and began to try

to collect the money back from people to whom it had written checks and many of these people were still out of work. About \$50 million was owed back to the state and about \$100 million was owed to the federal government.

In one of the truly great bipartisan moments during my time in the legislature, the House of Representatives passed a bill that would have forgiven the entire portion of the money owed to the federal government and allowed for generous payment plans to pay back what was owed to the state. (The Democrats argued that the state portion should also be forgiven, but could not get enough support across the aisle to do it.)

Unfortunately, the proposal died in the Senate and as of now, people will still have to pay this money back. I am hopeful the Governor will call a special session to fix this. It is absolutely wrong to ask these hard working people to pay back money they don't have that



Mo. State Rep. Wes Rogers joined the picket line at the G.M. Fairfax Assembly Plant in 2019. He represents the 18th District in southwestern Clay County including a portion of Kansas City and the entirety of the municipalities of Avondale and North Kansas City. Photo by Don Lehman

they received and spent in good faith.  
**Proposal to reduce unemployment benefits to eight weeks stalls**

Finally some good news. Republican Senators had proposed a bill that

would reduce unemployment benefits to as little as eight weeks. Democrats in the Senate vehemently opposed this and were able to stop it from becoming law.

## KC low-wage workers join national fight for \$15 wage

*Excerpts from a speech by State Rep. Emily Weber to striking low-wage workers in Kansas City May 19*

I'm proud to stand here today with you all in solidarity, because I know why you're fighting. I've lived it. I've been employed in the retail industry and the food industry. I know how taxing those jobs can be.

You work. You work your butts off. Double shifts, Long hours, Crappy conditions, No benefits,

Through the breakfast rush, the lunch rush and the dinner rush.

This past summer, you worked through a once-in-a-century pandemic, during a time of unprecedented uncertainty. You were declared "essential workers." Workers so important they had to put themselves in harm's way to keep our society running.

And what did you get?

A sticker that called you a hero if you were lucky. But you sure weren't treated like one.

Instead, you worked in dangerous conditions to take home a meager income to try to stay above water.



Mo. State Rep. Emily Weber, center, joined striking low-wage workers in KC May 19 to demand \$15 an hour and a union. Weber represents District 24 in Kansas City.

You didn't have the luxury of working from home. You didn't get sick days or vacation days. I know. I went without health care for years because I couldn't afford it. And here you are being asked to work during a public health crisis with no assurance you would receive health care.

But there is a way to get what you deserve.

My husband is an IBEW 124 member, when I met him that's when I

started really understanding the power that workers have when they unite and use their collective power to remind corporate fat cats just how important the people on the ground are.

We know that there is strength in numbers. We are stronger together. In solidarity, I will always stand with you.

It's beyond time to change. You have a right to unionize. You have a right to a living wage. You have a right to health care.



Kansas Citians — including members of Local 249 — rallied May 14 to condemn the refusal by Republican Gov. Mike Parson and the Republican supermajorities in both houses of the Missouri Legislature to fund voter approved Medicaid expansion. Photo by Pat Hayes.

# KC protests refusal to fund Medicaid expansion

By Pat Hayes

**L**abor, clergy and community organizations came together May 14 at Trinity Lutheran Methodist Church in Kansas City to protest the decision by Missouri Gov. Mike Parson and Republicans in both houses of the state legislature to ignore a constitutional amendment approved by voters in the last election to expand Medicaid in the state.

"The time will come in America, not because I'm saying it, because we are saying it, because God is on our side. That we are too rich, we are too wealthy of a nation not to provide access to basic and quality healthcare for every person. Black and white. Red and yellow. Rich and poor," Rev. Vernon Howard with St. Mark Church told the crowd.

The presence of Rev. Howard at the rally focused attention on the years-long battle to win Medicaid expansion in Missouri.

Howard, who is president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference of Greater Kansas City, was one of the Medicaid 23 who were convicted of misdemeanor trespassing and obstructing government operations at the Capitol in Jefferson City for a non-violent protest over Missouri's failure to expand Medicaid in 2014.

Gov. Jay Nixon pardoned 16 of

them. Six of those convicted, including well-known clergyman Rev. Wallace S. Hartsfield Sr., declined to seek pardons saying they wanted their convictions to stay on their records.

Local 249 activists Greg Smith, Luke Taylor, Austing McFarland, Chris Thornberry, Gary Thomas, Shirley Mata, Jessica Bertocci and her daughter, Aurora, added their voices to the demand that Medicaid expansion be funded by the state as required by the constitutional amendment approved by the voters in 2020.

"My birthday is on July 12 and I will be 42 years old," Terrance Wise, a McDonald's worker and spokesperson for low-wage workers represented by Stand Up KC told the crowd.

"I have not seen a doctor since I was 18 years old. That's right, I haven't seen a doctor in over 20 years."

Wise said he is often asked what he does when he gets sick. "Hope and

pray," he said.

Despite the failure of the governor and legislature to fund Medicaid expansion, because of the constitutional amendment, Wise shouldn't have to do that after July 1 when it goes into effect.

"I already have it on my calendar," he said, "because I am looking forward to signing myself and my family up for Medicaid."

An estimated 230,000 people are expected to be newly eligible for coverage under the expansion of Medicaid in Missouri. Coverage will be available to adults up to age 64 if they have an income that doesn't exceed 138 percent of the poverty level. In 2020, that amounts to about \$17,609 for a single individual, and \$36,156 for a household of four, according the HealthInsurance.org.

The failure to pass Medicaid expansion has cost Missouri an estimated \$17.8 billion in federal funding. Hospitals around the state were projected to lose \$6.8 billion between 2013 and 2022. Rural hospitals have been especially hard hit as they treat many uninsured patients and haven't been reimbursed by federal funds due to the failure of the governor and legislature

to pass expansion.

Seven of Missouri's rural hospitals have closed since 2014, including one that shut its doors in 2020, according to the health insurance organization.

At the protest, Local 249 member Gary Thomas was asked how Medicaid expansion would affect him by a Channel 41 news reporter.

"It won't," he said. "As a UAW member I have contractually negotiated best in industry Healthcare. I am here because people are dying and Medicaid expansion will help prevent those deaths. If we allow something done to others then we allow it done to ourselves."

The reporter then asked Thomas what do you say when Mike Parson says there's not enough money?

"He's lying," Thomas replied. "Just as simple as that. Medicaid Expansion, like unemployment benefits, will be partially federally funded. Millions and millions of our tax dollars are being ignored. Why? Because, Mike wants the working class so desperately miserable and hopelessly dependent of the capitalistic system rather than have a working class full of freedom and vitality to achieve what it wants independently."