

CITY WORKER NEWS

NEWSLETTER OF THE UE UNION FOR CITY WORKERS ACROSS NORTH CAROLINA AND VIRGINIA



UE Members from Norfolk, Virginia Beach, Portsmouth and Newport News Meet to Develop Strategy to Win!

On Saturday, July 13, key UE leaders from four cities across Hampton Roads gathered to learn from each other's work. UE has been invested in building real worker power for over four years in 757 area. At these meeting, UE members were trained on understanding the Collective Bargaining Taskforce and having our own proposal for a strong Collective Bargaining ordinance.

More inside:

- Charlotte workers win \$23/hr minimum wage
- Newport News workers elect union reps to Task Force
- Norfolk workers challenge ERC

UE Wins \$23/hr Minimum Wage in Charlotte!



Charlotte city workers pack City chambers on May 13

City Workers Across North Carolina Lead Successful Campaigns to Raise Wages

One of UE's main goals this year was to raise the wages of all state and local government workers across North Carolina to \$20 per hour. Our focus was on workplaces that have a Black majority workforce which includes 14,000 direct care healthcare workers at the state thirteen mental health facilities, 13,000 workers including housekeepers and facility staff at the UNC Chapel Hill and other state universities, as well as nearly 7,000 municipal workers in Charlotte, Greensboro, Raleigh and Durham.

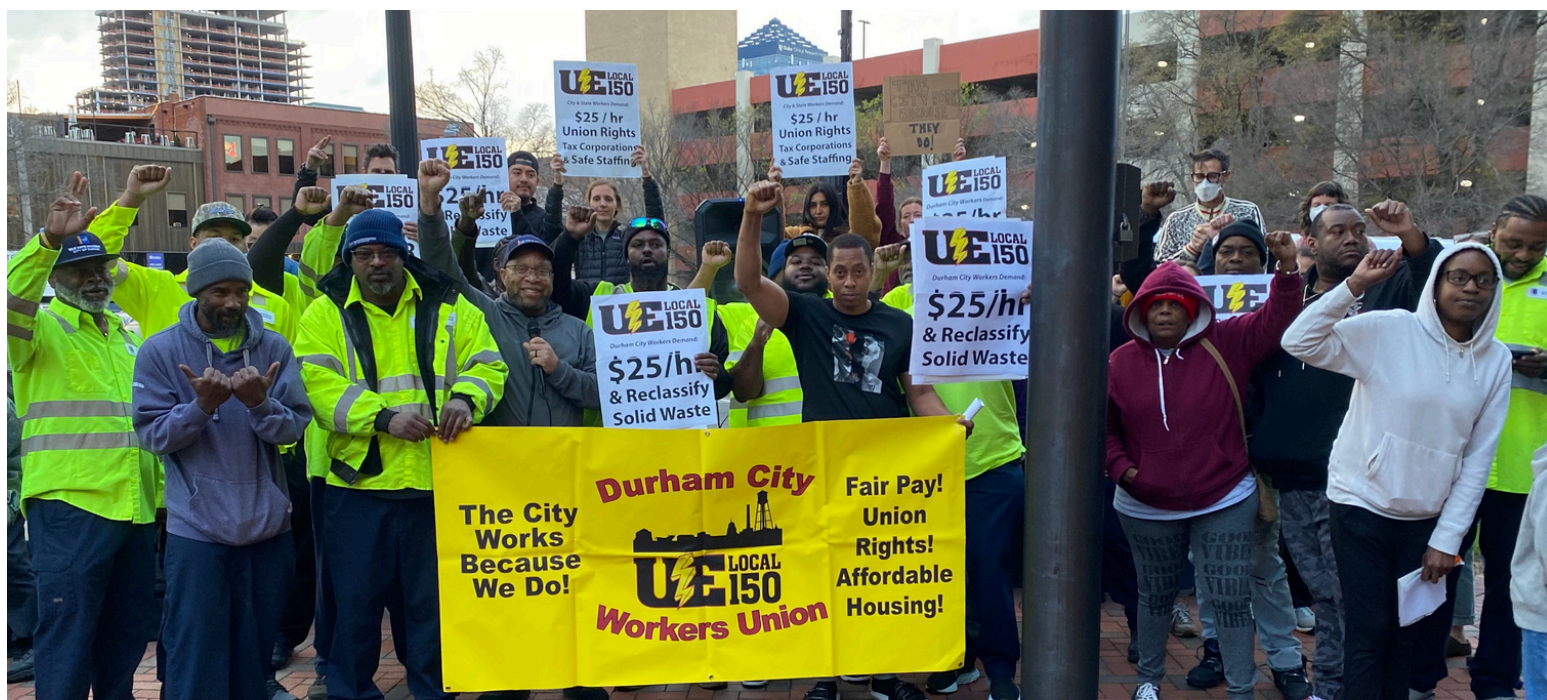
Leading the way, In Charlotte, while our campaign has helped secure significant municipal worker wage increases the last two years, continued action this year **raised the minimum wage to \$23 per hour**. In Greensboro and Raleigh, only a handful of workers will earn less than \$20 per hour when the new budget is approved. UE members consistently rallied at city council meetings and spoke out at multiple budget hearings, and had private meetings with City Council. Let's keep pushing! **READ MORE ON PAGE 3**



Hundreds of Workers Get Skilled Up with Targetted Trainings

Throughout the course of this last year, nearly 200 worker leaders attended trainings lead by the UE. Many thanks to UE Local 150 **Chief Steward Craig Brown** for leading many of these training! **MORE ON PAGE 5**

NC WAGE CAMPAIGNS (CONTINUED)



The Durham sanitation worker strike, which our campaign played a pivotal role in organizing, in September 2024, led to an immediate investment of **\$6.5 million in bonuses awarded to city workers**, the lowest wage earners (earning less than \$42,000) got the full **\$5,000 bonus**. A more full analysis of the strike can be found [here](#).

This victory catapulted our work among the 900+ essential workers in Durham to deepen our organizational foothold, develop leadership and build towards a much deeper campaign to win an actual wage increase, not just a one time bonus. This was launched with mass meetings of workers to develop a list of demands on the municipal budget. Workers also built relationships with key community faith leaders and won the support of Durham's three major citywide faith coalitions – Durham Congregations in Action, Durham CAN and also Interdenominational Ministers' Alliance. Over a hundred city workers participated in one of our

multiple actions starting in November 2023 through the final budget hearing on June 3.

Ultimately, the campaign **helped secure \$28 million in raises**, the largest investment in workers in the city's history.

While the minimum wage starting July 1, 2024 will be \$19.58, all current city employees will be making around \$22 per hour. Many of the senior experienced workers in sanitation and public works **will receive \$12,000–14,000 raises** annually.

We are also strongly positioned going into next year's budget cycle to win even more structural changes to the pay plan design, including awarding low wage workers the same annual increase as higher wage earners, as well as amendments to the city's Universal Living Wage ordinance.

NEWPORT NEWS CITY WORKERS ADVANCE FIGHT FOR COLLECTIVE BARGAINING, WIN TASK FORCE!



UE MEMBERS AND ALLIES RALLY IN NEWPORT NEWS, JULY 3

On July 3, UE members in the City of Newport News were instrumental in pushing the city to establish a Task Force for collective bargaining. UE members in Portsmouth also participated in a campaign that won a collective bargaining ordinance in Portsmouth last November. UE is committed to continuing the struggle in all cities across 757 to win collective bargaining rights for all workers.

40 UE members participate in election of two Union Task Force Representatives

In order for workers to have democratic input to who would represent them on the Collective Bargaining Task Force, UE organized an election for all union card signers to participate. On August 27, 40 Newport News city workers that are members of UE voted on their two reps. Congratulations to **Keith Graham** and **Curtis Hartsfield** and all workers that participated in this important process. Onwards to your appointment by the City Council!





NORFOLK CITY WORKERS EXPOSE “ENHANCED” EMPLOYEE RELATIONS COUNCIL AS A FRAUD

Last November 2023, the Norfolk City Council voted to deny collective bargaining and rather go with an “Enhanced” Employee Relations Council. Turns out, the “enhanced” version means that management gets to hand pick who represents the workers! City workers have many issues, and are exposing how the ERC is unable and unwilling to resolve these issues. We need real power through a union and collective bargaining!



“Collective bargaining is the power a union has as the legal authority to negotiate binding contracts with employers on behalf of their members. This includes wages, benefits, working conditions and other employment terms. ERCs typically do not have this power.”

- **Velma Owens**, Combined Ops., Utilities Department



“Workers deserve to speak for themselves. An ERC is controlled by management, not the workers.”

- **Clifford Johnson**, Lead Collector, Waste Management



“The ERC is company run and everyone is employed by the company. There is no help to the workers.”

- **Ted Hurdle**, Equipment Operator, Water Distribution, Utilities Department



“City workers must unify and stand in solidarity with one voice for changes that we need. This can only be achieved through building union power in the workplace, not the ERC.”

- **Robert Brown**, Water Distribution, Utilities Department

CITY WORKERS ORGANIZE FOR SAFETY AMIDST EXTREME HEAT, WIN FIRST EVER OSHA PROPOSED RULE!

This July was the hottest month ever on record. Climate change is making it increasingly dangerous for workers. Yet, Federal or State OSHA have NO RULES for protecting workers against excessive heat.

On Thursday, September 5, workers from across N.C. including food service workers, city workers, laundry workers, airport workers and farmworkers spoke out at a Heat Safety Town Hall organized by the Union of Southern Service Workers (USSW). Members of the Durham City Workers Union chapter of UE Local 150 attended the hearing.

Michael Reynolds, Durham city worker in General Services, Durham UE150 member testified about the struggles faced by city workers across the state working outside in the increasingly hot weather.



Michael Reynolds, UE150 member testifies at Town Hall on Heat Safety, 9/5/24

After worker pressure, Federal OSHA Issues New Draft Heat Safety Rule! Comment Period Open for 120 Days

Our union, and others in the labor and social justice movement have been fighting for a federal and state heat safety OSHA rule for decades - and just last week OSHA published a new draft rule!! The proposed rule emphasizes preventative measures such as access to water, rest breaks, and shaded or cooled areas. It also mandates training for workers and supervisors to recognize and respond to heat-related illnesses. We must continue the struggle until this rule is adopted by Federal OSHA as well as our state OSHAs.

HUNDREDS OF WORKERS TRAINED UP!!



December 12, Durham, NC



February 18, Durham, NC



March 23, Goldsboro, NC



November 9-11, Charlotte, NC



November 18, Virginia Beach



January 27, Raleigh, NC

Throughout the course of this last year, nearly 200 worker leaders attended trainings lead by the UE. On **Saturday, September 7, workers from across four departments in Portsmouth attended a training**

In the fall of 2023, we brought together 46 workers from across North Carolina to participate in a three part leadership development training. The first two sessions were held statewide on zoom, the third and final session was held in person across the region in Charlotte, Chapel Hill, and Goldsboro. Workers learned many skills regarding holding successful organizing conversations, developing an issue based campaign, public speaking and the qualities of a successful leader. Bringing workers together across the state across these industries has created more space for peer-to-peer sharing and learning.

Over the weekend of November 11-12, we brought together 22 municipal worker leaders from Charlotte, Durham, Greensboro, Raleigh, Norfolk and Virginia Beach for an intensive two-day leadership development training in Charlotte, NC. The following weekend on November 18, we repeated the material with 11 additional worker leaders in Virginia Beach.

UE MEMBERS SHOW SOLIDARITY WITH OTHER WORKERS IN THEIR UNION FIGHTS!



Solidarity with Starbucks Workers!

On May 5, UE members joined the Tidewater Workers Assembly to show solidarity with the Oyster Point Starbucks in Newport News to congratulate those workers on being the first in Hampton Roads to win an election with Starbucks Workers United.

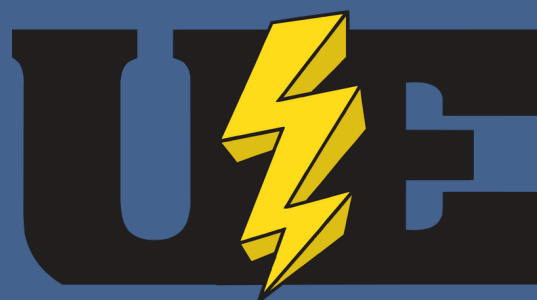
Pictured Right: UE members in Portsmouth join Firefighters to support Council members Louise Burke's campaign for Mayor



UE members Trina Love and Pat Thebert attend Costco workers rally

Solidarity with Costco workers Teamsters Union Fight for a First Contract!

Costco workers represented by Teamsters Local 822 in Norfolk, Va., have voted to authorize a strike against the retail wholesaler as national contract negotiations are set to begin on Aug. 21. The near-unanimous strike vote comes after more than eight months of negotiations for a first contract at Costco. The 250 warehouse workers organized with the Teamsters in December 2023, becoming the first group to win union representation at Costco in over two decades.



The Union for Everyone

JOIN AND BUILD THE UE UNION

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