



NEWS – Local 825

International Union of Operating Engineers

Contact: Greg Lalevee
Business Manager, Local 825
(973) 671-6900

PR Contact: Bill Carlos
Avow Communications
(908) 499-7862

OPERATING ENGINEERS LOCAL 825 OBSERVES LABOR DAY

AS A LEGACY OF GAINS BENEFITTING EVERY WORKING AMERICAN

SPRINGFIELD, NJ – To many, Labor Day means a final, long weekend at the shore, a picnic or barbecue or a sale at the mall. On this Labor Day, take a moment to remember how it all began and how we got here from there.

Labor Day pays tribute to American workers past and present. It is a day of pride that commemorates the social and economic contributions workers have made to the strength, prosperity and well being of our country throughout its history.

Labor Day began as a series of local celebrations in different states. By 1894, 32 states had created holidays paying homage to the labor movement. That year, Congress passed an act declaring it a national holiday and President Grover Cleveland signed it into law.

The vital force of labor

For generations since, the vital force of labor has contributed to the highest standard of living and the greatest production the world has ever known. It has brought us closer to the ideals of economic and political democracy.

We share a sense of pride that so many of organized labor's gains – protections against child labor, minimum wage laws, the eight-hour work day and the defined work week, cost-of-living increases and health and pension benefits – have benefited union and non-union workers alike.

During the boom years of the 1950s and 60s, the middle class of America expanded in size and enjoyed its healthiest period of economic advancement. It is not a coincidence that this period coincided with the expansion, strength and unity for America's trade unions. Trade unions were woven into the fabric of American industry and society.

Interlocking fortunes

Today unions are under assault, declining in membership and fragmented. At the same time, unemployment remains over 9% and the economy is stuck in low gear. Some

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politicians seize on unions to drive a wedge between union workers and the rest of society.

This divisive rhetoric is intended to hide a grim reality: just as society benefitted from union gains, reducing those rights and benefits will ultimately lower standards for non-union workers and society as a whole.

The idea behind unions – unity – was at the heart of past gains for the American worker. Division and disunity now threaten to pull those gains apart.

Reunite. Restore. Rebuild.

Make this Labor Day a watershed year that reverses the downward trend. Reunite around common interests, such as job creation, continuous skills development, worker productivity and fairness.

Help to restore American labor's role as the vital force it has always been for economic advancement. Speak out. If you're a union worker or member of a union family, let your friends and neighbors know what that means to you and why you're proud of it.

Get involved in your community. Use periods of inactivity to help charitable and civic causes. Attend municipal meetings and voice your support for issues and candidates that affect jobs in your community.

And above all, vote. Listen to the candidates. Be wary of those who would divide people. Advocate for candidates who respect labor, who fight for jobs and who focus on rebuilding our economy and who bring people together.

Union – not fragmentation

This Labor Day, remember the reason we celebrate – the social and economic contributions that have come about through the unity of American workers. Don't be sidetracked or suckered by political rhetoric intended to divide us as a society. Unions are not the problem. But unity – the understanding that we're all in this together – is the solution.

Enjoy your Labor Day.

Greg Lalevee
Business Manager
Local 825
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Local 825 of the International Union of Operating Engineers represents more than 6,600 members throughout New Jersey and in five counties of lower New York state.