



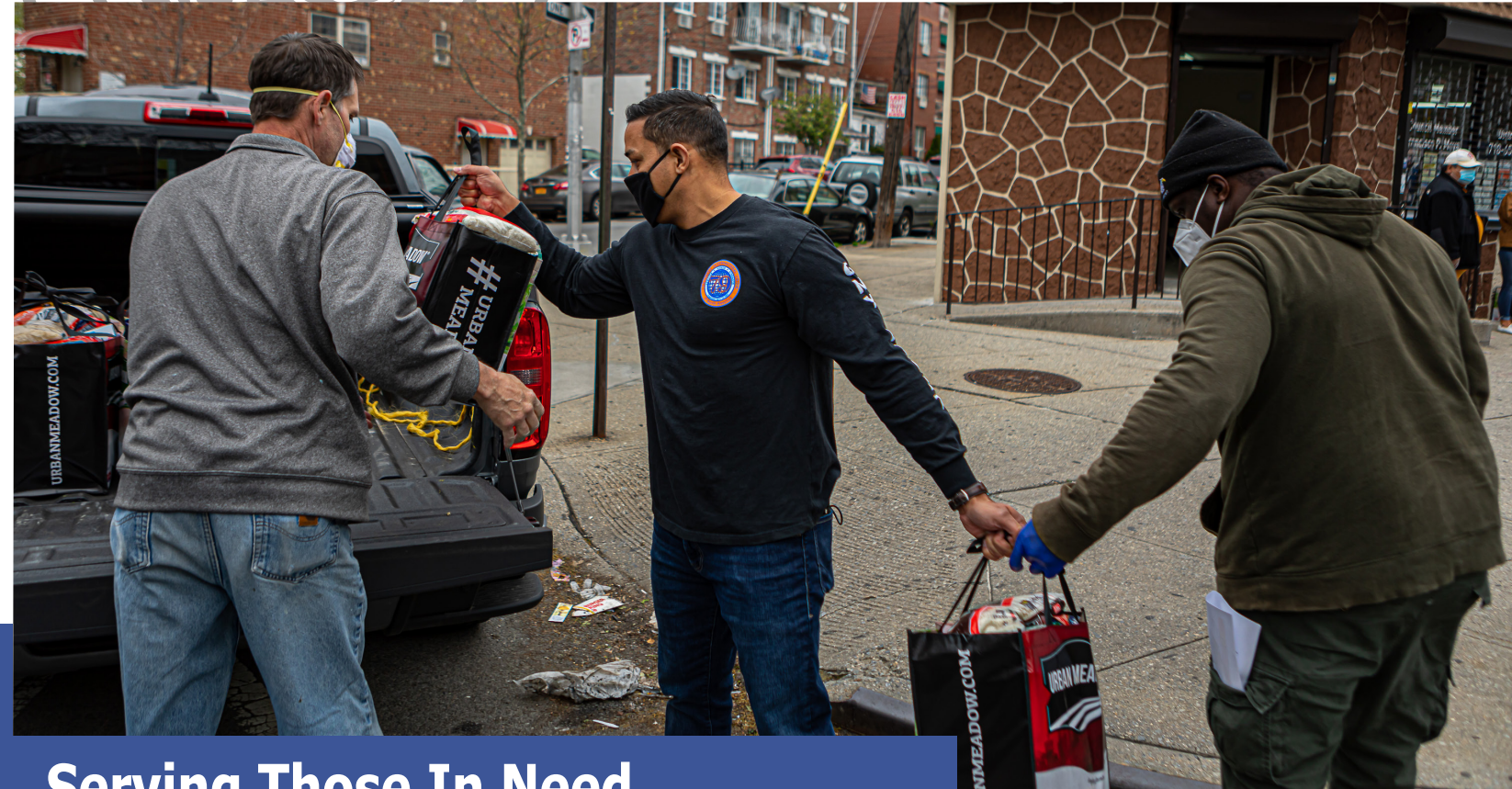
**Construction & General Building  
Laborers' Local 79**  
131 W 33rd Street, 7th Floor  
New York, NY 10001  
Phone: 212-465-7900 Fax: 212-465-7903



RETIREE NEWSLETTER | SUMMER 2020

# LOCAL 79 NEWS

CONSTRUCTION & GENERAL BUILDING LABORERS



## Serving Those In Need

Local 79 Steps Up to Deliver Emergency Supplies

**AS NEW YORK CITY SUFFERED FROM THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC, LOCAL 79 REFUSED TO STAND IDLY BY WHILE OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS WERE IN NEED.**

The pandemic highlighted the role of unions in protecting the health and well-being of New York City's essential workers. It also demonstrated the stark inequalities in our society. As the wealthy sheltered in place and fled the city, New York City's working-class was on the frontlines and faced the greatest risks. After our union created a comprehensive COVID-19 response plan to provide important resources to our membership, Local 79 organizers collaborated with local NYC community groups to deliver emergency food and supplies to those most impacted by the Coronavirus and unable to leave their home. During these tough and never-before-seen times, our union stepped up to serve our city.

## IMPORTANT UPDATES

*Out of an abundance of caution and in accordance with government protocols, Local 79 has postponed all large-scale indoor gatherings including union meetings and retiree events until further notice. Thank you for your understanding and we will update you about any future developments.*

*The Union Hall is currently open for appointments only at our new office space. To schedule an appointment or for any questions, please call 212-465-7900.*

*Contact information for the Mason Tenders District Council's Trust Funds can be found on our website at [local79.org/funds](http://local79.org/funds).*

**[www.local79.org](http://www.local79.org)**



Local 79 members working to expand ICU capacity at North Central Bronx Hospital.

## Local 79 Frontline Heroes Complete Emergency COVID-19 Projects

**IN THE GRIPS OF THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC WITH HOSPITALS OVERWHELMED, LOCAL 79 MEMBERS ANSWERED** the call to build emergency ICU units in hospitals across our city. These projects were completed in record time and expanded needed capacity to treat New Yorkers in critical condition. "We have gone through some really difficult times," said Business Manager Mike Prohaska. "Nevertheless our members never stopped being up for the task to keep sites safe and secure for all workers and the public."

## Fill Out the 2020 Census Today!

We encourage every member to make sure you and your family fill out the 2020 Census by the September 30<sup>th</sup> deadline. The census is critically important for our union because it determines how our government distributes infrastructure and other federal spending. These dollars have become all the more important in making sure New York City receives its fair share of COVID-19 recovery funding. If you have any questions, call Bernard at 646-265-7762.

**LEARN MORE** > [liuna-ny.org/census](http://liuna-ny.org/census)



**DUES NEWS**  
**Member Dues: \$37/month**  
**Retiree Dues: \$8/month**

*REMINDER:* Dues payments must not go over two months without being paid or the member will be suspended.

Members' Union Book numbers must be written on their checks or money orders when paying dues by mail. Members may also call the Dues Department and provide their book number to pay by credit card.

**4 New Contract Agreements**

On July 1<sup>st</sup>, the Mason Tenders District Council signed new agreements with four different contractor associations, including The Contractors' Association of Greater New York, Total Demolition Contractors Association, The Cement League & The Plasterers Spray Fire Proofing Association. President Anthony Vita said, "I am proud to say that we negotiated a fair contract under difficult circumstances due to the pandemic and that Local 79 members can look forward to raises in each of the contracts."

**TRUST FUNDS SUMMARY**



Members should feel secure knowing the Annuity Fund's net return last year was 14.47%, their Pension Fund is over 100% funded and that our Medical/Welfare Fund has approximately two years in reserves. Trustees will continue to review the claims experience and plan design to make sure the funds remain financially solvent.

**LOCAL 79 EXECUTIVE BOARD**

Mike Prohaska, Business Manager  
Anthony Vita, President  
John Norbury, Vice President  
Kenneth Brancaccio, Secretary-Treasurer  
Joe Cestaro, Recording Secretary  
Barrie Smith, Sergeant-at-Arms  
Chaz Rynkiewicz, Executive Board member  
Jose Andino, Executive Board member  
Luis Montalvo, Auditor  
Anthony Williamson, Auditor  
Kenneth Robinson Jr., Auditor

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An affiliate of: the Mason Tenders District Council of Greater New York and Long Island, LiUNA; the New York City Central Labor Council; the Building and Construction Trades Council of Greater New York; and the New York State AFL-CIO.

  **Follow us on Facebook & Twitter**

**Contact information, events calendar, news, and general information can be found at [www.local79.org](http://www.local79.org)**

**MESSAGE FROM  
BUSINESS MANAGER  
MIKE PROHASKA**

Local 79 always stands united no matter what challenge comes our way. As we continue to grieve for those taken too early from us due to the COVID-19 virus, it is our duty to keep fighting for our union, our loved ones, and our country.

We are a family, and we do what families do – protect and care for each other. I thank every member for your contributions and commitment to Local 79 over this period. When I took my oath of office, I promised I would stand with you, fight for you and serve you through the good times and the difficult ones. This year we have gone through some difficult times, but our union is already coming out of this pandemic stronger than ever.

With an out-of-work list currently around 300, the majority of our membership returned to work following Governor Cuomo's Phase One order to reopen NYC construction in June. My number one priority has always been to protect the safety and well-being of Local 79 members. That is why we joined with the NYC Building Trades to negotiate statewide safety guidelines to respond to the new reality and the training fund began offering online classes that included COVID-19 training. Our office staff also came back in the beginning of July and have strictly followed all government safety guidelines. Under our phased re-opening program, Local 79's office is currently open for appointments only.

The Mason Tenders Trust Funds also have strived to ensure the financial security and strength of our member's benefit funds. As a trustee, I am proud that we stepped up to make sure that all members unable to work were able to access up to \$10,000 in their annuity funds. It wasn't easy, but that was never going to stop us. If you experience any problems with the Trust Funds, call Lori at 212-465-7965 and I will personally follow up to make sure your problem receives an appropriate response.

The pandemic has exposed great structural inequalities in our country. It is our job as the labor movement to fight against the forces of greed and protect the interests of working people. This moment has only created greater divisions in our country and there is much work for us to do to get our country back in unity together. As the November election approaches, you will hear more from our LiUNA PAC affiliates with more information in the coming months. If you have any questions about registering to vote or your polling location, call Ari at 646-721-1235.

In these uncertain times one thing is clear, Local 79 members are blue-collar workers that have the courage and can-do spirit to respond to any challenge. God bless all of you. Stay safe and stay strong. We will get through this together.

In solidarity,



**LiUNA!**  
*Feel the Power*



**Lavon Chambers  
Retires**

A true laborer and a deeply respected voice in our Local retired this year. Lavon Chambers has been a mentor to many of our members and his lifelong community leadership has helped our union grow stronger and more united. Lavon leaves a lasting impact and we are proud to celebrate his decades of dedicated service to our union.



Lavon started as an organizer in 1996 and was part of our union's historic campaign to organize the demolition industry with Business Manager Mike Prohaska. He was also vital in our campaigns to organize NYCHA and SCA, campaigns that considerably expanded our union's public sector work. After working for a time as a Business Agent, Lavon was tapped to be one of the first employees of GNY-LECET where he oversaw our Community Affairs initiatives and put together GNY-LECET's Build Together program for our MWBE signatory contractors. He also was a co-founder of Pathways 2 Apprenticeship.

On his last day, Lavon said, "Working for the Laborers has been much more than a job; it has been a way of life. I considered the Laborers organization to be my family. The impact this union has had on my life and my family's life is unmeasurable."

**Landmark Case  
Brought by NYS  
Attorney General**

NY State Attorney General Tish James announced in July a first-of-its-kind \$1.5 settlement with Trade Off Construction for 18 of its employees that experienced sexual harassment and workplace retaliation. Local 79 and the Mason Tenders District Council initially brought the case to the Attorney General's office after our organizers heard first-hand accounts of the company's despicable practices. According to Chaz Rynkiewicz, Organizing Director and Executive Board member, "This settlement exposes the 'body shop' model



of non-union companies that take advantage of low-income women and the formerly incarcerated. Our organizers are in the streets fighting against the exploitation of these vulnerable workers." Tierra Williams, one of Local 79's newest organizers, was a leader in the settlement and now educates non-union workers about their rights and the power of collective bargaining to create a safer and more fair workplace.

**The Anti-Union  
Track Record of  
Donald Trump**

Local 79 feels it is our duty to warn our membership of the anti-union track record of our current President. Under the leadership of Donald Trump, our country has appointed the highest number of anti-union judges to our nation's federal courts, which resulted in the atrocious Janus decision that brought about right-to-work laws in the public sector. This ruling directly hurts our union. It means that union-security clauses can be taken out of our federal Project Labor Agreements and allow for open-shop work on taxpayer funded projects. If Trump is re-elected, you can expect the private sector to be the next target. Trump's National Labor Relations Board went after Local 79's free speech right to use an inflatable rat to expose corporate greed in a nationally-covered case. We fended them off, but the NLRB is still pursuing similar cases elsewhere. The



Department of Labor this year also attacked our corporate strategies by passing a new regulation saying that "private employer-sponsored retirement plans are not vehicles for furthering social goals or policy objectives." This mechanism was put in place to stop our efforts to attach labor standards and responsible contractor policies to construction financing funded by worker pension funds. Our union leadership can in no way support a candidate that has directly tried to weaken our union. "No matter who wins in the election," said Secretary-Treasurer and PAC member Kenneth Brancaccio, "We will not stop fighting to make sure union rights are respected and expanded in our country. Remember, elections have consequences."