



April 15, 2021

Dear Union Members,

Minnesota’s Labor Movement is diverse. From the work we do, what we look like, where we live, where we were born, and how we pray – Minnesota’s union members come from all walks of life. While we have many differences, we are united by a set of shared values. We believe all working people should have the freedom to join together to negotiate a fair return on their work. We believe all Minnesotans have the right to safety – both on the job and in their communities. We believe in justice. It is those values that unite us in our State Federation and Central Labor Bodies.

The last year has tested working Minnesotans like never before. Amid a global pandemic that put many union members out of work or fundamentally changed how they did their work – we witnessed the police killing of George Floyd. Following that traumatizing incident, the Minnesota AFL-CIO renewed our commitment to seek racial and economic justice in both our state and local Labor Movement and to elevate the voices of Minnesota’s Black union members, Indigenous union members, and all union members of color.

Last Sunday, as our community has been reliving the trauma of last summer during Derek Chauvin’s murder trial, we witnessed Daunte Wright’s tragic death at the hands of law enforcement. Community members have rightfully taken to the streets in peaceful protest of yet another police killing of an unarmed Black Minnesotan.

As Labor leaders, we honor and respect the National Guard's service and commitment to our community, state, and country. In fact, many of these men and women are also proud union members. At the same time, for a significant portion of union members, their lived experiences in both foreign countries and this one, have made the military symbols of oppression in their eyes. Additionally, while the National Guard was deployed by the Governor with the intent to protect our communities from outside agitators and provocateurs, many in the community view their presence as a crackdown on first amendment rights. That is why, for many union members, Wednesday’s pictures of National Guard troops using the Saint Paul Labor Center as a staging area were deeply disturbing.

Labor has always been about protecting workers at work and in their communities. Labor unions have over the years raised the voices of immigrant and BIPOC union and community members. Increased diversity within union membership makes all unions stronger. Now is not the time to turn back from our efforts to raise the voice of all union members. In the spirit of strength and unity, we invite federation partners to seek one another out for conversations, learning, and listening. We must always remember, there is so much more that unites us, than divides us.

In solidarity,

William McCarthy  
President

Bradley Lehto  
Secretary-Treasurer

