

BURNING BRIGHT



Transport Workers Union
Utility Division

Transport Workers Union Local 101 AFL-CIO 195 Montague St., 3rd Floor,
Brooklyn, NY 11201 Tel: 718-745-7597 www.twulocal101.org Summer 2019

CONTRACT RATIFICATION AND WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW



**CALL CENTER
CRUSADERS**

**TWU LOCAL 101
FAMILY DAY**



Constance's Corner

By Local 101 President Constance Bradley

It was great seeing everyone June 15 at Family Day. Hundreds of TWU Local 101 members, along with their children and spouses, turned out to enjoy a relaxing day in the sun – and shade!

The Family Day picnic and BBQ is an annual tradition that was started by our late, beloved President Mike Conigliaro. It's definitely one of my favorite days of the year.

We had a new location this year – Coney Island. We set up our tents adjacent to the historic amusement park and boardwalk, along with TWU Local 100 and several other locals in our larger Transport Workers Union family.

While most of us caught up with friends and enjoyed the BBQ, our softball team battled its way into the championship game. The TWU softball tournament was held in MCU Park where the Brooklyn Cyclones, the Mets' minor league team, play their home games.

Our boys lost the final game, but there might have been some funny business going on. Let's just say that next year we might have to demand Local 100 provide some documentation, like pay stubs, for the players that it puts out on the field. Some of their "Bus Operators" had trouble remembering their depots and routes when asked after the game!

Still, we had plenty to celebrate this year. We don't have to go through a long and ugly contract fight with National Grid this fall. Don't get me wrong. We were prepared to go to the mat to get a fair contract, if necessary.

But we managed to negotiate a good labor-management agreement months early. That was only possible because National Grid knew that we were united and the administration had the full support of the membership. I can't stress enough how important that is when dealing with the company, their lawyers and negotiators.

The negotiations were tough at times. At one point, I got up from the table and stormed out the door. I wasn't fooling



around. I let them know that we'd go down to the wire if they weren't going to make reasonable offers beneficial to our men and women out in the field. (They followed me out to the hallway and asked me back to the negotiating table!)

Since the contract was ratified – overwhelmingly – we will see our first raise on Oct. 16, 2019 (2.75%). Two more raises will follow on the same date in 2020 and 2021 (3% and 3%). Compounded, that means a 9% wage increase over the life of the contract.

Raises are important. That's how we put food on the table and pay our bills. But I'm also very pleased that this contract provides additional promotional opportunities to many members, and grabs back utility and call center work from contractors.

Enjoy the rest of the summer.
Talk to you soon,
Constance

A FEW WORDS *from*

Joe

Local 101 Vice President Joe Coscia



It's time to get fired up. National Grid needs to increase its natural gas supply in order to meet growing demand in Brooklyn, Queens and Long Island. But environmental regulators are blocking the construction of a pipeline that would deliver the much-needed fuel.

This is bad news for customers. This is bad news for workers. And this is bad news, ironically, for the environment.

So, we have to take action. I'm asking all TWU Local 101 members to take a few minutes and send an email to Gov. Cuomo urging that he support the Northeast Supply Enhancement (NESE) project. The governor hasn't taken a definitive position on the issue. He needs to hear from the workingmen and women of this state, not just environmentalists opposed to the pipeline.

In addition to emailing the governor, we all should reach out to our local politicians, including members of the state Assembly and Senate.

If this pipeline doesn't get built, the existing natural gas shortage will just get worse. That means prices paid by customers will rise.

If this pipeline isn't built, companies won't be able to create new jobs in

construction and many other fields. There simply won't be enough natural gas available to provide service to additional homes or businesses. Property owners who are now burning heating oil,

meanwhile, won't be able to switch to natural gas, which is much less polluting.



Finally, a worsening gas shortage will mean fewer inspections and service hook-ups for TWU Local 101 members. Our work already has started to slow down a little.

NESE would deliver natural gas from Pennsylvania to New Jersey and New York (Brooklyn, Queens and Long Island) with a 24-mile pipeline. Part of the network would go beneath Raritan Bay, the Lower New York Bay and the Atlantic Ocean.

The New York Department of Environmental Conservation has twice denied the project developer, the Transcontinental Gas Pipe Line Company, a permit necessary to begin construction. The DEC is concerned that dredging will release into the water chemicals that for years have been buried in the sediment at the bottom of the bays. At some concentrations, those chemicals could be harmful to fish, crabs and other wildlife.

Fair enough. But in this day and age, with all the technology at our disposal, we should be able to expand the gas supply while also taking reasonable steps to limit environmental impacts. Reasonable steps. Tell Gov. Cuomo and your representatives to support this necessary pipeline project.

You can email Gov. Cuomo and your other elected state officials by going to these links:

Gov. Cuomo: <https://www.governor.ny.gov/content/governor-contact-form>

State Assembly: <https://nyassembly.gov/mem/> | **State Senate:** <https://www.nysenate.gov/senators-committees>



Family Day 2019







A TRAILBLAZER WHO PREFERS WORK BOOTS OVER HEELS ON THE JOB

After breaking asphalt and digging trenches all day, Louise Barnes, a Helper with the Brooklyn Union Gas Company, wanted to take a shower before heading home. It was a simple and legitimate request.

But this was 1983. Brooklyn Union didn't have a woman in the Distribution Department before Barnes showed up in her work boots in April of that year. The company's Springfield Yard didn't have a washroom for women, and the company's all-male bosses didn't have any intention of providing one.

Their attitudes changed, however, after Barnes, then 23 years old, marched into the men's locker room wearing a bathing suit and started taking a shower with the guys – most of whom quickly ran out in a state of shock and panic.

"They built me one after I did that," Barnes said.

Brooklyn Union, now National Grid, quickly learned something about Barnes.

"I don't take no tea for the fever," she said. "That's a polite way of saying, 'I don't take no bull----.'"

Transport Workers Union Local 101 President Constance Bradley called Barnes, now a 59-year-old grandmother, a pioneer and a legend. She has been on the job for 36 years.

Philda Louise Ryerson Barnes was born in 1960 in and was raised in St. Albans. Her mother was a nurse. Her father passed away when she was very young, she said.

Barnes was a young mother herself when she decided to attend a school that prepared women for construction jobs. She always had a bit of a tomboy streak in her, and she knew the trades paid much better than office work available to women at the time.

"I had no problem putting boots on because I could make more

than I could in heels and stockings," she said. "I never really acclimated to heels and stockings."

She was 23 years old when she landed a Brooklyn Union job with an assist from her Godmother, a politically active Community Board leader who put in a good word for Barnes with the company.

The work as a Helper was strenuous, and some of her co-workers and supervisors verbally harassed her, but Barnes wasn't changing her course.

"I was determined," she said. "I was hell bent on making it. Yes, you went home tired. Yes, you went home with your back hurting. The guys did too. That's the nature of the job. The job was putting pipe in the ground."

"My attitude was, 'Nobody is going to get to me. I'm a woman. I can do this. This is easy – birthing a baby is harder.'"

Barnes next worked on the Rack Truck, which was a valuable experience because she learned about the materials and tools needed for various jobs, she said. She did, however, have to make some adjustments. She had to place two bags of asphalt on the driver's seat so she could see over the steering wheel.

After working as a Helper, Barnes moved up to Operator, Mechanic and then Inspector, a title she has held since 1995.

Throughout her career, Barnes has been generous about sharing her vast knowledge with co-workers, Local 101 Vice President Joe Coscia, said. A two-time cancer survivor, Barnes has reliably visited co-workers in the hospital who were battling the disease, he said.

"She has a tough exterior but she has a heart of gold," Coscia said.





ON THE JOB at the *Call Center*

I smell gas. I have no heat. Why are they ripping up my street?
When the phone rings at National Grid's Customer Call Center at MetroTech in downtown Brooklyn, there's no telling what one of the Customer Service Reps might hear from the customer on the other end.

Approximately 170 Customer Service Representatives, Billing Specialists and Team Leaders work in the bright, sprawling 16th-floor office. They handle all customer calls – everything from emergencies to questions about bills – that come in from residents and business owners in Brooklyn, Queens and Staten Island.

And the calls do come in. Open from 6 a.m. to midnight, six days a week, the Call Center handles on average between 6,000 and 8,000 calls a day.

Service Reps are literally on the clock.

On average, they are not supposed to spend more than 12 seconds between calls and can't keep customers on hold on for more than 20 seconds. Each question or complaint is supposed to be resolved in 325 seconds (5.4 minutes) on average.

"It's a stressful job," TWU Local 101 lawyer Arthur Schwartz said. "It's non-stop, non-stop. A lot of the people are calling to complain. They're not calling to wish you a happy Mother's Day."

Teleisha Dominguez, 32, is one of the newer Local 101 members. National Grid hired Dominguez approximately two years ago.

"The best part of the job is you are constantly talking to different people and learning different things," Dominguez said.

"The worst part is irate customers who curse you out about something that's out of your control."

"The best part of the job is you are constantly talking to different people and learning different things"



Prior to National Grid, Dominguez worked at the Gap clothing store as a systems manager in charge of displays. She switched to National Grid in part because of the union-negotiated benefits like paid sick days and regular, predictable schedules.

The dean of the Call Center undeniably is Roger Ashley, 54. He's

been on the job nearly 36 years and is at the very top of the seniority list.

"I just love dealing with the customers," Ashley said. "I love customer service. I love helping people. When I help someone with their bill or a type of job – a gas leak, closing an account, opening an account, an appliance acting up – it gives me a

sense of accomplishment. Helping the customer accomplish what they wanted to accomplish is very satisfying."

Ashley says he has a recipe for success: The three Ws.

"I want the customer to feel warm, welcome and wanted," he said. "I try to put myself in their shoes and treat them as I would want to be treated."



Contract Extension with National Grid Ratified.

Bruising Battle with the company avoided – and raises secured!

TWU Local 101 members didn't just approve the three-year contract extension that union officers negotiated with National Grid. They approved it by an overwhelming and stunning margin.

Approximately 87% of members who cast ballots voted 'Yes.' Only 13% of participating members voted No.

Members cast their ballots on May 30th at the Local 101 office on Montague St. in downtown Brooklyn, and at the Knights of Columbus hall on E. 86th St.

An independent outside company, Global Election Service, conducted the vote and counted the ballots.

"This is a very good, solid contract, and the members see that," Local 101 President Constance Bradley said.

"I'm proud of my officers and administration. I think we delivered. We took care of business."

The contract extension runs from Oct. 16, 2019 to Oct. 16, 2022.

It delivers 9% raises compounded over the three-year period with the first scheduled for Oct. 16, 2019. It also grabs back more work from outside contractors, increases promotional opportunities, expands job security and improves healthcare.

"It looks pretty good," Sean Bechan, a Call Center worker in the Local 101 C title, said after voting on Montague St.

Under the provisions of the contract extension, Local 101 C employees with consistently excellent work and attendance metrics will be able to move up into the Local 101 Associate Customer Service Representative title.

"If I show my worth, I can get into a better situation with better pay, a better pay progression and more vacation days," Bechan said.

Jeremy, an 11-year A Operator who didn't want to provide his last name, welcomed the raises but was also looking forward to a new healthcare provider.



The agreement replaces GHI medical insurance coverage with Aetna.

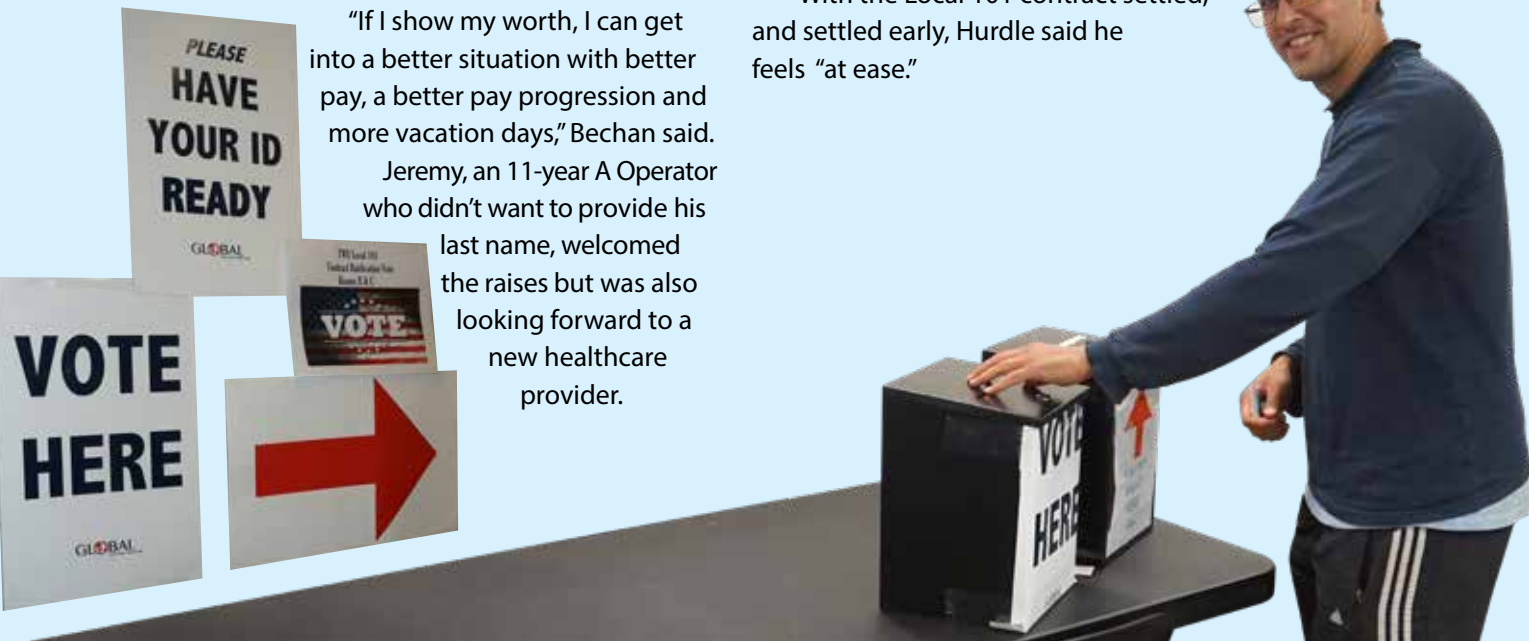
"A lot of times doctors don't take GHI and I have to pay out of pocket," Jeremy said. "The hope is things will be better with the new insurance provider."

Adrian Hurdle, a BPI crew leader, thought the economic incentives for perfect attendance would encourage younger workers to report for duty and not take sick days here and there. But the biggest benefit of the contract extension is labor-management peace – and peace of mind, Hurdle said.

National Grid locked out its unionized workers in Boston last year, and that contract fight took more than six months to resolve. Local 101 members thought they'd have to wage war with management down here too, Hurdle said.

"A lot of people thought we were going out on strike," Hurdle said.

With the Local 101 contract settled, and settled early, Hurdle said he feels "at ease."



A wrongfully arrested National Grid employee is back to work, thanks to an agreement Local 101 secured that also grants her one year of back pay.

The worker, a member of TWU Local 101 for more than two decades, was charged in 2016 with illegally arranging gas meter installations without the required city permit. But the Brooklyn District Attorney's Office eventually dismissed all charges against the woman – who steadfastly maintained her innocence. (She did not want her name used for this article) She returned to work for National Grid in June under grievance settlement Local 101 negotiated with the company.

"We're all ecstatic to have her back," Local 101 President Constance Bradley said. "She was out of work for a long time, and she went through a terrible ordeal. I'm very happy the union could secure this agreement, which will enable her to start putting her life back together."

Local 101 lawyer Arthur Schwartz said National Grid had to be forced to do the right thing. In addition to the one year of back pay, the settlement requires National Grid pay the worker a higher hourly rate so she can recoup all of her lost income over time. She also will receive pension credits for the nearly three years she was off the job, Schwartz said.

"It's a good win for her and for the union," Schwartz said. "Anytime you get back pay for someone, it's a good win. Employers never want to grant back pay."



CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR RETIREES – OLD AND NEW



Nearly 60 retirees turned out for Tony Balzano's annual reunion of former National Grid employees. This year's event was held June 8th at Patrizia's Restaurant on Staten Island. Retirees came from near and far, including Florida, North Carolina, South Carolina, New Jersey and Pennsylvania. A great time was had by all. See you next year!



Six Local 101 members – with a combined 224 years on the job – have recently retired from National Grid. Congratulations! Enjoy your well-deserved time off. Pictured at their retirement ceremony are: Pat Carrol, 37 Years of service; Stephen Baierlein, 34 years of service; John Maggiore, 45 years; Kenneth Ferguson, 32 years; Eddie Haddican, 41 years; and Darnell Brown, 35 years.

MAKING THE GRADE



TWU Local 101 President Constance Bradley and M3 Technology President John Pescitelli (center) standing with scholarship recipient Jadhia Harper (6th from right) and Jadhia's mother, Jacqueline Peters-Harper (5th from right). Also pictured (from far left to right) Ralph Pitta of M3 Technology; Local 101 Delegate Warren Rollins; Local 101 Administrative Assistant Angela Green and Local 101 Executive Board Member Derrek Oliver. Also present (from far right to left): Local 101 Recording Secretary John Nellis; Financial Secretary-Treasurer Richard Diaczuk; Vice President Joe Coscia and Executive Board Member Phil Coiro.

The daughters of two TWU Local 101 members each were awarded \$2,000 college scholarships at a ceremony held at the Union Hall in downtown Brooklyn this spring.

This is an annual scholarship program that benefits our children in a very meaningful and powerful way, helping them pay tuition as they advance their educations. Local 101 is extremely proud to partner with M3 Technology, which generously provides this very important financial aid, and looks forward to seeing what our young scholars do in the years to come.



Paris Smith, who received a scholarship that helped pay for her senior year, graduated in May 2019 with high honors from Johnson & Wales University in Miami, Fla. She majored in Business. Paris' mother, Felicia Parrish, works for National Grid in the Dispatching Department in MetroTech.



M3 Technology President John Pescitelli and scholarship recipient Jadhia Harper. Harper is attending Long Island University Post (LIU Post). She is majoring in Biology. Her mother, Jacqueline Peters-Harper, is a CAC Team Leader at MetroTech.

TWU Local 101 Utility Division

TRANSPORT WORKERS UNION of AMERICA, AFL-CIO

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Constance Bradley
President

Richard Diaczuk
Financial Secretary-Treasurer



Joseph Coscia
Vice President

John Nellis
Recording Secretary

NOTICE OF SECTION MEETINGS

2019 - 2020

ALL MEMBERS ARE WELCOME TO ATTEND

AUGUST - RECESSED

THURSDAY - JANUARY 16

THURSDAY - SEPTEMBER 19

THURSDAY - FEBRUARY 20

THURSDAY - OCTOBER 17

THURSDAY - MARCH 19

THURSDAY - NOVEMBER 21

THURSDAY - APRIL 16

THURSDAY - DECEMBER 19

THURSDAY - MAY 21

ALL MEETINGS ARE HELD AT 6 PM SHARP

LOCATION:

**KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS
1305 86th STREET, BROOKLYN, NY 11228**

ALL DELEGATES AND SHOP STEWARDS MUST ATTEND

THIS NOTICE TO BE POSTED ON ALL UNION BULLETIN BOARDS



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**TWU Local 101 Section Meetings
are held monthly on Thursdays
at 6 p.m. at
The Knights of Columbus,
1305 86th St., Brooklyn, NY, 11228**

**ALL DELEGATES
AND SHOP STEWARDS
MUST ATTEND**



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