



Embers of Hope: Lahaina’s Fight to Rebuild Two Years Later.



Stephanie Smythe, Maui Division Business Agent, who worked at the Royal Lahaina at the time of the 2023 fires, stands in the kitchen of her temporary home in the Ka La’i Ola complex, constructed by the state of Hawai’i.

It’s been two years since wind and fire mixed to set Lahaina ablaze. The devastation was swift and widespread — entire neighborhoods reduced to ash, hundreds displaced, and a beloved historic town forever changed. But in the months and years since, something else has taken root: the long, uneven, but determined path toward healing and rebuilding.

To mark this solemn anniversary, The Voice spoke with two ILWU members impacted by the fire, each offering a personal view of what “recovery” looks like. What we heard were stories of strength, neighborly care, and steady progress, alongside frustration, exhaustion, and the ongoing challenges that remain. For many, the fire exposed structural cracks that were already there: an overheated housing market, long permitting delays, and systemic barriers to rebuilding local lives. And yet, within the loss, many found new sources of solidarity and hope.

One of those members is Stephanie Smythe, a lifelong Lahaina resident, graduate of Lahainaluna, and now a Maui Division Business Agent. At the time of the fire, she was Unit Chair at Royal Lahaina. She also lost her home that day.

“I lost everything,” she shared. In

the months that followed, Stephanie lived out of a room at the Royal Lahaina, balancing her union responsibilities while navigating her own displacement. Today, she calls Ka La’i Ola home — a state-funded temporary housing community that opened its doors one year after the fire and now houses roughly 1,500 fire survivors.

Finding peace one year later
Nestled just mauka of Hawaiian Homes, Ka La’i Ola was designed for stability and peace — and for many like Stephanie, it’s working. “I’m beyond pleased with the state for this housing,” she told The Voice. “I’m so happy and have gratitude for Governor Green for providing these units. Just this morning, we got a letter from the Governor letting us know that the waiver on rent and utilities is being extended until February 2026.”

Stephanie’s unit is a 296-square-foot one-bedroom laid out in a cluster with a dozen others — a neighborhood, with planter boxes, picnic tables, and communal grills. “It’s a good feeling,” she said, “considering you lost everything and were scattered — and then came together at Ka La’i Ola. You’re in a neighborhood again.”

That sense of community is no small thing. “The little things we used to take

for granted, they’re huge now,” she reflected. “Being able to say to your neighbor, ‘Hey, I just went to Costco, I don’t have room in my icebox — you got space?’ That’s mental health. Maybe even physical health.”

Her permanent home is still under construction. “It’s going, but it’s slow,” she said. Stephanie is among the many who are rebuilding one step at a time, with support from family, union siblings, and neighbors who may not be from the same neighborhood, “but I know all of them. They’re solid members of the community.”

The road for Stephanie has been rough. But progress toward peace and stability has been consistent. Not all survivors of the fires, however, have shared such a road. Owen Kahahane, Unit Chair at the Hyatt Regency, Kapalua, has had a rocky road to say the least, in his life after the fires.

The Struggle of the System
Owen Kahahane, Unit Chair for Unit 2516, the Hyatt Regency Maui, lost the home he shared with his extended family. Seven people lived in the house—his mother, siblings, their children—but because only his mother’s name was on the title, each family member had to file separately with FEMA as renters.

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Meeting Dates

Local Executive Committee
Monday, September 2
Monday, October 6
Monday, November 3

Local Executive Board
Friday, September 5
Friday, December 12

Hawai’i Division Executive Board
Last Friday every month

Maui Division Executive Board
3rd Wednesday every month

O’ahu Division Executive Board
3rd Wednesday every month

Kaua’i Division Executive Board
2nd Wednesday every month

ADDRESS LABEL

News from The Dispatcher

“Heat & Hammer” Wins Historic first contract at Wallenius in Tacoma: Local 23 welcomes 150 new workers; here’s how we won



One hundred and fifty workers at the Wallenius Wilhelmsen Logistics (WWL) Tacoma Vehicle Processing Center in Tacoma won union recognition and a first contract after more than a year of determined organizing and bargaining. Workers won significant pay increases, safety protections, increased PTO, and other protections.

After ten months of bargaining and holding strong against an aggressive union-busting campaign, 150 workers at the Wallenius Wilhelmsen Logistics (WWL) Tacoma Vehicle Processing Center won a first contract with ILWU Local 23.

Part of the ILWU’s Supply Chain, Logistics, and Transport (SCLT) organizing program, Local 23’s victory over WWL is a powerful step down the supply chain and toward greater union power for the entire ILWU.

Here’s how we did it:

Building the Union at WWL

In 2019, Wallenius opened a new “vehicle processing center” (VPC) across the street from a major ro-ro/break bulk terminal in the Port of Tacoma. Workers at the VPC prepare vehicles before they go to the dealership, including post-factory accessory installs, parts-handling in the warehouse, moving cars to and from satellite yards, quality control, a body shop, and rail team that loads vehicles onto autorack train cars.

Wallenius is the largest ro-ro carrier in the world and also a PMA member company. As a signatory to the PCL&CA, they’re familiar with good union standards and wages — and can easily afford them. In 2024, Wallenius brought in \$5.3 billion in revenue and more than \$1 billion in profits alone. But wages for WWL distro drivers were less than 40% of what ILWU longshore workers earn performing the same work for the same company. Other problems, such as abusive management, dangerous speed-ups, deliberately high turnover, and other sweatshop conditions, were even worse.

Despite having unionized facilities around the world, WWL intended to keep

their Tacoma VPC non-union — and above all, the company directive was to keep the ILWU out. These low wages and poor conditions posed an existential threat to ILWU standards and jurisdiction. Local 23 knew organizing the VPC would strengthen our position, and VPC workers knew with longshore power at their backs, they could disrupt the flow of cargo and force Wallenius to the table.

VPC workers launched the union fight with a mass strike that coincidentally coincided with a vessel offload on February 7, 2024, walking off the job after managers reacted to their demands for respecting health and safety by illegally threatening to fire workers in retaliation, landing several “unfair labor practice” (ULP) charges against WWL. Longshore workers discharging autos refused to cross the picket line. Operations at the facility ground to a halt, and no new cars made their way in.

But successful mass strikes don’t happen spontaneously. They take careful preparation. VPC workers spent months building an organizing committee, one conversation at a time. These discreet “one-on-one’s,” conducted away from management’s watchful eyes, are the essential building block for organizing a union. With support from ILWU Local 23 President Jared Faker and ILWU Assistant Organizing Director Jon Brier, the committee met on a monthly and then weekly basis to share updates about their ongoing efforts.

The day after the strike, workers announced they were joining ILWU Local 23 and demanded voluntary recognition. WWL declined and filed for an NLRB vote instead, hoping to defeat the union in a certification vote. The company flew in

their union-busting team from at least four states and Canada, texting anti-ILWU propaganda to employees and holding anti-union meetings on a near-daily basis. Despite WWL’s efforts, workers prevailed by a vote of 2-1 on March 21.

After the vote, we invited everyone from the bargaining unit to propose contract demands and then elected a 20-person bargaining committee, including Local 23 President Jared Faker as chair, At-Large Labor Representative Zack Pattin as vice chair, and Jon Brier, who directs the ILWU SCLT program. This large, broadly-

representative committee was a constant thorn in the side of WWL. The company’s chief negotiator (a longtime union buster picked up from Amazon) complained for months about the size of the committee and their “decorum.”

This big committee ensured that members’ needs across every department were met, but there was another reason for it too: the union’s members are the union’s greatest strength. Packing the room means rank-and-file workers themselves control and shape negotiations and also get to see firsthand just how little the company thinks of them. When you see firsthand who’s fighting for you and who’s against you, it’s easy to pick your side and stick with them.

Battle for a First Contract

On June 4, we sat down with WWL and hit them with a full proposal covering every issue that goes into a contract, including complete job descriptions, jurisdiction, terms of the agreement, a working grievance machinery, year-by-year wage scale — even a cover page and signature lines. That move caught them off guard and left WWL’s negotiators speechless. The next two days, they returned with copy-paste responses, mostly from their company handbook.

This zero-effort approach was the norm for the first several months. WWL made clear they would obstruct, stall, delay, and drag out negotiations as long as they could. Engaging in petty debate, showing up late, cancelling bargaining dates, refusing to schedule more than just two half-days a month at times, even making an issue about the temperature of water provided — WWL wanted to waste our time. Many of their responses were incoherent and contradictory. Several passes were blatantly illegal, violating the Americans

with Disabilities Act (ADA) or Washington state L&I.


The worst of WWL’s behavior wasn’t at the table, however, but back at the facility. Before or after almost every single session, a committee member or supporter would be forced into unsafe or irregular assignments, written up for fabricated infractions, even illegally fired for union activity. In one case, a manager hurled racist slurs at a bargaining committee member and threatened to fight him in the parking lot.

During negotiations, the union filed fifteen ULPs. Marches on the boss, sometimes 50 people at a time, were a regular occurrence. Workers struck two more times, both in response to illegal discipline and firings: On August 2, a one-day ULP strike over the firing of Dakota Booth and forcing others to walk through high-traffic areas; in December, a four-day ULP strike in response to WWL’s firing of bargaining committee member Milton Turner. Again, longshore workers, and additionally truck drivers and railroad workers, honored picket lines, and the facility was shut down.

Our committee was trained and prepared for these attacks (what organizers call “inoculation”) before negotiations even started. We made regular reminders of what ILWU Organizer Jon Brier told everyone before we started: That the bargaining table is only where we measure our strength. The job itself — where workers are able to take collective action to disrupt production — is where we have our power.

Another powerful tool was our regular member bulletins. Summarizing discussions and providing updates on tentative agreements (TAs), these bulletins were an antidote to WWL’s attempts to control the narrative, helping dispel rumors and other misinformation. Though written for members, our bulletins caught the attention of management too, including executives as far away as Norway.

Bad publicity and the threat of further disruption forced WWL to change gears. Corporate leadership reached out to the Port of Tacoma and scheduled a meeting with commissioners and Local 23 President Jared Faker, hoping to ease tensions and worker militancy. President Faker made clear the ILWU’s commitment to moving cargo, but that the union would never back down in the fight for good conditions. WWL added a new negotiator to their

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“This is our top priority”: Maui Division Mobilizes for Housing



Officers, members, and pensioners stand with community organization, Lahaina Strong at a press conference preceeding the June 9th County Council meeting.

June and July saw relentless political action by the Maui Division with one simple goal: passing Bill 9, Maui County’s proposed ordinance to phase out short-term rentals (STRs). Union members, pensioners, and community allies have stood united, delivering a powerful message to the County Council—housing isn’t a commodity, and protecting it serves workers, families, and Maui’s future.

Mayor Bissen Sets the Stage

In our last issue, The Voice shared that Mayor Richard Bissen addressed the Maui Division Executive Board. He updated members on the hurdled course Bill 9 faces and emphasized how essential public turnout and testimony are at council hearings. His presentation set

the stage for mobilizing Maui Division’s members, ensuring that our collective voice would be heard loud and clear in Council chambers.

Rally at County Council

On June 9, ahead of the council meeting, ILWU Maui Division officers, members, and pensioners joined forces with Lahaina Strong and other community organizations, holding a press conference to underscore the urgent need for Bill 9. Together, they made it clear that homes—not investor-vacation rentals—should be prioritized throughout Maui County.

That same evening, in the packed County Council chambers, Richard VanBarren—a proud ILWU Unit 2520 member and Grand Wailea worker—

took the mic for public testimony: “As an ILWU member, our workers need affordable housing and our hotels need workers, so for obvious reasons, I support Bill 9.”

He challenged the notion that STRs are the lifeblood of Maui’s economy: “I heard somebody say today that the Maui economy today is a ‘living breathing thing’... Hawaiians think about this differently. What is living and breathing to us is the water, the sky, the land, the people, the community.” His words brought clarity to the cause—protection of home and generationally-rooted working-class families must come before profit.

Steward Class Takes Political Action

On July 18, during the ILWU Maui Division’s steward training with 60 members, union leadership made another bold push. Division Director Stephen West tuned in to testify on Zoom and delivered impassioned remarks framed by a sea of union solidarity: “We represent 5,500 members on Maui. This is our top priority. I hope this is your top priority.” West closed his testimony with a resounding chant: “Who are we? ILWU!” and challenged the council: “Pass Bill 9.” The volume of testimony was so immense that Council recessed three times, finally finishing testimony in the evening of June 24th—a testament to how deeply the community cares.

Revealing Questions from Council
During the hearings, council members took a sharp tactic—questioning opponents about how many STRs they owned. One testifier admitted to owning 440 units. When asked what he’d do if the ordinance passes, he replied: “I’d just hold them for when friends and family visit.” That glimpse into landlords’ attitudes laid bare the depth of greed and disregard for Maui families.

Where Things Stand

The Council reconvened on July 2, spending most of the day in a closed meeting to review legal questions around the Bill. Bill 9 passed out of the Maui County Council Planning Committee on July 24. It will likely be heard by the full County Council some time in August. We can expect STR lobbyists to continue to pressure lawmakers to oppose the bill so Maui member mobilization will be critical. Attend your Unit and Division meetings and heed the call from Unit and Division leaders.



Richard VanBarren, Kaleo Kalawai’a, and Melinda Digregorio, all leaders at Unit 2520 Grand Wailea, take a breather with another supporter after hours of testimony.

ILWU Local 142 PAC: 2025 Legislative Session Recap

The 2025 Hawai‘i State Legislative Session marked a rebuilding year for the ILWU Local 142 Political Action Committee (PAC). Throughout the session, our PAC focused on collaboration, advocacy, and laying the groundwork for greater legislative influence in the years ahead. Despite challenges, we stood firm in our commitment to protecting workers, advancing labor interests, and strengthening Hawai‘i’s local industries.

Legislative Initiatives & Victories

We stood shoulder to shoulder with our brothers and sisters in the labor movement, including supporting SB83, Hotel Labor Disruption Notification, a bill championed alongside UNITE HERE Local 5. SB83 would require hotels to notify incoming guests of any impending labor strikes, helping to ensure that hotel workers are not unfairly blamed during labor disputes and encouraging greater accountability from hotel operators. The bill successfully crossed over from the Senate to the House this session but did not go further than that. We remain optimistic that with continued work during the interim, SB83 can be passed into law next year.

Expanding Worker Rights

The ILWU PAC supported measures aimed at safeguarding and expanding workers’ rights, including:

HB162 – Hawaii Labor Relations Board Arbitrators. This bill increases the number of available arbitrators for the Hawaii Labor Relations Board, ensuring that disputes can be resolved more fairly and efficiently for workers across the state. The Governor signed this bill into law at the end of May.

SB1032 – Foreign Campaign Contributions Ban. A critical good-government measure, SB1032 prohibits foreign entities from making contributions, expenditures, electioneering communications, or donations for election purposes, helping reduce foreign influence in Hawai‘i’s elections. SB1032 crossed over from the Senate to the House but died in committee.

Hawai‘i Ag and Food Security

ILWU Local 142 PAC remained committed to protecting Hawai‘i’s farmers and our island food systems:

HB1291 – Coffee Labeling Protection Enhancements. This bill added “roasted coffee” to the list of

protected labeling, preserving the integrity and reputation of one of Hawai‘i’s most important agricultural export. It was signed into law by the Governor at the end of May.

HB427 – Strengthened Biosecurity Measures. This bill enhanced the state’s capacity to prevent and respond to invasive species threats, including the Coconut Rhinoceros Beetle, Little Fire Ant, and Coqui Frog. The law strengthens biosecurity protocols and supports the use of transitional inspection facilities to better protect Hawai‘i’s environment and agriculture. This bill awaits the Governor’s signature.

Food Access for Children

Among this year’s most impactful victories was SB1300 – Free School Meals, a hard-won achievement that will expand access to free school meals for children across the state. The passage of this bill represents a major victory for Hawai‘i’s working families, helping to ensure that no child goes hungry in the classroom, regardless of their family’s income.

After passing both chambers of the Legislature, SB1300 was signed into law by the Governor, making Hawai‘i

one of the growing number of states leading the way on universal school meal access. This new law not only helps families struggling with the high cost of living, but it also supports student success by ensuring children are fed and ready to learn.

SB1300 was the result of a strong, community-driven grassroots campaign, with broad support from labor unions, education advocates, parents, and public health organizations. The ILWU Local 142 PAC proudly stood with these allies to push this critical legislation forward. The bill generated significant media attention, highlighting the urgent need to address food insecurity among Hawai‘i’s keiki.

Looking Ahead to 2026

The 2025 session was about rebuilding influence, strengthening alliances, and setting the stage for future wins. With strategic appointments and progressive legislation under our belt, ILWU Local 142 PAC is well-positioned to grow our impact in 2026 and beyond. Our fight for working families continues.

Lahaina:

Owen lived at the Hyatt for six months following the fire. While grateful for the hotel’s shelter and meal program—three meals a day—he noted that it wasn’t always the healthiest, and it was no substitute for having a stable home. He technically owned a five-bedroom home in West Maui, but it was occupied by tenants paying \$2,100 a month—well below market. “I thought about moving in,” he said, “but that would’ve meant evicting my tentants in the middle of a housing crisis. I couldn’t do that in good conscience.”

Instead, he and his wife were offered temporary housing in Ha‘ikū, a long drive from Lahaina on the other side of the island. The home had no air conditioning, and the summer heat was unbearable. When Owen purchased a portable AC unit, the homeowners association objected. What followed was four months of frustrating back-and-forth between FEMA, the HOA, and contractors just to get an AC installed. “We finally got it done, but it wore us out,” he said.

By February, they had left Ha‘ikū altogether. “The FEMA system just became too stressful. “There’s a psychological side to it that people don’t talk about,” Owen shared. After opting out of the FEMA program, he and his wife moved to a rental in Wailuku, where they now make the long daily commute to Lahaina for work.

The experience left him deeply critical of how housing support was handled. “The federal government agreeing to pay whatever landlords asked—that was a huge mistake. Short-term rental owners and landlords saw an opportunity, not a crisis,” he said. Owen later discovered that his landlord in Ha‘ikū had been charging FEMA \$5,100 a month for their rundown two-bedroom unit.

Still, he keeps fighting. “This is why I fight for Bill 9,” Kahahane said. “We have to do something about the housing crisis on Maui. If we don’t, nothing’s going to change for working people like us.”

Bill 9 is a Maui County proposal that would limit short-term rentals in apartment-zoned areas—housing that was originally intended for local residents. Advocates like Kahahane say the bill is a crucial step to bring long-term housing back into the hands of working families.

In July, after months of organizing and testimony from unions, housing advocates, and fire survivors, the Maui County Council passed Bill 9 on first reading. The final vote is expected in August. For workers like Owen, it’s more than policy—it’s about protecting the future of life on Maui for everyday people.

Two years after the fires, the recovery in Lahaina is far from over. On a drive through Lahaina today, one sees mulitple government mini-home complexes up on the hill where a large number of survivors live. The debris is mostly cleared out and the new frames of one or two houses per block are beginning to stand up.

For some, the current phase has meant finding new forms of community in unexpected places. For others, it has meant confronting the harsh realities of a broken system—one that too often puts profits over people. But across every story, one thing is clear: the people, including ILWU members, are not finished fighting for their future.

Whether it’s organizing around legislation like Bill 9, caring for displaced neighbors, or simply showing up every day to rebuild their lives, members are proving that real recovery is collective. The path forward may be uneven, but it’s being shaped by the people who call Lahaina home—who lived the disaster, who stood by one another, and who continue to fight not just to recover what was lost, but to build something stronger in its place.

Heat and Hammer:

committee: a retired general manager from Vancouver, BC.

In part, this change was just about getting a more reliable set of eyes and ears on the situation. WWL’s new direction at times undermined their in-house union buster’s own agenda: an obsessive hostility towards workers’ rights, regardless of what’s best for the company. We began making progress on core issues for the first time, including defeating WWL’s demands for 12-hour days and mandatory extra shifts.

In January, though, we took a hit when General Motors imports returned to Baltimore. WWL imposed layoffs and manipulated the situation, claiming it was because of the union’s “unreasonable” demands. But GMs were only temporarily here (something WWL told workers from the start), a short-term fix for pandemic-related supply chain issues. Undeterred, our committee refused to cave. WWL’s entire team was visibly taken aback when the committee kept pressing ahead with full confidence.

Still convinced they had the upper hand, WWL tried to slow the pace of negotiations again. We needed to escalate in a new way to keep the pressure on. That’s where the ILWU’s international allies came in.

Letters of support from dockworker and maritime unions around the world flooded in: East Coast longshore with the ILA, Australia, Belgium, Benin, Bermuda, Japan, New Zealand, Ukraine, Uruguay, and international federations like the IDC and ITF. Dockers with the Maritime Union of Australia (MUA) in Port Kembla and All Japan Dockworkers Union (Zenkowan) in Yokohama picketed on the docks

and even took actions aboard Wallenius vessels, including hand-delivering letters demanding WWL bargain in good faith.

The next time we met, we secured nine TAs in two days, our single most productive session. And on April 2, 2025, after ten months at the table, we locked in wages and healthcare, and had a near complete TA — except for one outstanding issue: wiping out past discipline.

Despite assurances from WWL’s negotiators that both parties would benefit from a clean slate, the company’s union buster had other plans. The bulk of this discipline was purely retaliatory. After a few tense days, WWL folded and reset discipline records back to zero in the majority of cases. A few special circumstances moved to lower steps in the discipline process, while others continued before the NLRB. Just this month, the Board announced it will prosecute WWL for firing Violet Moman. She was on the organizing committee and fired the day after the certification vote.

Three other illegal firings were resolved through the MOU, including bargaining committee members Dakota Booth and Vance Flippin, as well as Isiah Soto, who was fired for taking a phone call from his niece’s school. He was late to get her because of mandatory overtime — a practice now banned by the contract: If you’re assigned overtime, but have to pick up your kids from school, you’re exempt from all required overtime assignments for childcare purposes and emergencies.

Ratification, Retaliation, and Fighting Back

With a complete tentative agreement

in hand, we scheduled read-throughs for members to attend and went over every word of the contract, taking questions along the way. When members voted on May 1 (International Workers’ Day, as it were) the contract passed by 97%. Here’s what we won:

- Average of 50-60% raises
- 95% employer-match healthcare
- The right to standby over safety
- Joint Labor Relations Committee
- 40-hour (full-time) guarantee
- Fair scheduling
- 100% voluntary extra shifts
- 3 weeks vacation after 3 years, 4 weeks after 7 years, 5 weeks after 12 years
- Additional leave even after exhausting sick time
- 14 holidays, including MLK Day and Bloody Thursday

Among the contracts we reviewed from other WWL VPCs and their competition, like Auto Warehousing Company (AWC), the standards we won in Tacoma are far and away the best, helping set the bar and raise expectations for Wallenius employees across the country. But now comes the next fight: enforce the contract and protect what we won.

Barely allowing the dust to settle, WWL’s union buster resumed operations soon after ratification. The company announced a punitive round of layoffs less than a week into the new contract, followed by a slew of flagrant violations: deliberately misclassifying employees into lower-paid categories, denying protected forms of medical leave, management doing bargaining unit work (in the midst of layoffs, no less), understaffing rail in violation of safety requirements, and more.

On June 24, WWL announced fourteen additional layoffs, targeting four more members of the bargaining committee: Richard Booth, Jose Camacho, Ladda Hilyard, and Jessica Roberson (who became a fourth-generation ILWU Local 23 member when she swore in at the June meeting). Everyone laid off took part in strikes, signed petitions, or marched on the boss, and the majority have spoken with NLRB agents about WWL’s illegal activities.

On the same day, WWL fired Garret Wagner, another bargaining committee member, whose past discipline had also been cleared by the MOU. Garret and his girlfriend, Violet Moman, have both been long targeted by the company. He was fired two weeks after the NLRB announced it would prosecute WWL for Violet’s illegal firing last year.

But we’re not taking these lying down. Members now have the ability to fight back using their contract. We’ve filed grievances on behalf of all the workers laid off or fired on June 24, not to mention the two dozen other grievances already in the system. Four have been adjusted in members’ favor so far. The rest we’ll fight to resolve through the JLRC and take to arbitration if we have to. With support from longshore workers across the street and around the globe, we’ve beaten this company on every front so far, and we’re ready to win again.

– Zack Pattin, ILWU Local 23

More to the story! Read the full article and see more photos at ILWU.org

Longshore Pensioners Club Hits the Ground Running



Hilo pensioners, L-R: Manuel Branco, Gary Kuikahi, Eli Miura, Marcus Goo, Alan Cadaoas, Gerald Otomo (seated), Randy Molina, Jerry Calahate, Danny Pacyao, Ron Auwae, Kevin Chavis, and Darrell Mattos.

The formation of the ILWU Hawai‘i Longshore Division (HLD) Pensioners Program marks an important step in honoring the generations of longshore workers who helped build and sustain our union. Pensioners are carriers of knowledge, culture, and history. Even in retirement, they have a vital role to play—as mentors, educators, and active union voices.

The pensioner program is more than a social outlet. It is a structured effort to engage retirees, address their needs, preserve our collective history, and foster intergenerational unity to strengthen our foundation for the future.

Laying the Groundwork
Efforts began in January 2025 with Division Rep Nathan Dudoit assisting Social Services Coordinator Cassie Cockett in building a pensioner club and supporting auxiliaries. By February, planning and research were underway, including development of a comprehensive pensioner database for effective outreach.

In March, a draft letter and questionnaire were presented to the O‘ahu pension group for feedback. That same month, HLD reps attended the Maui Pensioner Council meeting and met with key retirees to begin groundwork for local organizing.

Outreach expanded statewide as letters and questionnaires were mailed to pensioners across all islands.

By April, representatives visited Hawai‘i Island to attend the local Pensioners Council meeting and continue mapping structures for engagement. In May, questionnaire responses were analyzed, providing insight into the needs and priorities of retired members.

A major milestone came in June, when pensioners on Hawai‘i Island officially formed the Big Island Longshore Pensioners Club (BILP). Thirteen members attended the inaugural meeting and elected officers: Ron Auwae as Chair and Eli Miura as Secretary/Treasurer. This first formal club set a precedent for other islands.

In July, HLD shared the BILP model with O‘ahu Pensioners and scheduled club training for August. That same month, representatives attended the annual Maui Pensioners Luncheon to raise awareness and build support for a club on Maui. Organizing there is ongoing, with Kaua‘i next in line for

outreach.

Looking Ahead
This program ensures that our retirees remain visible, respected, and involved. It strengthens union connections across all islands and reaffirms our commitment to lifetime solidarity. As each island builds momentum, we move closer to a unified statewide network that reflects the heart and history of the ILWU. The next scheduled meeting is August 8 in Hilo. Longshore pensioners interested in getting involved should contact Nate Dudoit: ndudoit@hawaiilongshore.org or Cassie Cockett: (808) 949-4161.



Newly elected Secretary-Treasurer for the Big Island Longshore Pensioners, Eli Miura, and Hawai‘i Longshore Division Rep, Nate Dudoit.

Lili‘uokalani Birthday Recognized by Hawai‘i Longshore Division



1917—204 Native stevedores, known as “po‘olā” draw Queen Lili‘uokalani’s casket to ‘Iolani Palace to lie in state before ushering it to her final resting place at Mauna Ala.

Have you seen this photograph before? Can you tell what it is? The ‘Iolani Palace in the background signifies a royal event—and indeed it is. This image captures part of the funeral procession of Queen Lili‘uokalani, as her body was moved to lie in state at the Palace. The men in white are “po‘olā,” or Native Hawaiian stevedores.

What do stevedores have to do with the Queen? Quite a lot. But to understand that connection, we need to go back. Under Kamehameha I, Hawai‘i entered international trade by exporting salt and sandalwood, which the king exchanged strategically for ships to build the kingdom’s maritime capabilities. While he welcomed

foreign advisors, Kamehameha relied on his chiefs to train in shipbuilding, blacksmithing, and other trades—creating trusted homegrown workforce that powered the early economy. Native stevedores loaded and unloaded cargo and sometimes helped guide ships to the outer harbor by canoe.

Though the origins of the name po‘olā as Native stevedore are unclear, “po‘olā” roughly translates to “head in the sun”. These workers formed a mutual aid society in 1876: the ‘Ahahui Po‘olā. Members paid 25 cents annually to help cover funeral expenses for fellow workers and their families during a time of devastating population loss among Native Hawaiians.

That same year, the Hawaiian Kingdom entered a major free trade agreement with the United States known as the Reciprocity Treaty. While free trade promised economic growth, many Native leaders opposed provisions they felt undermined Hawaiian sovereignty. Amid this tension, King Kalākaua turned to the po‘olā, whose labor would become vital as trade expanded.

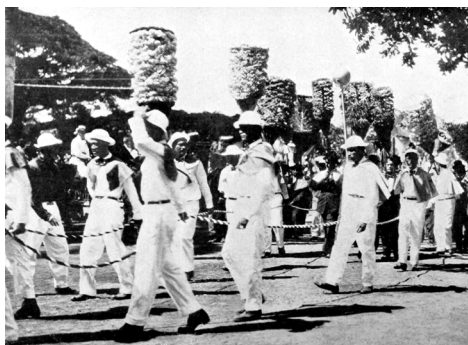
In 1877, Kalākaua attended the ‘Ahahui Po‘olā’s convention. In a lengthy speech, he traced the term po‘olā to his chiefly ancestors in Kaupō, Maui, known for toiling in the sun for the good of the people. He recast the term as a title of honor, referring to generations of ali‘i who worked for their people, and thanked the po‘olā for their service to the nation.

Both Kalākaua and his sister Lili‘uokalani called on the po‘olā in times of need. In 1881, when lava from Mauna Loa displaced families, the ‘Ahahui Po‘olā donated to relief efforts. During the 1882 smallpox outbreak, they gave \$500 to assist the quarantined. When a fire displaced residents in Hilo, the po‘olā gave generously again, becoming the second-highest donor in a campaign led by Queen Lili‘uokalani.

Beginning in 1877 with Kalākaua’s brother Leleiohōkū, the po‘olā also served as pallbearers for Hawaiian

royalty. Not six to eight men, but dozens—sometimes hundreds—dressed in white, drawing the royal hearse with symbolic ropes. For Queen Lili‘uokalani, they carried her casket from the Palace to her final resting place at Mauna ‘Ala.

Because of this deep historical connection, the Hawai‘i Longshore Division fought to win Queen Lili‘uokalani’s birthday as a holiday for their members. While met with resistance, the union held firm. Ultimately, the committee prevailed—earning the first new holiday in 27 years. September 2nd is now a day of remembrance, honoring the Queen and the proud lineage of po‘olā still carried by Hawai‘i’s longshore workers today.



Membership Services Department

Welcome the 2025-2026 New Bouslog Scholars!



Micah Akiu is the son of Michael Akiu, who works at McCabe Hamilton & Renny. He is a graduate of Kamehameha Schools Kapālama and is attending UH Mānoa.



Leah Asano is the niece of Amelia Amon Rego, who works at Dole Cannery. She is a graduate of Kamehameha Schools Kapālama and is attending UH Mānoa.



Nalani Blanco-Louis is the sibling of Tyler Blanco-Louis, who works at Hawaiian Mac Nut. She is a graduate of Ka‘ū High School and is attending Hawai‘i Community College.



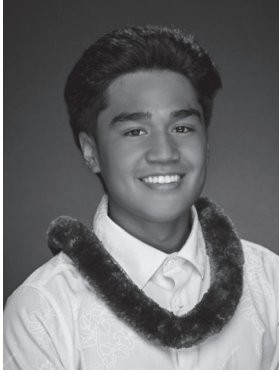
Andrew Delos Santos is the grandson of Roger Fagaragan, who works at Matson. He is a graduate of Waipahu High School and is attending UH Mānoa.



Kody Hayashi is the son of Charlton Hayashi, who works at Hawai‘i Stevedores. He is a graduate of Kalani High School and is attending Kapi‘olani Community College.



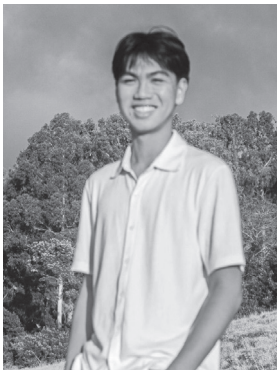
Lokela Kaia is the son of Jordon Kaia, who works at McCabe Hamilton & Renny. He is a graduate of Hawai‘i Technology Academy and is attending Leeward Community College.



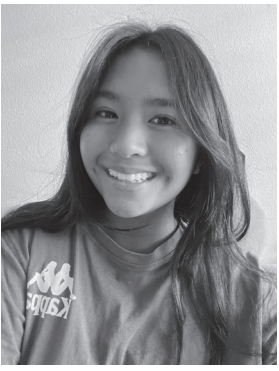
Cheydon Kaluahine-Salmo is the grandson of Corinna Salmo-Nguyen, ILWU Vice President. He is a graduate of Kamehameha Schools Kea‘au and is attending UH Mānoa.



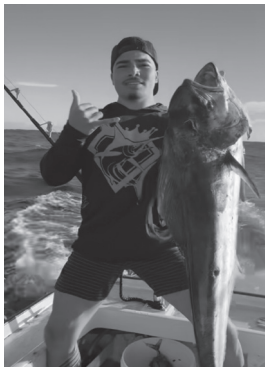
Kaulana Kraan is a member of the ILWU and works at Foodland. He is a graduate of Aiea High School and is attending UH Mānoa.



Kian John Pigao is the grandson of Demetria Pigao, who works at Grand Wailea Waldorf Astoria. He is a graduate of Maui High School and is attending UH Mānoa.



Chanelle Simpliciano is the daughter of John Simpliciano, who works as a Local Representative. She is a graduate of Maui High School and is attending UH Mānoa.



Brennon Soares is the son of Damien Soares, who works at Young Brothers. He is a graduate of Kamehameha Schools Kapālama and is attending UH Mānoa.



Casylynn Villaun is a member of the ILWU and works at Grand Wailea Waldorf Astoria. She is a graduate of Lahainaluna High School and is attending UH West O‘ahu.

Harriett Bouslog’s Legacy of Justice and Equality Lives On Through ILWU

The Harriet Bouslog Labor Scholarship is a unique and meaningful award available to the children, grandchildren, and legal dependents of ILWU Local 142 members. The scholarship not only provides crucial financial support for students attending any campus within the University of Hawai‘i system, but it also honors a fearless trailblazer in Hawai‘i’s labor movement: Harriet Bouslog.

Harriet Bouslog was Local 142’s first female labor and civil rights attorney, a woman whose sharp legal mind was matched only by her unwavering commitment to social justice. Originally from Florida and raised in Indiana, Harriet brought her talents and passion to Hawai‘i when Harry Bridges asked her to come and support striking workers. She stood alongside ILWU workers during some of the most turbulent moments in our labor history—including the landmark 1946 sugar strike. In a time when female attorneys were rare, and when laborers—many of them immigrants—

faced harsh discrimination, Harriet didn’t flinch. She represented over a hundred workers without regard for their ability to pay, often defending strikers who were unjustly targeted simply for demanding fair treatment.

Her belief in justice, equality, and dignity for all working people left a permanent imprint on Hawai‘i’s legal and labor landscape. Established in 1989, the Harriet Bouslog Scholarship continues to reflect her radical compassion. It empowers a new generation of students—all of whom are the descendants of ILWU members—to pursue higher education and carry forward the values Harriet championed: fairness, courage, and solidarity.

This year’s recipients went through a rigorous application process that required knowledge of ILWU history and engagement with ILWU members. The scholars represent not only academic achievement but the living legacy of ILWU’s commitment to the working class. Their success is built

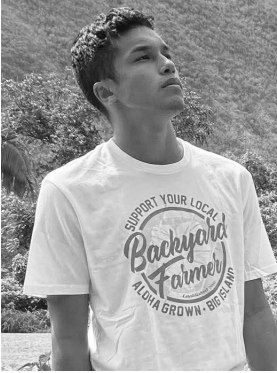
on the sacrifices of those who came before them and the doors opened by Harriet’s trailblazing spirit.

For school year 2026-2027, the scholarship will be managed through the UH Foundation. Members who are interested should look to union communications in early 2026 for details.

As we celebrate the 2025 Harriet Bouslog Scholarship recipients, we are reminded that the fight for justice is never done... but with each new scholar, the future of Hawai‘i’s working families grows brighter.



Devlin Bazzini is the son of Taryn Bazzini, who works at Andaz Wailea. He is a graduate of Maui High School and is attending UH Mānoa.



Alexander Santiago is the son of Tiffany Santiago, who works at Hāmākua-Kohala Health Center. He is a graduate of Honoka‘a High School and is attending UH Mānoa.



Harriett Bouslog with union members

Two Statewide Medical Negotiations Show Will And Determination

This summer, Local 142 members finds themselves at two ends of the bargaining table in Hawai‘i’s healthcare sector—celebrating a contract win at Kaiser Permanente and stepping into a high stakes contract negotiation for members at the Straub Medical Center.

Kaiser Techs Win Big

On July 3rd, ILWU members across the islands who work at Kaiser Permanente ratified a new four-year agreement that will deliver a 20% compounding wage increase, marking one of the strongest contracts for a medical unit in Local 142’s history. The contract covers just over 100 diagnostic technicians across eight Kaiser sites—six on O‘ahu, one on Maui, and two on Hawai‘i Island—under one statewide agreement.

The deal didn’t come easy. Months of negotiations were paired with a fiery member-led campaign. Techs from multiple departments participated in coordinated button-ups, proudly wearing union pins to show unity. Regular membership meetings and negotiation updates kept members engaged and informed across all three islands.

In addition to the wage increases, the new contract includes immediate market rate adjustments for select

departments, ratification bonus for others stronger protections ensuring rest periods or overtime pay for consecutive shifts

This win reflects a broader trend in ILWU’s recent bargaining efforts: contracts that break from past norms and begin to close the gap between wages and Hawai‘i’s rising cost of living.

Straub Negotiations Go All In

Just as Kaiser techs began to enjoy the gains of their new contract, ILWU members at Straub Medical Center entered negotiations of their own. Representing medical assistants, certified nursing assistants (CNAs), and other support clinicians, these workers are essential to the hospital’s daily operations, providing frontline care and critical support to both nurses and doctors.

The Straub bargaining committee pushed for wage increases, recognition of years of service, and a more affordable medical package. While the team remained hopeful, the backdrop suggests a tough road ahead.

Straub is part of Hawai‘i Pacific Health (HPH), a nonprofit healthcare network that also includes Kapiolani, Pali Momi, and Wilcox Medical Centers. In 2023, HPH reported \$1.66



L-R: Straub Negotiating Committee; Maria Bandonill, Lisa Goo, Faith Andrade, Dural Duenes, Chantel Quinones, Lailani Allagonez, Brianne Leong, Marisa Alderman, Teresa Agraan.

billion in revenue and nearly \$928 million in net assets, operating on par with a large corporation despite its tax-exempt status.

Just last year, Kapiolani nurses clashed with HPH management in a bitter contract fight that included multiple strikes and a management-imposed lockout. Nurses ultimately won key gains, but only after months of tension and organizing.

Straub members entered negotiations with that history fresh in their minds,

which strengthened their focus and determination. Negotiations began on July 15th and the Committee reached a tentative agreement at 11PM on August 4th. On July 31st, negotiations went until 2AM. Ratification will take place in mid-August.

From one end of the health system to the other, ILWU Local 142’s healthcare members are showing what it means to fight for dignity—not just for patients, but for the people who care for them.

Summer Field School Exposes UH Students to Hawai‘i Labor History and Issues



Field School students spent a day with Unit Chairs Jeoffrey Baltero (Unit 2401, Four Seasons Lāna‘i) and Jimmy Fernandez (Unit 2405, Pūlama Lāna‘i) learning the role of labor on Lāna‘i.

Increasing awareness and growing pride in Hawai‘i’s labor movement was the goal for this year’s Ea Hawai‘i Field School - a week-long Maui-based 3-credit class with students from O‘ahu, Maui, and this year, Lāna‘i. The 2025 field school was a collaboration between UH Mānoa, UH Maui College, and for the first time in the program’s ten year history, the Lāna‘i Education Center and the ILWU Local 142.

The program kicked off on Maui, exposing participants to the development of modern industry in Hawai‘i through 3 major homegrown workforces in the Hawaiian Kingdom: paniolo (cowboys), po‘olā (stevedores), and holokahiki or

selamoku (sailors).

It then shifted focus to the economic transition from a subsistence and small export economy into a plantation economy, bringing waves of immigrant workers to Hawai‘i and drastically changing the environmental landscape. Students learned about the harsh working conditions on the plantations and how the plantation bosses kept workers divided.

Students met with Walker Kawika Crichton, former Unit Chair for the Ritz Carlton Kapalua, and Doris Kaleo Kalawai‘a, a Unit Vice Chair for Unit 2520 Grand Wailea to learn about organizing to build worker power, both historically and through

current efforts. These ILWU member leaders discussed the tourism industry, mobilizing members, and winning campaigns. They were joined by Pā‘ele Kiakona, a leader in the community organization Lahaina Strong . Kiakona discussed the power to confront serious community issues, such as housing, when coalition is built with labor. Panelists answered student questions, which largley focused on visions for a just future for tourism.

The students were then off to Lāna‘i to learn the incredible story of the 1951 pineapple strike and explore what life is like in what largely remains a “company town”. Approximately 41% of employed residents on Lāna‘i are members of the ILWU, (nearly double the entire union density rate of the state of Hawai‘i). Four of the participating Lāna‘i students were children of ILWU members.

The Lāna‘i program began with a history of the 1951 Pineapple Strike, led by Lāna‘i Elementary and High School teacher Simon Tajiri and Local 142 Education Coordinator, ‘Ilima Long.

Students met with ILWU Unit Chairs, Jeoffrey Baltero and Jimmy Fernandez, who shared their own stories of the island’s past and how

they are leading their Units today.

After hearing from union leaders all week and analyzing historic campaigns, the students put themselves in union members shoes for their final project, preparing for hypothetical contract negotiations. They were required to research a Hawai‘i corporation, draft a five-point contract proposal including justifications, and prepare a mobilizing plan. The groups presented on the sixth and final day of the field school.

Students completed the field school with a newfound appreciation for the proud labor history of their islands, as well as the role the union continues to play in the economic well-being of their families and community.



L-R: Walker Kawika Crichton (Unit 2523 Ritz Carlton), Doris Kaleo Kalawai‘a (Unit 2520 Grand Wailea), Pā‘ele Kiakona from Lahaina Strong.

New Ah Quon McElrath Film Screening at ILWU Halls



Ah Quon McElrath teaches union members life economics and strategies to save money.

A powerful new documentary released in 2024, *Ah Quon McElrath: The Struggle Never Ends*, tells the story of one of Hawai‘i’s most inspiring labor and social justice leaders. The film honors Ah Quon “AQ” McElrath — the social worker,

organizer, and lifelong advocate for working families — whose efforts helped shape Hawai‘i’s modern labor movement.

A Life of Purpose and Persistence
Born in 1915 to Chinese immigrant

parents in Iwilei, McElrath overcame poverty and discrimination to become one of the most influential voices for working people in Hawai‘i. She began volunteering with the ILWU in the late 1930s and was instrumental in organizing the historic 1946 sugar strike that helped secure rights for plantation workers and strengthened multiracial unity in the labor movement.

A Documentary Years in the Making
Produced by Chris Conybeare and the Center for Labor Education & Research at UH West O‘ahu, the documentary premiered on PBS Hawai‘i in October 2024. The film was created to ensure that future generations understand McElrath’s extraordinary contributions, especially in a field where history has often overlooked women’s leadership.

Through rare archival footage and interviews with labor scholars, former governors, and McElrath’s colleagues,

the documentary highlights her key role in Hawai‘i’s major organizing efforts and her tireless fight for social justice — always with humility, often letting others take the spotlight while she drove change behind the scenes.

Filmmaker Screenings at the ILWU
The film will screen throughout the month of September on three different islands, followed by a QnA with the filmmakers.

First up is Hilo, where the film will show at the **Harry Kamoku Hall on Saturday, September 6 at 3p.m.** Up next is O‘ahu on **Monday, September 8 in Hale Hapaiko at the Honolulu hall at 6p.m.** Finally, the film will screen at the **ILWU Women’s Conference in Maui on September 28th.**

If you are interested in setting up a screening for members, contact your Division Director.

Dion Dizon Named Director of UH Center for Labor Education and Research



Dion Dizon, Director of the Center for Labor Education and Research.

The University of Hawai‘i–West O‘ahu’s Center for Labor Education and Research (CLEAR) has a new leader — and she’s no stranger to Hawai‘i’s labor movement. Dion Dizon, JD, has been appointed Director of CLEAR, returning to the center where her journey began as a student intern.

Dizon’s path reflects the power of education, advocacy, and solidarity. After starting at Leeward Community College, she earned her bachelor’s degree from UH West O‘ahu, then went on to the William S. Richardson School of Law at UH Mānoa. As a law student, she served as Political Education Director for the Hawai‘i State AFL-CIO, where she helped advance pro-worker legislation and coordinate political candidate endorsements that supported working families.

Following law school, Dizon fought for federal sector union members as a Business Representative for IBEW Local 1186. In that role, she

administered collective bargaining agreements for eight bargaining units and supported 20 union stewards. She continues to serve Hawai‘i workers through her roles on the State’s Workforce Development Council and the Native Hawaiian Education Council.

Dizon brings not only legal and policy expertise but also a deep understanding of the challenges working people face on the job and at the bargaining table. She is determined to make CLEAR a resource for unions, workers, students, and communities across every island and industry.

“Too often, people undervalue their labor without even realizing it,” Dizon said. “When people think about work—especially young people or those changing careers—they’re often not encouraged to ask the kinds of questions that help them really evaluate job opportunities. Gig work and short-term hustles are more and more common, often at the cost of stability, benefits, and a future. Union jobs, on the other hand, continue to be some of the few that offer living wages, protections, and real pathways to staying and thriving in Hawai‘i.”

Dizon fills the leadership role, previously held by Dr. William Puette, who served as Director of CLEAR since 1993. Her Directorship marks a passing of the torch to the next generation to lead the University of Hawai‘i’s one and only labor studies program. The next generation is exactly who Dizon has her sights set on.

“I joined CLEAR because I

believe workers, especially the next generation, deserve the tools to make informed choices. Leaving Hawai‘i for better work shouldn’t feel like the only option; it should be a choice, not a default.”

CLEAR was established in 1976 by legislation written for labor by labor-friendly lawmakers. Its mission: to educate workers, unions, the public, and educators about labor, and to serve as the statewide clearinghouse for labor education. CLEAR is advised by the Labor Education Advisory Council, which Local 142 holds a seat on.

“Through labor education, we can

equip people with the knowledge to navigate today’s job market, understand their rights, and see the value in organizing for something better. That’s what CLEAR is here to do — and that’s the work I’m proud to be part of,” Dizon said.

Dizon’s appointment signals a renewed commitment to strengthening labor education in Hawai‘i — ensuring that CLEAR continues to support working families and the future of the labor movement. The ILWU Local 142 welcomes sister Dion Dizon to her new leadership role and encourages our members to consider enrolling in the Labor Studies Certificate program.

Classes offered through UHWO Labor Studies

LBST 100: Intro to Labor Studies
This is a survey course providing the basic concepts, theories, and skills for analyzing and addressing how workers have organized their workplace to improve working conditions and society.

LBST 200: Hawaii Labor Media & Film
Students critically examine the social, political, economic, historical and cultural effects of labor media in Hawai‘i to understand how media impacts perceptions of organized labor locally and globally.

LBST 300: Labor Theory
Introduction to current research in labor, labor law and various forms of labor theory.

LBST 400: Seminar in Labor Topics
Seminars on topics including labor-related skills trainings including grievance handling, introduction to collective bargaining.

LBST 486 & 490: Applied Reserach Project or Practicum
Students will have the option of completing a supervised reserach project and/or publication for a labor-related organization, or complete a supervised practicum at an approved labor-related organization.

To learn more: www.hawaii.edu/uhwo/clear/home/