

THE POWER OF ORGANIZED LABOR

BY ZANE DALAL
 BENEFIT PROGRAMS ADMINISTRATION
 EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT



This year, more than ever, it is important to celebrate Labor Day. This holiday pays tribute to the contributions and ingenuity of American workers. While it traces its origins to well before the Industrial Revolution, organized labor and unions are as relevant and necessary as ever before, constantly adjusting to new challenges and in recent times, facing down the odds with renewed resolve. It is worth asking whether the systematic erosion of organized labor seen these last 25 years, and its undoubted erosion of communal society, has left us in a weaker position as we battle against COVID-19.

Labor unions have been part of the

American landscape since the nation's founding, with the formation of the Federal Society of Journeymen Cordwainers (Shoemakers) as early as 1794 in Philadelphia. However, much of the serious work of organized labor came into effect after the Civil War, with the National Labor Union formed in 1866 precisely to convince Congress that the number of hours worked in a week needed regulation. As industries changed from household craftsmen to mechanized factories, the market expanded beyond local boundaries and new levels of supply and demand determined an expanding economy.

The greatest achievements of the United States have the power of organized labor at their core. Wages in the private sector have always followed those achieved and set in organized labor. Organized labor was, in large part, responsible for the strong middle class, the bulwark of the WW II manufacturing machine that led us to victory, and the driver of the greatest economy the world has ever seen. The idea of American exceptionalism and our preeminence in international affairs was made possible by the hard-working, organized American labor force.

While 2020 has been an unpredictable year, and has brought untold trag-

edy to our shores, unions and their members have become more important than ever. Many front-line workers who were deemed essential during the virus outbreak stepped up and continued their jobs. From construction workers to teachers and drivers, everyone was forced to learn a new normal and have relied on their unions to promote safety.

As we all face change, adapting to stay ahead of a virus that challenges us constantly, it is worth remembering that all the programs that we rely upon, and many that Congress currently seeks to strengthen in our time of need, owe their very existence to the efforts of organized labor. They include unemployment benefits, FMLA, sick leave and basic health benefits. The workers and unions that fought for better standards deserve to be rewarded and applauded this Labor Day.

On the employment side, the pandemic has forced companies to adapt, so their workforce can remain efficient, connected, and engaged, all the while remaining safe for themselves and their families. Whether providing PPE, flexible hours, equipping employees to work remotely from home, or expanding definitions of paid sick leave, everyone who remains in busi-

ness during these unprecedented economic trials has come to appreciate a respectful bond between employer and employee.

Strengthening that bond is the measure of success. A good benefits package supports employees' health, future finances and work-life balance, contributing to employees' satisfaction and overall productivity. In this uncertain and stressful time, providing an environment where employees feel empowered, efficient, to know their worth and above all, feel safe, will be the key to survival.

At Benefit Programs Administration, we deliver outstanding services with personnel who care about your individual needs. We administer funds of all sizes, with the expertise to serve larger entities as well as the high-touch interactivity that smaller funds require. We're small enough to be nimble and responsive, established and founded in experience, and large enough to grow with our clients. Contact us to learn how you can partner with Benefit Programs Administration to build the trust that motivates the workforce.

But first, make sure you take a true break this Labor Day and remember all of the hard work from unions before that got you here.

On Labor day and every Day

In this moment we celebrate essential workers and others that helps us enjoy a high quality of life. We stand with worker organizations in the fight for dignity, fair wages, safety and security for all.



MARQUEECE
 LOS ANGELES CITY
 COUNCILMEMBER  **HARRIS-DAWSON**

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