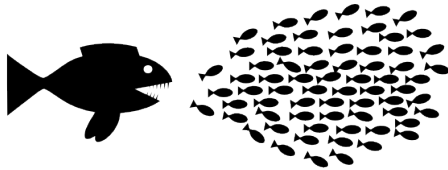


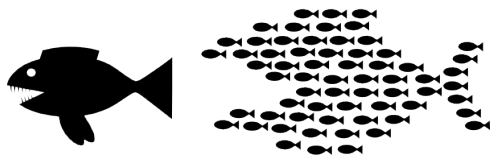


FIRST QUARTER NEWSLETTER

1602 S. Park St. #115, Madison WI, 53715 • (608) 255-0376
info@workerjustice.org • workerjustice.org



ORGANIZE!



This year has brought a big change for WJW: we've moved offices! We're still in the Labor Temple, but we have moved across the hall to Room 115. This new space is double the size of our previous office, so there's more space for our staff and training sessions. We expect to continue to expand our educational and training spaces this spring, so stay tuned! We are very excited that our organization is growing and we will be better equipped to partner with and empower workers in our community.

Organizer Socorro Cortez claimed the sunniest spot in the room!



Development Associate Caleigh was quick to make her space her own!



Executive Director Rebecca Meier-Rao hard at work!

Worker Justice Wisconsin had an exciting first few months of 2022. Besides returning to in-person work at our new office (read more below!), we also resumed our Worker Membership meetings (page 3), started posting regularly to our blog (page 5), supported a co-op led by workers who met through our worker center, created a voter guide for the upcoming election (page 4), and are now on our way to expanding our staff!

Save the Date: We'll be hosting an Open House on Sunday. May 1st, 4pm to 8pm so you can see our new office and training space. Come ready to share the excitement for the new space and pick up your WJW Membership Card while you're at it! Please wear a mask!

OPEN HOUSE

Sunday, May 1st, 4-8PM
1602 S. Park St,
Room 115



FIRST QUARTER NEWSLETTER

DIGNITY AT WORK VOTER GUIDE

With the Dignity At Work Coalition, WJW created a voter guide for the upcoming election. Check out some excerpts below or read the full Voter Guide [here](#)!

RIGHT TO ORGANIZE

The right to join or form a union is fundamental to democracy. Through organizing, collective bargaining, and direct action, unionized workers have improved their working conditions, provided healthcare protections, fought for paid leave, and won childcare provisions. Many labor laws and workers' rights have been eroded or are not enforced. For example, employers, corporations, and CEOs steal \$15 billion a year from workers by paying them less than the minimum wage (or not paying them at all). Since 2017, millions of workers have lost \$5.2 billion in foregone overtime wages. Workers in construction, service industries, and the 'gig' economy 'independent contractors' have been misclassified, bringing down wages even further. Nearly 25 million workers must waive their right to a class action lawsuit or joint arbitration. Millions of more workers, including public sector workers who deal with public safety, do not have a voice over safe working conditions, even during an unprecedented pandemic. Many of these workers are not allowed to unionize, and those who are are often retaliated against or terminated from employment. For those who are in unions, the right to strike provides a fundamental countermeasure to balancing power in the workplace. Low wage workers, including fast food workers and agricultural workers, depend on support from other workers and the community. These workers cannot afford long strikes.

PAID FAMILY & SICK LEAVE

Workers should not be forced to choose between their economic security and their health, or the health of a loved one. But without paid family and sick leave, workers may not be able to stay home from work when they are sick or someone in their family needs care. Getting sick can have disastrous consequences for workers of color. More than half of Latinx workers and nearly 4 out of 10 of Black workers are blocked from earning even a single paid sick day at their jobs. These workers typically are paid less and have access to less wealth than White workers, so getting a paycheck docked or losing a job due to illness can be devastating.

LIVING WAGE

The living wage is what a household must earn to afford basic necessities such as food, childcare, healthcare, housing, and transportation. Until 1968, the minimum wage not only kept pace with inflation, it rose in step with worker productivity. For over 50 years and since 1968, the minimum wage has not kept pace with inflation. For over a decade, the minimum wage has been stagnant at \$7.25 per hour, and the tipped wage for service workers is \$2.33 per hour. Yet, for a family with 2 children with both parents working in Dane County, the living wage should be \$24.28 per hour. If the minimum wage had risen with productivity growth, it would be over \$24 per hour nationally. Though rural areas boast their affordability compared to Madison and Milwaukee, the difference is slight (less than \$4/hr) and the lack of transportation and highquality jobs add their own challenges and expenses.



FIRST QUARTER NEWSLETTER

WORKER MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS

We were excited to see 19 workers turn up to our Worker Membership meeting on Thursday, March 17th. Attendees discussed important topics such as knowing your rights in the workplace, how to collectively organize, how to deal with problems at work such as discrimination and accidents, and more! If you missed it--not to worry! We will have two Worker Membership meetings in April: one on Thursday, April 21st at 5PM and one on Tuesday, April 26th at 10AM. Join us at the Labor Temple in Room 115 to share a meal and learn more about your rights in the workplace.



THURSDAY, APRIL 21ST ♦ 5PM
TUESDAY, APRIL 26TH ♦ 10AM

FAITH AND LABOR STATEMENT

As people of faith, we uphold the sacred and intrinsic dignity of every person. We believe that work should be a vehicle for discovering a sense of purpose and fulfillment, but that too often it is a means for abuse. We recognize that in today's climate, individual workers are at the mercy of more powerful employers, and we commit to joining forces with workers when they collectively summon the courage to demand fair and just working conditions. Finally, drawing on our sacred traditions, we stand together as communities of faith to advocate for:

- A just/living wage and healthcare benefits for all
- Paid sick and family leave
- Workplaces free from all forms of discrimination and harassment
- Opportunities for collective organizing without fear of retaliation
- A healthy work/life balance for all people regardless of race, gender, national origin, immigration status or creed



FIRST QUARTER NEWSLETTER

BOARD FEATURE: EDNA BALDWIN

Tell us about yourself. Who are you?

I was born and raised in Mexico. I moved to the United States in 2008. I've lived in the Waukesha area for more than a decade with my husband, where we are raising our two children. I currently work for Construction Business Group as a Wage and Hour Investigator. I work on a statewide basis supporting other Construction Business Group investigators on complex payroll and benefits fraud investigations. Prior to joining CBG, I worked in Labor Compliance for the Wisconsin Department of Transportation. I have a Bachelor's Degree in Accounting, and I am fluent in Spanish.

What is joint labor-management? Why is it important?

The Joint Labor-Management committees are essential for representatives of labor and management to join to talk about mutual problems. Joint Labor-management helps stabilize labor relationship within their communities and through industries. Labor-Management is one of the keys to accomplish this. At CBG, the Joint Labor-Management charter provides for a Board of Trustees consisting of seven labor trustees and seven management trustees. Both labor and management have equal representation and voting authority. The Board of Trustees is charged with the responsibility of managing the Fund and directing operations.

What is your role as a Wage and Hour Investigator?

Some of my responsibilities as a Wage and Hour Investigator include:

1. Monitoring construction projects with Davis-Bacon (Prevailing Wage) projects, and visit private construction projects for general labor law compliance
2. Investigating alleged wage violations
3. Assisting with wage and other complaints at state and federal levels
4. Assisting with additional Compliance and Support Work (like OSHA and other safety requirements)

What motivates you to serve on the WJW Board?

I love the direct assistance that WJW provides to the workers. Opening doors to workers that need it the most is an incredible opportunity for underprivileged construction workers, workers that otherwise would've gone without.



**Board Member
Edna Baldwin
works as a
Wage and Hour
Investigator with
Construction
Business Group.**

Why is the work CBG does essential?

At CBG, we strive to make certain that all workers are paid properly and have access to safety nets, such as worker's compensation if injured on the jobsite. Construction Business Group is a partnership of construction employers and employees established to enhance business opportunities in Wisconsin's construction industry by ensuring fairness, equity, and standards of excellence. CBG works to improve employment opportunities for employees, expand the market for the construction industry, and ensure that a skilled workforce is available to meet Wisconsin's projected growth in the construction industry.

What area of workers' rights are you especially passionate about?

The area of workers' rights that I am passionate about would be fighting Worker Misclassification. Worker Misclassification/Payroll Fraud deprives employees of important legal protections and employment benefits. Worker misclassification happens when employers improperly classify workers as "independent contractors" instead of "employees." Misclassification/Payroll Fraud has an impact on society that includes loss of tax revenue by the state and federal government and placing a substantial strain on public resources due to lack of worker's compensation and unemployment coverage for workers.

What is your vision and hopes for the future of WJW?

My vision and hopes would be for WJW to keep being able to promote and protect workers' rights and to improve their working conditions in Wisconsin. I also want to see WJW continue to provide workers the leadership and organizational skills to advocate for themselves and their communities.



FIRST QUARTER NEWSLETTER

BLOG UPDATES

Did you know that Worker Justice Wisconsin has a blog? It's updated weekly with topics ranging anywhere from board member interviews, social issues, local news, history of worker movements, and more! We're always hoping to feature new contributors: if you're interested in collaborating on a piece, please email caleigh@workerjustice.org

Here's an excerpt from one of our more recent entries, focused on literature findings about wage stagnation and increasing economic inequality. Read more [here](#).



"The Federal Reserve Economic Data (FRED) reported that the per capita GDP has nearly doubled between 1980 to 2020. If workers are paid by their productivity, we would expect that individual incomes would double as well. So—have they?"

There is no short answer: it varies. Most Americans saw that over the past 40 years, their real median wages only grew around 9%. The lowest-earning 10% of American workers only saw their wages grow by around 6.5%, and the highest-earning 10% of American workers saw their wages grow by around 41%. Looks like individual incomes did increase—but only for those who were already earning more than 90% of other Americans.

One study decided to split up Americans into groups based on their income. This allowed them to measure with averages without having to worry about the very high extremes of the top 10% of earners.

For the Americans in the lowest-earning 20%, their average real income actually DECREASED by around 25% between 1980-2014. For the highest-earning 10% of Americans, however, it grew by around 110%. Remember— this is all occurring over a time period where our per capita GDP nearly doubles. So what does this mean for most workers? For all Americans except the highest-earning 13%, income grew more slowly than the economy. In simple terms: the vast majority of Americans did not see their wages grow at the same rate as their productivity.

We can draw some pretty nasty conclusions from this. It's easy to use "average wage growth" to hide what's really happening: the rich are getting richer, the middle earners are mostly staying the same/decreasing slightly, and the poor are getting poorer."



FIRST QUARTER NEWSLETTER

WE'RE HIRING!

Worker Justice Wisconsin is hiring! We have three available positions: **Program Director**, **Worker Organizer**, and **Business Manager**. We'd love to see candidates that speak Spanish, have a passion for workers' rights, and have experience with organizing, unions, nonprofits, social services, something similar, or any/all of the above! Candidates must be able to travel to and within Madison, WI. See full details [here](#).

Apply by sending a cover letter and resume to info@workerjustice.org

STAFF AND BOARD

STAFF

Rebecca Meier-Rao — *Executive Director*
Socorro Cortez — *Worker Organizer*
Caleigh Judd — *Communications and Development*

BOARD

Kurt Kobelt — *President*
Charity Schmidt — *Vice President*
Apolonio "Polo" Duran
Edna Baldwin
Natalie Gerloff
Paulette Harder
Sister Mary Kremer, O.P.
Jeff Mehrhoff
Julio Garcia

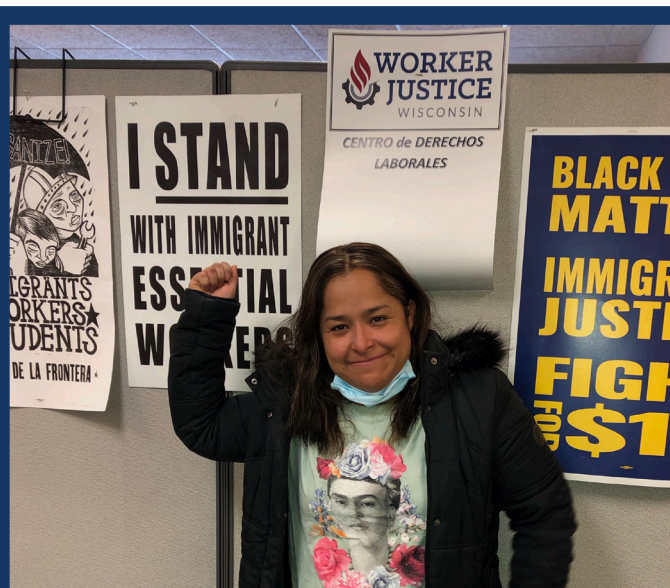


WE ARE HIRING

Email resume and cover letter to info@workerjustice.org

- Program Director
- Worker Organizer/Advocate
- Business Manager

Join our team!



"Hello, my name is Ruby Castañeda. This is the second time I've come to Worker Justice Wisconsin and they've helped me. I ask people that if you experience abuse in the workplace, go to WJW because they will support you. We all have more power when we work together!"

--Ruby Castañeda, worker