

PRIVATE SECTOR SHOPS

AUDUBON WORKERS IN 11 STATES & REGIONS FORM UNION WITH CWA

Workers at 11 state and regional offices in the National Audubon Society voted overwhelmingly in December in favor of forming a union with the Communications Workers (CWA) of America in official National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) elections.

The vote caps the workers' year-long effort to secure stronger health care, job security, and a voice at the table for all workers regardless of race, gender, or background. Audubon workers will join the Audubon for All Union, which began at Audubon's national headquarters where members voted to form a union with CWA earlier this year.

Audubon employees began organizing to form a union after facing two rounds of layoffs in 2020, including one on Earth Day, and having the cost of their health care increased amidst the pandemic. Workers also point to the fact that all major decisions at Audubon have been made by executives behind closed doors.

December's wins are part of a sweeping push by Audubon workers nationwide to secure union representation, and includes workers in the Northeast (New York and Connecticut), Upper Midwest (Iowa, Minnesota, Missouri), Southwest (Arizona and New Mexico), the Great Lakes (Illinois, Ohio, Michigan, Wisconsin), the Mid Atlantic (Pennsylvania, Maryland), North Carolina, Nebraska, Washington, Alaska, Vermont, and California. In total, these 11 regions account for more than 120 Audubon employees who will be represented by CWA Local 1180, in addition to the 131 workers at the national headquarters.

Audubon is the latest of a number of environmental groups, including The Center for Biological Diversity, Sunrise Movement, the Sierra Club, 350.org, Physicians for Human Rights, and Greenpeace, whose workers have formed unions. Audubon workers add to the growing number of conservationists and climate activists paving the way for a stronger alliance between labor and environmentalism.

Further fueling the drive to organize was Audubon's toxic culture that created countless barriers in the workplace – primarily for women and employees of color – and was confirmed by an independent audit. Audubon is one of many environmental organizations grappling with its racist history, and workers there view a union as their best opportunity to address those concerns. These wins insure workers a seat at the table as they look to build an Audubon that values the voices and ideas of all employees, not just the decision-makers at the very top.

In Jan. 2022, Audubon replaced their former legal representatives with Athena Buenconsejo of Sagacious Leadership. Buenconsejo was previously a labor relations director for Alameda Health System, which operates five hospitals in California. In Oct. 2020, after bargaining under her leadership stalled for months, the staff union went on strike. To meet the workers' demands, AHS management removed Buenconsejo from its bargaining team, which allowed the union to progress in negotiations.

Since then, Audubon has become the only non-profit shop represented by Local 1180 to refuse to bargain during the workday, forcing members of the Bargaining Committee to negotiate on weekends and until midnight during the week so members and representatives from all of their offices can be included. Rank-and-file members have proudly exercised their right to collectively bargain by showing up to the meetings outside work hours while no members of Audubon's senior leadership have shown up during negotiations.

"It just shows that they have no respect. They don't respect that we represent over 200 people. If they can't show us this level of respect after we have voted for a union, that's exactly why we need one," said **Sonceyrae Kondrotis**, one of the Bargaining Committee members.

When told that every other Local 1180 non-profit Bargaining Committee has been able to do their work with accommodations to bargain, Buenconsejo asserted that staffers who could do both might only need to be employed on a part-time basis,



Audubon workers shared selfies of themselves mailing their ballots to the NLRB, both as a tactic to get out the vote, and to show management that last-minute union busting wasn't working. Pictured clockwise from upper left: Sharon Bruce (NY/CT), Refugio Mariscal (Great Lakes), Diana Wilson (NT/CT), Ben Graham (North Carolina), Allison Christenson (Nebraska), Pedro Hernandez (California), Zack Boerman (NY/CT), and Cacey Wilken (Nebraska).

implying that anyone who can finish their work and bargain should have their full-time position reconsidered. In addition, management also has questioned the need for accountability for staff that intentionally refuse to use their colleagues' preferred pronouns.

Despite Audubon's continuous disappointing behavior, the unionized staff continue to show solidarity with their transgender colleagues in response to management's comments by holding collective actions on internal communication channels. The staff have also demonstrated a commitment to the movement by reaching out to other unionized environmental groups to plan activities between Earth Day and May Day.

The unionized staff at Audubon are represented by Local 1180 Staff Representative Chris Thomas, District 1 Rep. Luis Benitez-Burgos, three staff members from Audubon's national office, and three from Audubon's centers across the country.

CWA Local 1180 organizer Leslie Fine worked on these elections with a team that included former OSF Shop Steward Renata Peralta, CWA staff TITLE Erin Mahoney, and others from across CWA's National Organizing Department.

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UNION BARGAINING VICTORIES IN PRIVATE SECTOR SHOPS

Local 1180 continues to break new ground in terms of progressive language in our private sector contracts. Our bargaining committees are pushing for more inclusive language within the anti-discrimination clauses, more objective and collaborative and objective processes within our proposals around discipline, and greater degrees of structure and opportunity for members within the layoff clauses.

This progressive language being negotiated in the National Domestic Workers Alliance (“NDWA”), Sunrise Movement, and Amnesty International, on top of the 6% COLA increases that we were able to get our members at Amnesty International and NDWA, is setting us up for an ambiguous year.

Bargaining Updates



Amnesty International – Local 1180’s members at Amnesty International overwhelmingly ratified their new contract on April 18, 2022. “We are very proud of the milestones and gains that we have made in their contract,” said **Private Sector**

Staff Rep Christopher Thomas. The contract proposal includes ground-breaking layoff language, generous annual increases of our negotiated proposal or COLA, depending on which is higher, and established temporary increases for staff who are covering the work of their colleagues or supervisors. Staff at Amnesty have been dealing with capacity issues since before the pandemic, and the Bargaining Committee believes that these enhanced clauses will allow members to get some well-deserved additional pay.

Members will receive a 3.5% annual increase, or COLA, whichever is greater. This year, the COLA was higher so members received 5.9%. In addition, they will get increased longevity, a guarantee that non-union members will not be allowed to do union work, an increased ability to three months to use comp time, additional paid holidays to include Veteran’s Day and Juneteenth, and the ability to use sick time for mental health,

Members who sat on the Bargaining Committee were Daphne Eviator, Christina Saenz, Fatimah Hassan, and L. Francisco.



National Domestic Workers Alliance “NDWA” – We are in the final stretch of bargaining! NDWA recently passed their counter proposal on wages, and the Bargaining Committee is hard at work

to respond. NDWA will be the first of the Local 1180 non-profits to implement a “wage table” and “job families” in their workplace. A wage table is a method of paying employees that is typically used in the public sector or inside of unions. It is more rigid than everyone negotiating their own salaries, but comes with the benefit of greater transparency and equity. The job family’s concept is one that helps employers and employees understand the salary ranges of different positions in the company more easily. “We are incredibly excited for the direction that this has gone in and look forward to trying to implement these more transparent and equitable methods of compensation in our other shops,” Thomas said.



Sunrise Movement – Sunrise has been on a roller coaster with its recent success, and current struggles leading to a restructure and significant layoffs. Despite mistakes

and lessons learned, Sunrise management has invited the Bargaining Committee to provide an unprecedented amount of input and collaboration on the layoff process and suggestions into their new structure. While Local 1180 is unhappy with the layoffs, the decisions that led to them and the timetable in which solutions had to be worked on, there was effort on both sides that gives some insight into what a true internal collaboration could look like when the workers are able to provide genuine input into forming the structure of the organization. Staff Rep Christopher Thomas said this is all a positive first step to one day having workers be part of the decision-making process. Sunrise is proposals away from finishing their first contract, but hopes to wrap it up by May.



Audubon Society – With three bargaining sessions complete,

Audubon remains the only one of Local 1180’s 17 nonprofit shops that refuses to bargain during the workday, thereby forcing members of the Bargaining Committee to meet on weekdays between the hours of 9 p.m. and midnight, or on weekends. Adding insult to injury, none of Audubon’s senior leadership have shown up to any of the bargaining sessions, but have left their outside consultant to represent them. Union members, meanwhile, continue to show up in full support at all hours. “This behavior has been illustrative of Audubon’s attitude toward the unionization process since the time of their organization,” Thomas said. The Bargaining Committee will continue pushing forward, but Local 1180 intends to speak with Audubon’s leadership to discuss why their actions aren’t living up to their word.



Type Media – Type Media has begun to bargain its second contract, and its first since separating from its parent company. As a young publishing company, bargaining has illustrated all of the issues that non-profits today are dealing with, such as the rising cost of health care, lack of funding in the field, and less-than-ideal capacity. Even with all of those factors, the Bargaining Committee continues to prioritize best practices and transparency, to hold management accountable for their decisions, and make sure that those decisions aren’t hidden from the workers. Bargaining continues to move forward at a typical pace.