

STEVEN P. DINKIN A Path Forward

# AS TRUST ERODES, LABOR ACTIONS GAIN MOMENTUM

For many, Labor Day was like any Monday holiday: the perfect excuse to kick back, relax and think about anything other than work — a bit ironic, considering its origin. President Grover Cleveland made Labor Day a national holiday in 1894, to recognize the contributions of American workers and labor unions to our country's strength and prosperity.

It was also a way to acknowledge their mistreatment: Cleveland signed the law in the wake of a strike by railroad and Pullman sleeping car company workers. Federal troops were called in, and 30 people died.

On this Labor Day, the vibe was more akin to 1894, when you consider worker angst in the U.S. According to Rob Pelaez of the Boston Herald, more than 500 labor actions, including strikes and protests, have occurred since the beginning of the year, involving hundreds of thousands of workers.

The disputes are sometimes about working conditions — but more often, about wages. A Gartner survey last year found that just

32 percent of workers feel they're paid fairly. Reports of inequality have sharpened the pain: A Statista Research Department report estimated that in 2021, CEOs received nearly 400 times the average annual salary of their production and nonsupervisory workers. The Economic Policy Institute offered a different take: Between 1978 and 2019, CEO compensation grew 940 percent, while typical worker compensation rose just 12 percent.

A chasm like that is bound to inspire unrest. In a sense, Labor Day symbolizes a slowdown, as winter draws closer. But this year, labor actions are only heating up, across multiple sectors of the economy:

- Hollywood is in the midst of a two-pronged labor battle that began in the spring, with members of the Writers Guild of America and SAG-AFTRA (actors' union) on strike against the studios. Neither dispute appears to be headed for resolution anytime soon.

- Unionization efforts are cropping up in Starbucks stores around the country, including San Diego.

Some 600 complaints of unfair labor practices have been filed with the National Labor Relations Board and in June, 3,000 workers went on strike when managers at several locations removed Pride month décor.

- Members of the United Auto Workers are edging closer to a strike against General Motors, Stellantis and Ford. Their contract ends on Thursday.

Associated Press writer Tom Krishner said that even the UAW's president has called their demands "audacious." They include a 46 percent wage hike; a 32-hour work week, with 40 hours of pay; and a restoration of traditional pensions. Krishner said the UAW was inspired, in part, by "increasingly emboldened U.S. unions of all kinds" and major corporate concessions. In July, UPS negotiated a five-year contract deal with the Teamsters union, averting a strike by its 340,000 drivers. The agreement, ratified in August, includes pay raises and promises to address complaints about delivery vans.

A Gallup poll found that Ameri-

cans' support of labor unions has grown, from 48 percent in 2010 to 67 percent this year. Yet anti-union sentiment remains strong: In the Republican presidential debate last month, former New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie turned around a question about UFOs to talk about education and teachers' unions. Christie said the unions "put themselves before our kids" and called them "the biggest threat to our country — not UFOs."

In our work at the National Conflict Resolution Center, we've seen lingering animosity on this topic. One company hired us to deliver communication and conflict resolution training to a group of leaders so they can better respond to divisiveness in their workplaces. But the biggest source of conflict, we learned, wasn't pay or performance or politics: It was support for (or opposition to) union labor.

There's a feeling that workers have the upper hand right now — after all, there aren't enough of them. The bubbling angst is symptomatic of a larger problem. As the

Gartner report noted, perceptions of pay are often divorced from actual compensation, tied instead to the way a person feels about their employer.

In organizations across America, those relationships are tenuous, if not fractured. There has been a loss of trust — a feeling among workers that they are not valued.

On Wednesday, I heard an NPR interview with SAG-AFTRA leader Fran Drescher, who said to Hollywood studio heads, "Just pivot. Start being inclusive. Start realizing that we're not peons. We're in this together. Honor our artistry. Exalt what we bring to the world."

It's a message that many corporate leaders need to hear. Until and unless they do, the unrest will continue.

Dinkin is president of the National Conflict Resolution Center, a San Diego-based group working to create solutions to challenging issues, including intolerance and incivility. To learn about NCR's programming, visit [nrcrcenter.com](http://nrcrcenter.com)

## BLOOD DRIVES

The San Diego Blood Bank will hold blood drives in the following parking lots:

- Palomar Health San Marcos, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday at 120 Carven Road, San Marcos.
- Palomar Medical Center Poway, 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. Monday at 15615 Pomerado Road, Poway.
- Palomar Medical Center Escondido, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Tuesday at 2185 Citracado Parkway, Escondido.
- California Coast Credit Union, 10 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Tuesday at 9201 Spectrum Center Blvd., San Diego.
- Sony Electronics, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Wednesday at 16535 Via Esprillo, Building 1, visitors lot, San Diego.
- Bressi Ranch Village Center, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Thursday at 2629 Gateway Road, Carlsbad.
- The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, noon to 5 p.m. Thursday at 2255 Felicita Road, Escondido.
- Southwestern College, 10 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Thursday near Mayan Hall at 900 Otay Lakes Road, Chula Vista.
- Crawford High School, 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Friday at 4149 Colts Way, San Diego.
- Bonita-Sunnyside Branch Library, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Friday at 4375 Bonita Road, Bonita.

To make an appointment or find more drives, call (800) 469-7322 or visit [sandiegobloodbank.org](http://sandiegobloodbank.org). Walk-ins are also welcome.

LINDA MCINTOSH U-T

## SMOLENS

FROM B1

A 2021 poll by the non-partisan Public Policy Institute of California found that an overwhelming majority of California adults did not want federal protection for access to abortion to be overturned — including 59 percent of Republicans.

In January of this year, a PPIC poll showed 75 percent of likely voters support allowing gay and lesbian couples to marry. Slightly less than a majority of GOP voters — 46 percent — supported same-sex marriage.

But the California GOP's core activists adamantly oppose abortion and same-sex marriage and are certain to fight the proposed changes in the platform.

Those advocating the shift contend the activists' views aren't shared by a large portion of rank-and-file California Republican voters and blame the rigid stances on those and other social issues — at least in part — for people abandoning the party over the years.

The nation's political landscape was upended

when the Supreme Court in June 2022 overturned the constitutional right to abortion under *Roe v. Wade*.

Many Republicans were thrilled by the ruling, but were subsequently alarmed by the political backlash in Kansas, a GOP stronghold, and Ohio, a reddish swing state.

This isn't to say California party leaders and prominent Republicans — or even all platform committee members, for that matter — necessarily support abortion rights or same-sex marriage.

They just don't want the party's stand on those issues weighing down their candidates.

State GOP officials have long focused on California's high taxes and concerns about its business climate. But there's been a move to sharpen focus on pocket-book issues and other matters that affect the daily lives of residents, rather than engage in ideological cultural battles.

The thinking was this might help Republicans gain ground in Democratic urban and suburban areas they need if the GOP is

going to improve its fortunes in California.

In addition to state GOP chair Jessica Millan Patterson, two San Diego Republicans were at the forefront of this push — former San Diego Mayor Kevin Faulconer and Ron Nehring, former chair of the San Diego and California Republican parties.

How successful this has been is debatable. Democrats continue to hold supermajorities in the Assembly and state Senate, effectively shutting Republicans out of most policy-making, and they hold all statewide constitutional offices.

California Republicans made important gains last year in Congress, but some analysts thought they should have done better. The reality is that Trump and Republican efforts to roll back abortion and LGBTQ+ rights dominate the political discussion these days.

Asked for his take on the brewing California platform fight, Nehring's frustration was palpable.

"I've come to believe the state Republican platform should focus on state issues not otherwise addressed in the national party platform," he wrote in an email. "Let the national party platform speak to national issues while we take the

opportunity to use our state platform to focus on our solutions to California problems.

"The Democrats have handed us a tremendous opportunity to lead because of their failures on crime, homelessness, open air drug markets and quality of life. We've seen the disintegration of our cities and public spaces because of the failures of California Democrats."

"... I'm not going to get drawn into issues which in California are not changing any time soon. California elections in 2024 are not going to turn on social issues which have been settled either in the courts or the ballot box — they are going to turn on the top of mind issues at the center of the state's declining quality of life."

That may be his hope, but it remains to be seen which issues will drive next year's elections. Legal rights once thought to be inviolable suddenly appear vulnerable.

A lot of people thought the *Roe* decision in 1973 would stand forever. California has added abortion protections, but it's no longer inconceivable they could be undone by future Supreme Court rulings.

There was a similar feeling about the legaliza-

tion of same-sex marriage, which resulted from court rulings overturning California's voter-approved ban on gay marriage under Proposition 8 in 2008.

Proposition 8, which couldn't pass in California today, is still on the books, even if it has been made moot by the courts.

Democrats are planning on something of a replay of last year's abortion-rights vote by running a ballot measure to remove Proposition 8 language from the state constitution.

Whether motivated by concern that future court rulings could revive the dormant law, or political calculations to boost Democratic turnout, proponents are pushing for another blowout in November 2024.

Republicans, particularly those in swing districts, probably don't want to have to defend the party's current stand on that issue.

### What they said

Business Insider (@BusinessInsider) on X (formerly Twitter).

"Forget snowbirds: 'Sweat birds' flee the heat of Texas and Arizona to spend summer in cooler northern climates."

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# Together San Diego

## LIVESTREAM

Community relations manager Paola Hernández-Jiao interviews the people and organizations working to make our community a better place.



**Wed., Sept. 13  
at 11 a.m.**

**Jesus Benayas**

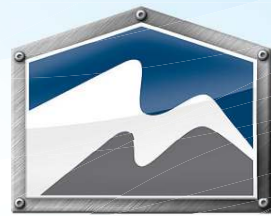
President  
House of Spain in San Diego

**Hispanic Heritage  
Month celebration  
at Balboa Park**

Hear from Jesus Benayas about a special Lawn Program celebrating Hispanic Heritage Month taking place Sept. 23 at the House of Pacific Relations area of Balboa Park. The event will include dancing, music and food representing five countries, organized by the Houses of Mexico, Panama, Peru, Puerto Rico and Spain. Dignitaries from the City of San Diego and honorary consuls will be in attendance. Admission is free.

Watch the interview at:  
[SanDiegoUnionTribune.com/TogetherSDLive](http://SanDiegoUnionTribune.com/TogetherSDLive)

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