

March 11, 2024

Dear Chair Champion and Members of the Senate Jobs and Economic Development Committee:

On behalf of the 14,000 members of Laborers' International Union of North America (LIUNA) Minnesota and North Dakota, I am writing to urge you to make workers who have stopped working because of a labor dispute eligible for unemployment benefits.

LIUNA members live and work in every corner of the state and want good jobs, fair wages, good schools, reliable healthcare and time for family. Our members join together with their co-workers to make their workplaces better and to have a say in decisions affecting their pay, benefits and working conditions. Collectively, unions advocate for working people to make all of us safer, healthier and able to enjoy a higher quality of life.

No worker wants to go on strike. Our members want to earn a full paycheck and benefits, provide and save for themselves and their families, and they want to serve the public and build a better Minnesota. Strikes are rare. In fact, it has been more than a decade since 38 members of LIUNA Local 563 made the courageous decision to go on strike at Cretex - a concrete products manufacturing facility in Shakopee. That strike was in response to a company proposal to reduce employees' compensation - including pension contributions - by about \$4 per hour. In 2013, that was the equivalent of a 12- to 17-percent pay cut.

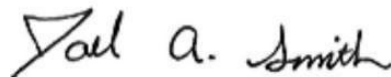
Our members felt that the company's attempt to eliminate pension contributions was a slap in the face that forced them to go on strike. One of our newer members at the time said, "I'm here to support the other guys who have been working here so long. They don't deserve it, and they know it."

The strike at Cretex illustrates that sometimes it is necessary for workers to use their power to strike in order to improve their jobs and do their part to unrig the economy. Making workers who have stopped working because of a labor dispute eligible for unemployment benefits is one way to soften the financial blow of going on strike. SF 3588/HF 3446 will put some power in the hands of workers and restore some balance to the unfair and uneven power dynamic between workers and employers that tilts toward employers.

The Walz Flanagan Administration and Legislature delivered many wins for Minnesota families in 2023, and there's much more we can and must do, including making workers who have stopped working because of a labor dispute eligible for unemployment benefits. We urge you to support SF 3588/HF 3446.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,



Joel Smith
President and Business Manager
LIUNA Minnesota and North Dakota