



Annual Report

2025





A note from our Executive Director

Our democratic republic teeters on the edge of authoritarianism, from Jefferson City to Washington, D.C. A regime has taken hold in both places that seeks to wipe away whatever remains of the tolerance and freedom of the neoliberal order. The decades-long decline of organized labor and the middle-class prosperity that accompanied it is giving way to a wave of AI-driven automation that will displace blue- and white-collar workers by the millions. Climate change is now irreversible and a clean energy future is threatened by the massive expansion of energy-greedy data centers. Authoritarians eviscerated the victories of the rights revolutions of the 60s, the civil rights and voting rights acts, *Roe v. Wade*, DEI programs, and affirmative action.

The words of Italian political theorist Antonio Gramsci ring true:

The old world is dying, and the new world struggles to be born: now is the time of monsters.

At Missouri Workers Center, we have been thinking intently about how to meet this moment and our role in the political and economic trajectory of Missouri and our nation. We crafted a new mission, legacy, and vision statement to meet the historic moment, because we don't believe that all hope is lost. Our hope lies, as it always has, in the capacity of poor and working class people to act in bold and creative ways to fight for their own future. No one will save us but ourselves. Even in this deep existential crisis, there is an opportunity for a more democratic, just, and liberatory future.

Don't take my word for it. Look to the streets. In response to the authoritarian breakthrough, millions have marched to save our democracy. When the Missouri legislature robbed us of earned paid sick leave, guaranteed increases in the minimum wage, and reproductive freedom, hundreds of poor and working class people rallied at our state Capitol. When Missouri lawmakers attacked their constituents again with an illegal gerrymandering scheme to steal our representation in Congress



and further entrench the racial and economic dividing lines of Kansas City, over 8,000 people joined emergency mass meetings, submitted testimony, and flooded the Capitol rotunda by the thousands. These actions set the stage for hundreds of thousands of Missourians to petition for a referendum to repeal the racist maps.

We are meeting the authoritarian moment by organizing a broad base of leaders across the state of Missouri who are imagining a renewed, more vibrant democracy. We are organizing immigrants in St. Louis to fight for their families to stay together and to redefine what it means to be an American, and who has the freedom to participate in the civic life of our nation. We are supporting service workers, like the baristas at Kaldi's coffee, and Amazon warehouse workers who are fighting to rebuild the labor movement and win democracy in our economy. We are building political power in the suburbs of Kansas City to hold our legislators accountable for overturning the will of the people. We are building the movement to fight for a future where technological advancement creates shared prosperity for the working many instead of enriching the wealthy few.

We are stronger than we've ever been and ready to do whatever it takes to win a Missouri where the welfare of the people is indeed the supreme law and where America is truly by the people and for the people. 2026 will be a watershed moment in this country. We'll spend it by training more leaders, organizing more workers, and fighting harder than ever before. Join us.

In Solidarity,



Jeremy Al-Haj
Executive Director





New Mission, Legacy, & Vision Statement

Mission

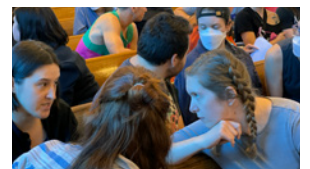
Missouri Workers Center is building a multiracial worker-led movement to advance the rights and power of workers on and off the job in rural, urban, and suburban Missouri. We organize workers for collective action against billionaires and racists who seek to exploit and divide Americans. We go on strike, rally, practice civil disobedience, and march on bosses. We do whatever it takes to win prosperity, dignity, and freedom for all.

Legacy and Vision

Missouri Workers Center (MWC) builds on the long history of workers improving their lives and working conditions by organizing, petitioning, rallying, marching, striking, and engaging in civil disobedience.

From the CIO organizing industrial workers, to national civil rights efforts like the March on Washington, collective demands for economic and racial justice have been a force of change


across the country. Victories from those efforts — the 8-hour work day, a 5-day work week, anti-discrimination protections, overtime pay, workplace safety measures, and a minimum wage — have benefitted all of us. In Missouri, collective action has long powered the struggle over American identity and labor: from John Brown's abolitionist raids and Dred Scott's battle for freedom, to German immigrant revolutionaries fighting for the Union Army, the Southern Tenant Farmers



Union organizing sharecroppers, the Funsten Nut Strike defeating racist wages in St. Louis, and the United Farm Workers struggle for a union and civil rights.

MWC draws from histories of multi-racial worker-led movements while learning from the failures of business unionism, exclusionary campaigns, and movements ignoring economic exploitation. Growing out of Stand Up KC — a local arm of the national Fight for \$15 movement — MWC fights for a Missouri where all workers have what they need to live with prosperity, dignity, and freedom. Through collective action we've won a \$15 per hour minimum wage, renters' right to an attorney in Kansas City's eviction courts, millions of dollars in raises from

billion-dollar employers, and respect, dignity, and safer working conditions for thousands of workers. We want prosperity — where workers aren't just surviving, but truly living. We want dignity — with work that does not break our bodies and spirits, where we feel belonging and are valued. We want freedom — where we pursue purpose and meaning, while making the decisions that affect us. We want to ask and answer for ourselves: What kind of life do we want to live?

Our demands require power from the shop floor to the streets to the halls of government. When workers come together, Black, white and Brown, and use our strength in numbers, we can win an America that works for us all. 



Bringing Worker Power to the People's House

On January 1, Missouri Workers Center leaders like Kaamilya Hobbs saw their paycheck increase¹ to \$13.75. Hobbs, like hundreds of thousands of Missourians, were newly reaping the benefit of a wage hike made possible by the passage of Proposition A last fall.

However, it wasn't long before corporate-backed state lawmakers threatened to steal away² our hard-fought Prop A win.³ They vowed to weaponize their legislative power to attack the cost-of-living adjustments and earned paid sick days that workers gained through passage of the measure. But workers — who have faced setbacks at the hands of the state legislature before — did what they do best. They organized their ire and headed to Jefferson City.



In February, hundreds of low-wage workers traveled from Kansas City, St. Louis, and beyond to hold a Lobby Day at the state Capitol. They demanded that lawmakers honor the will of the 58 percent of Missouri voters who passed Proposition A last November, by opposing House Bill 567, the bill to gut Prop A's paid sick days and minimum wage cost-of-living bumps.



Annelise Hanshaw/Missouri Independent

Workers like Richard Eiker shared their stories of how earning paid sick days for the first time could give them needed freedom to recover from illness and show up for their loved ones.



Workers and allies also advocated for the defeat of Senate Bill 22, an unconstitutional attack on the 100-plus year old initiative petition process that was central to winning a higher minimum wage and Medicaid expansion, in addition to repealing anti-union “right to work” laws in Missouri and guaranteeing reproductive freedom.

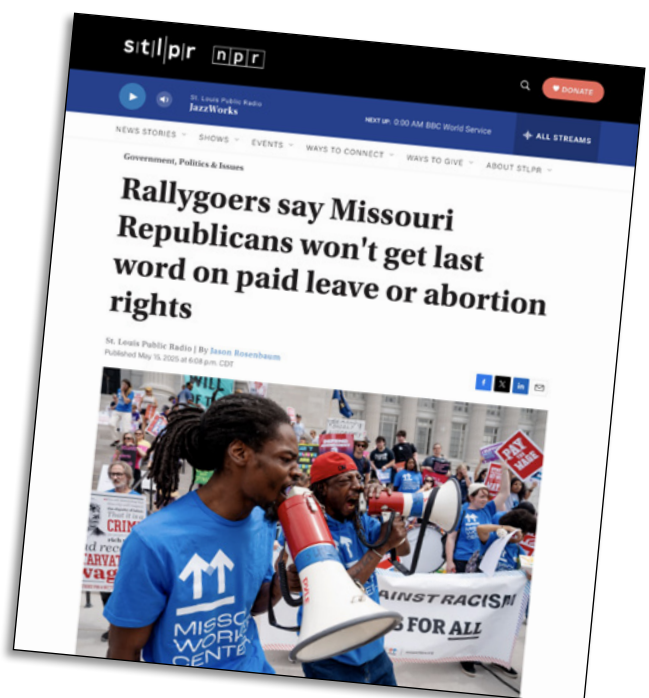




Despite popular support and hearing the stories of dozens of workers and allies, at the eleventh hour, lawmakers did the bidding of corporate executives by passing HB 567 and overturning Amendment 3, the ballot measure workers and allies won last November to restore reproductive freedom in the state Constitution. Hundreds of workers and allies took to the streets. In addition to rallying in St. Louis⁴ and Kansas City⁵ on May 3 to support Prop A earned paid sick days going into effect on International Workers' Day, workers returned to the state Capitol on May 15⁶ to flood the Capitol steps and demand that lawmakers respect the will of the people.



Nam Nguyen/Missourian



Defending Democracy

Workers stayed on the front line of the battle to defend democracy when Governor Mike Kehoe called state lawmakers back for a special session in September. Gov. Kehoe, flanked by Speaker of the House Jonathan Patterson and Senate President Cindy O’Laughlin, convened a special session for the sole purpose of advancing President Donald Trump’s authoritarian power grab.

Workers and allies launched a rapid-fire statewide mobilization to prevent lawmakers from illegally and unconstitutionally ramming through a proposal to redraw Missouri’s congressional map — which would disproportionately disenfranchise Black and Brown voters in the 5th congressional district.⁷ In a matter of weeks, MWC and our partners organized a series of mass meetings across the state with over 1,200 attendees, held mass Labor Day rallies in Kansas City⁸ and St. Louis⁹ with over 2,000 workers and their allies, organized Missourians to submit over 4,000 pieces of opposition testimony, and brought over 5,000 people to the state Capitol for the largest mass mobilization¹⁰ in the Capitol rotunda in decades.



Terrence Wise was one of two MWC leaders to offer a rallying cry on the mic at the Capitol that day.

// **They want to make it harder for us to transform our everyday living conditions. But we’re the Show-Me State, which means we have a mandate to show our elected leaders what democracy looks like.** //



A week later, Terrence made news¹¹ as the lead plaintiff in a lawsuit filed against the state over the legislature's redistricting scheme.

The widespread grassroots resistance gave rise to a coordinated coalition effort aimed at gathering signatures to overturn the illegal gerrymandering law. Over 300,000 Missourians have already signed on to the petition to remind state politicians that voters pick our leaders — not the other way around. [↑](#)[↑](#)





Nuestra Fuerza *Our Strength*



Against the backdrop of the Trump administration kidnapping, terrorizing, surveilling, and tearing our immigrant neighbors away from their children and families, immigrants in St. Louis launched **Fuerza**, a 100-strong organizing committee made up of workers who moved to the St. Louis region from Ecuador, Nicaragua, Honduras, El Salvador, Mexico, Colombia, Venezuela, and Guatemala for a better life.¹²

Fuerza leaders have been fighting for equal rights at work, an end to family separations, a just and accessible pathway to citizenship, and the safety and respect that everyone — native and newcomer alike — deserves.



This year they led neighborhood canvasses to grow their committee and win support from their community. They shared their stories at an MWC summer barbecue that brought together workers across race, ethnicity, and sector, as well as at several community events and actions — including on the main stage at the widely attended St. Louis Racial Equity Summit.

“Los que no arriesgan no ganan. Y yo quiero ganar todos mis derechos.”

Those who never risk, never win. And I want to win all of my rights.

Sara Herrera, Fuerza Organizing Committee member

Fuerza members will keep organizing to win a democracy that delivers good jobs, dignity, and belonging in Missouri — and America — for all working people. [↑](#)

Fuerza Worker Spotlight



“Unity brings strength, that strength gives us power, that power takes us where we need to go.”

Fuerza Organizing Committee member **Yery Castillo** shares what it means to tell her story.

How has this process changed you?

This process has changed me a lot. I have more expectations. I am stronger and have a greater desire to fight for what we all deserve. As a person, this process has made me more welcome because I've realized the problems we have as migrants are shared by people of all nationalities. This has been a year of a lot of learning. It has been beautiful and fruitful. I've learned a lot about the rights we have and how to fight for them, even if we don't have documentation or citizenship.

Why does telling your story matter in the fight for safety and respect, equal rights at work, an end to family separations, and a just and accessible pathway to citizenship?

I want people, immigrants and U.S.-born, to know the real story of why immigrants are here. We are here to benefit

our families, to improve ourselves, to be better people. I also want to change the narrative of how we're talked about. We're talked about in very cruel ways I don't want to repeat. We are here to improve ourselves, contribute, and work.



How do you feel as you reflect on your journey from a year ago, before you'd done much media or public speaking, to now, after having done a lot of it?


I feel more liberated, more open and free, like I was able to say what was stuck in my throat. I have been able to express what we have lived and experienced. Back then I felt fearful due to my status. I still feel a little bit of fear but if I don't speak something might happen to me anyway so I might as well speak. It's been a very beautiful experience. I don't have the same nerves that I had. I don't think as much about what people may think. I've realized that my story is very similar to many others.



Small tips like how to talk to the media without fear. More specifically I have learned how to answer questions by telling the media what I want them to



How do you see the importance of narratives in winning the positive change that immigrants deserve?

I want people to know that immigrants are good, honest, sincere people. These narratives can help lead us to inclusion because they drive home the point that all of us, migrants and non-migrants alike, are included and are human beings. That is ultimately what it's about. 




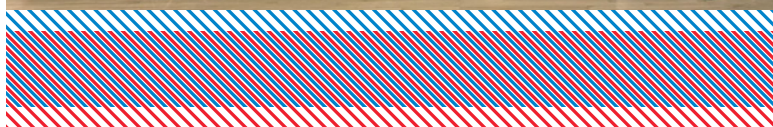


Movement Builders Bootcamp

This year we launched our inaugural Movement Builders Bootcamp. Nearly 100 workers, community partners, and members of the public convened in St. Louis and Kansas City for an intensive two-day training in each city to learn what it takes to be an effective organizer.

Participants explored their self interest in the movement for workers' rights and a stronger democracy, how power operates and ways to build it collectively, and the best tools and techniques to master the craft and build the working class power needed to beat back the billionaires and the racists who seek to divide Missourians.

"The most valuable part of the training was gaining a deeper understanding of the organizer's role as a connector and capacity-builder within a community," said one participant. *"The real-world examples helped clarify how organizers can balance relationship-building with strategic planning."* 



Solidarity Academy

Building on the momentum of the Bootcamp, MWC brought on organizing fellows and organizers from partner organizations to participate in our summer Solidarity Academy. Emerging organizers from across the country — some who had just completed the Movement Builders Bootcamp — spent 12 consecutive weeks in St. Louis. Beyond learning about the history of race and class in America through the lens of the labor and civil rights movements, fellows put their new skills and knowledge into practice through hands-on experience organizing Amazon and restaurant workers to advance local worker-led campaigns for fair pay, safe work, and a union.



The Solidarity Academy was a crucial step in expanding MWC's capacity to support worker organizing across industries and geographies, including Springfield. [↗](#)





Fighting Tech Billionaires

Amazon Workers Aren't Backing Down

While Amazon executives Jeff Bezos and Andy Jassy want us to believe that their cartoonishly evil schemes to exploit and minimize the human workforce are an inevitability, workers refuse to give up hope.¹³ Instead, they remain focused on organizing the many to defeat the money of corrupt tech billionaires.

In July, the STL8 organizing committee won a National Labor Relations Board ruling affirming Amazon warehouse workers' right to organize their coworkers in parking lots and break rooms.

STL8 workers at the St. Peters fulfillment center played a key role in providing testimony and evidence to support the board's ruling.

Just a few months prior, Amazon was ordered to restore all the unpaid time off hours that the company stole from workers participating in strikes nationwide, including the historic STL8 Black Friday strike that workers led in November 2022.





Beating Back a St. Louis Data Center

As greedy tech billionaires set their sights on Missouri as a growing hub for data center development — regardless of well-founded speculation that the AI bubble is on its way to bursting, MWC is keeping the working class front and center. We organized a coalition¹⁴ of labor, racial justice, and environmental groups to mobilize against the development of a data center at the vacant St. Louis Armory building. In October, the coalition turned out hundreds of concerned community members in a standing room-only town hall meeting.¹⁵

Beyond demanding no more development of AI data centers in St. Louis, the coalition is leading the way in a commonsense policy framework that protects the environment, keeps utility bills affordable for local communities already facing sky-high costs, and safeguards the dignity and rights of workers in the face of increasing automation. [↑](#)





MWC launched an ambitious campaign to build the movement of restaurant workers fighting for higher pay, safer work, and a real voice on the job — from Kansas City to St. Louis. Workers in both cities spent the latter half of the year building citywide service industry organizing committees. As part of that effort, workers hosted over a dozen OC meetings and many small-group restaurant worker meetings. Moreover, we engaged over 500 service industry workers in organizing conversations. Restaurant workers also drafted a “Bill of Rights” to set a strong foundation for industry-specific demands of their employers.

Growing the Restaurant Worker Movement

St. Louis Coffee Workers Go Union

In November, Kaldi’s Coffee workers in St. Louis went public¹⁶ with their campaign to win a union¹⁷ without retaliation. Their campaign rally¹⁸ was

the culmination of months of organizing among baristas, bakers, and back-of-house kitchen staff in eight different stores across the region. At the Skinker location, workers even reached a supermajority

of support to go union with UNITE HERE Local 74, the go-to union for much of the service industry nationally.

Organizing Gets the Goods

- When broken air conditioning in the Skinker Kaldi's forced workers to toil away over hot grills at the height of summer, workers took matters into their own hands and walked off the job for a day. Management promptly fixed the AC.
- Workers won a base pay bump to \$17 an hour in October. They also successfully kept their earned paid sick days after that part of Proposition A was gutted.
- The week of the public campaign launch, the St. Louis Board of Aldermen introduced and unanimously passed a resolution in support of Kaldi's workers' efforts to unionize. [↑](#)
- When a sewage backup, which workers dubbed "Lake Skinker," led to a temporary closure of the Skinker store,

workers flooded their work app with messages to management and won six hours of pay at time-and-a-half, plus five additional hours at that rate for training and cleaning.



MO Worker Voices

Rebuilding the labor movement in Missouri to win transformative change requires that workers also win a battle of ideas: namely, the idea that our political structures should work for all of us, not just an elite minority. That's why we launched MO Worker Voices this year, a yearlong intensive training program to build the narrative power the working class needs to shift the common sense of the public, what's possible, and what's worth fighting for.

At the October kickoff of the program in Columbia, Amazon workers, Stand Up KC members, restaurant workers, and immigrant workers came together for the first time to build their capacity as narrative strategists — learning the importance of storytelling that makes the multiracial worker-led movement for prosperity, freedom, and dignity irresistible — and successful.

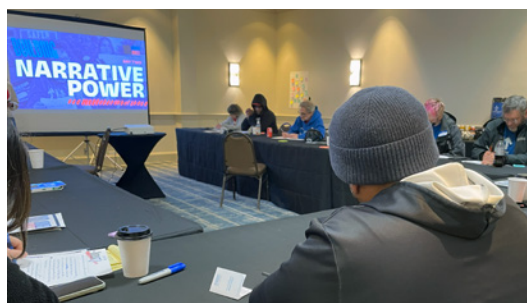
“One thing I took away from this weekend is that none of us are alone in our struggle. As long as we come together and share our stories, we can work together and build whatever world we need to thrive.”

Ash Judd, Amazon STL8 worker and MO Worker Voices participant



"There was a sense of solidarity with everyone in the room and across the whole state. It doesn't really matter where we come from or who we love. There's so much more we have in common than there is different. That made me feel empowered and hopeful." Bill Thompson, Stand Up KC leader and MO Worker Voices participant

Workers across races, places, and genders walked away understanding that now more than ever, we need the ability to shape and control which stories are told and the meaning people make from them, so that we can build the bigger "us" needed to win economic and political power. As the program continues, participants will hone their writing and oral storytelling skills to advance the campaigns they are leading — for greater power on and off the job. [↗](#)



Saving Kansas City's Public Transit



When Kansas City's public transit agency announced a \$30 million budget shortfall, the City quickly brought forth proposals to fill the gap by slashing 15 vital bus routes, over 150 union bus operator jobs, and the IRIS microtransit program that serves as a lifeline¹⁹ to thousands of local residents who live out of reach of an already underfunded bus system.

Low-wage workers with MWC, Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local 1287, Sunrise Movement KC, and community allies from across the region joined together²⁰ to successfully fend off the drastic cuts — saving public transit for the hundreds of thousands who depend on it to get to work, school, and community services across Kansas City.

IRIS drivers who had been organizing since last year to form a union without retaliation and fight back against zTrip, their predatory employer, made their voices heard week after week at City Hall during the height of the budget negotiations. Their efforts saved the IRIS program, and with newfound momentum, they partnered with Heartland Center for Jobs and Freedom to file a class action lawsuit²¹ against zTrip in July. Drivers Bakar Mohamed²² and Darian Hall took the mic at their press conference²³ outside the U.S. courthouse in Kansas City to publicly demand the thousands of dollars the company owes them in overtime back pay.



“I had to work 10 to 12 hour shifts six days a week, just to barely make ends meet. As a one-income household, my wife and children depend on me for stability. But despite feeling like I was working two jobs, I’ve been trapped in a cycle of debt. By rising up together to achieve justice in court, we build on the momentum that IRIS drivers have gained over the last several months, and the powerful lineage of Missouri workers who have been organizing for much longer to fight back against predatory employers across the state.”

Bakar Mohamed, IRIS driver and Missouri Workers Center leader [!\[\]\(90c859a17dbc6c3879e6b0c04b61632c_img.jpg\)](#)

In the Press

- 1 [KC mom got a raise at Arby's after voters passed Prop A. Now efforts aim to strike it down](#) The Kansas City Star
- 2 [Politicians, don't overturn Missouri's vote on minimum wage, sick time | Opinion](#)
The Kansas City Star
- 3 [In a push and pull battle over setting workers' pay and benefits, Missouri organizers say they'll keep trying](#)
The Journal: A Civic Issues Magazine
- 4 [Workers rally as lawmakers seek to quash voter-approved paid leave](#) First Alert 4 News
- 5 [Workers rally in support of Proposition A Supreme Court win on International Workers' Day](#) KSHB 41 News
- 6 [Protesters rally outside Missouri capitol after abortion, paid sick leave measures overturned](#)
5 On Your Side News
- 7 [Political Gerrymandering Is an Attack on Working Families and Black Voters Like Me](#)
Inequality.org
- 8 [Workers, Unions, Community members, gather for mass rally](#) Fox 4 News
- 9 [Protesters Decry Missouri Redistricting Plan at Labor Day Rally in Clayton](#) St. Louis Post-Dispatch
- 10 [Thousands flood Missouri Capitol to protest gerrymandering, direct democracy overhaul](#)
The Kansas City Star
- 11 ['Unconstitutional Power Grab': Missouri Voters Sue After GOP Passes Rigged Map](#)
Common Dreams
- 12 [Immigrant's journey in St. Louis: Yery Castillo fights for a better life and unity](#)
5 On Your Side News
- 13 [How to Form Community at Work By Joining a Union](#) Teen Vogue
- 14 [Coalition of labor, environmental groups ready for push against Armory data center](#)
St Louis Business Journal
- 15 [Missouri Workers, allies host town hall on actions against Armory data center](#) Fox 2 News
- 16 [Kaldi's workers from eight St. Louis-area locations announce plan to unionize](#) STLPR
- 17 [Kaldi's Coffee workers rally for union at chain's St. Louis headquarters](#) St. Louis Post-Dispatch
- 18 [Coffee workers hold union rally, citing poor working conditions](#) Fox 2 News
- 19 [KCATA riders, drivers hold rally to share concern about 2025 budget](#) KSHB 41 Kansas City
- 20 [Mass Uprising Erupts in Kansas City as Workers Fight to Save Public Transit](#)
The Kansas City Defender
- 21 [Drivers for KC rideshare service sue, claiming they are underpaid and exploited](#)
The Kansas City Star
- 22 [Drivers for IRIS, Kansas City's rideshare service, are suing over unfair work conditions](#)
KCUR Kansas City
- 23 [Rideshare drivers file federal lawsuit against zTrip, call for overtime pay](#) KCTV 5



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