

# 338 News

Volume I - 2020



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# *John R. Durso*

*President of Local 338*

## *Priorities for Local 338 Members in 2020*

As we dive into 2020, it is important we stay motivated and focused on our movement to protect, strengthen, and unite working people all across New York State. Each member of Local 338 must empower and uplift our fellow brothers and sisters to ensure our labor rights are upheld and expanded. Our voice is reflected in the leaders we nominate to defend our values. This year, we have a number of important elections with enormous consequences for the future of working people in New York State and across the nation. We are going to need all hands-on deck, not only to vote on Election Day, but also to stay informed and active.

In January, Governor Andrew Cuomo released his legislative priorities for 2020. Among those priorities include many laws which, if passed, will provide our members with valuable services and protections. Together, as a union family, we have successfully pushed our partners in State Government to prioritize our member's interests, including continuing the fight to legalize adult-use cannabis and creating good jobs in the industry, increasing access to the childcare subsidy program that many Local 338 members have benefited from, securing funding for wage increases for our members who work as direct caregivers at agencies like IAHD, Community Resources, and IRI, as well as expanding educational or vocational training opportunities.

Last year, New York State passed a law allowing farmworkers the right to

unionize, which had previously been denied to them. We have been tireless in the fight to organize New York State farmworkers by developing new and unique communication strategies. This year, we are determined to stand side-by-side with farmworkers so they may enjoy the same rights and freedoms we have fought so boldly for ourselves. The struggle for farmworker rights is the same struggle for all workers' rights. In the great words of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. "we are not free until everyone is free."

Presidential and New York State primary elections are only a few months away. If we want to maintain our progress and push to have our concerns addressed by our elected leaders, we must be vocal and persistent. You are not just voting for yourself; you are voting for your union brothers and sisters, and your family too. Look for a candidate who supports expanding childcare resources, cutting taxes for the middle class, investments in apprenticeships and education, and most of all, a candidate who stands for workers.

I want to remind all our members the 2020 Census is just around the corner and is an important opportunity to get involved. Be sure to look out for your Census survey in the mail around the middle of March. A ruling by the U.S. Supreme Court has officially declared that a question regarding citizenship status will not be asked. Everyone should feel comfortable submitting your 2020 Census, as your

honest responses will only help the community you live in.

I would also like to remind our members to take advantage of our scholarship opportunities available on Local 338's website. The deadline to sign up is quickly approaching so be sure to submit an application to potentially receive financial aid towards you or your family's education. For more information, visit: [local338.org/scholarships](https://local338.org/scholarships)

Finally, I would like to welcome all of our new members and I hope that everyone had a warm and loving Valentine's Day. We embrace, support, and love all our members. Local 338 is a home for everyone with a passion for supporting each other and the rights of other workers. Let us jump into 2020 with our best foot forward, strong-willed and focused. Only when we stand united will we succeed in having our voices heard and our rights respected.







On February 12th Local 338 members who work in New York's medical cannabis industry spent the day at the State Capitol in Albany advocating for the legalization of adult-use cannabis. Our members began the day by meeting with New York State AFL-CIO President Mario Cilentio who emphasized the significance of working people meeting with their legislators to share their firsthand experiences. He also discussed the work of Local 338 and the importance of our union within the cannabis industry.

Over the course of the day, Local 338 members met with their elected officials and discussed the work they do in the cannabis industry, as well as how belonging to a union has made a difference in their workplace and their lives. They advocated for the legalization of adult-use cannabis, the economic opportunities it creates for communities across the state, and the need for strong worker protections to ensure the creation of high quality careers. They also explained the importance of expanding New York's medical cannabis program to further increase accessibility for the patients they work with every day.

In addition to a full day of meetings with State Legislators, Local 338 members attended a press conference at the Capitol alongside patients, veterans and community partners in support of adult-use cannabis legalization. Kassan Seisay (Shop Steward at Vireo Health New York in White Plains) represented Local 338 and spoke about the standard that's been created in the cannabis industry through our strong union contracts. Kassan also highlighted how legalizing adult-use cannabis creates an incredible opportunity to amplify both social and economic justice and that investing in workers in the cannabis industry is going to be one crucial way to achieving this goal.

It was an incredibly productive day filled with exciting moments and we thank all of our members who spent the day in Albany advocating for their coworkers and the next generation of the cannabis industry's workforce!

## ADVOCATING FOR CANNABIS LEGALIZATION IN ALBANY



Local 338 members meet with Assembly Member Robert Smullen



Local 338 members meet with Assembly Member Pamela Hunter







# Neil E. Gonzalvo

*Executive Vice President*

## *A Letter to Our Shop Stewards*

I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincerest gratitude to all of Local 338's Shop Stewards. The work you do on the front lines is essential to the success of our organization. Without your loyalty, compassion and enthusiasm, the progress we've made as a union would not be possible. You are the boots on the ground and the pillars who support your fellow Local 338 members.

Often times, the invaluable work of Shop Stewards go unnoticed or misunderstood. Their role is complicated yet necessary. A Shop Steward is a shop-level advocate, responsible for helping members understand their contacts and benefits, sharing new and important union-related information, reporting worksite problems

to union representatives, and caring for the mental and physical well-being of our members. A Shop Steward must be a team player who other members seek for guidance and information. They are the eyes and ears of Local 338. Often times it is not until we

need them, do we recognize their value and the important role they play for their fellow Local 338 members.

Take some time this month to recognize your dedication and commitment to our members. I have enormous respect for anyone considerate and courageous enough to be an

effective Shop Steward. We are all in this fight together and we rely on each and every one of you.



***Do you have what it takes to be a Shop Steward?***

***Do you have what it takes to support your fellow Local 338 brothers and sisters?***

***Do you have what it takes to fight for what's fair?***

***If so, give me a call at 646-261-5458.***

***The first 10 callers will be featured on our social media for an upcoming Member Monday!***



## **IT PAYS TO BE UNION**

Since January 2020, Local 338, through grievances and arbitrations, collected funds and returned back wages to our members in excess of

# **\$3,286!**





# Kassan Seisay Local 338's MVP

Kassan Seisay has been a Local 338 member for nearly four years, working at Vireo Health, New York's medical cannabis dispensary in White Plains. His dedication and enthusiasm as a union member, Shop Steward, and now Local 338 Advisory Board Member have been enormously helpful in negotiating a strong union contract for his coworkers and also in our efforts to advocate for the legalization of adult-use cannabis.

Kassan was born in Sierra Leone and immigrated to the United States when he was four years old. He is an avid traveler with a thirst for adventure, visiting countries like England, Mexico, and most of West Africa. Kassan's passionate interest in human behavior and helping others led him to earn his bachelor's degree in Social Work. His major interests include soccer, listening and creating music and art, and most of all, astrology.

Throughout his life, Kassan has enjoyed exploring the human psyche. By using astrology as a means to break the ice with his patients, he builds a stronger, more personal connection through mutual understanding. While working at Vireo Health, Kassan has become more familiar with medical cannabis products and how they can be used to treat mental and physical ailments. As a Patient Care Coordinator, Kassan helps patients and caregivers navigate New York's medical cannabis program and also often makes recommendations to doctors as to which product the patient should be prescribed in order to effectively treat their symptoms. Kassan works hand-in-hand with the dispensary's pharmacist to monitor a patient's progress in order to study which products work best for certain conditions.

Before joining Vireo Health, Kassan had never been a member of a union. Saul Guerrero, his Union Representative, introduced himself and explained the benefits and rights members of Local 338 receive when they join. Kassan was inspired by the attention, consideration, and passion he felt through his conversations with Saul about Local 338. He decided to get more involved and join the fight to expand medical cannabis and legalize recreational cannabis in New York State. Over the last four years, Kassan became a Shop Steward at his workplace and has taken an active role in representing his coworkers during contract negotiations with his company. He has become a Local 338 member-spokesperson, attending lobby days at our State Capitol and speaking at press conferences in support of expanding New York's medical cannabis program and to explain the overwhelming economic, health, and social benefits of legalizing adult-use cannabis.

Local 338 is extremely grateful to have Kassan in our family. His commitment and sincerity to his patients, love and respect to his fellow union brothers and sisters, and his motivation to pursue a healthier and wealthier New York State for his neighbors inspires all of our members. Thank you, Kassan, for all that you do to support your fellow members not just at Vireo Health, but across Local 338!







# Joseph Quercia

## Our Executive Board Quarterback



Joseph Quercia, or Joey Q. as everyone knows him, has been a loyal and active member of Local 338 for the past 34 years! Joey serves his members as a hard-working Shop Steward and committed Executive Board Member. Joey began his career at Waldbaum's in Bensonhurst, later joining the Staten Island Stop & Shop team in 1998. He has been an important and knowledgeable advocate in the shop, always ready to be a ferocious supporter for his fellow union brothers and sisters.

Joey began serving on the Executive Board 20 years ago after having a passionate conversation with Local 338 President John R. Durso regarding the future of our members during the A&P crisis. Joey felt it was important to be a strong and compassionate voice for his fellow members during this difficult time. While serving on the Board, Joey pushes our members to get more involved in our union activities and rallies. He is a strong follower of the "strength through numbers" philosophy.

Joey spends his free time coaching the Staten Island Boys Football League where he provides his players discipline, structure and "tough love" in order to foster better students and future community leaders. He has been coaching young men, aged 7 to 14 years old, for the past 13 years. Joey uses his experience as a former football player to teach his players the ins-and-outs of the game. He says success on the field is just as important as success off the field. He mentors these young men to achieve their dreams and become the best version of themselves.

As an Executive Board Member, Joey has spoken with hundreds of members regarding how they can get more involved and support their union. "One major way our members can help strengthen Local 338 is by registering to vote and joining our PAC (Political Action Committee). The more political leverage we have, the stronger we become." He also says members should attend their local area meetings in order to stay informed and up to date on important events and information. Joey worked with his union representative, Maria Paul, to organize the membership meetings on Staten Island to help make sure his fellow members are able to connect with their union.

Be sure to say hello to Joey the next time you see him at a member meeting or in Stop & Shop! He loves meeting and speaking with his fellow members. We are very lucky to have Joey on our Executive Board!





# Have a Great Retirement, Yolanda!

Yolanda Fiorentino has been a Local 338 member for 46 years. She works at Gristedes in Manhattan and will be retiring at the end of February! Yolanda has been a loyal and dependable member. Her coworkers and fellow union brothers and sisters know Yolanda by her can-do attitude and approachable demeanor. She has left a legacy of warm-hearted service and compassion to all of her coworkers.

Yolanda, who started as a cashier in high school, got married and had a family all while being a 338 member. She says her benefits provided by our union allowed her to grow a family and took the pressure off certain expenses associated with raising a child.

Getting ready for retirement was made easier with help of our Local 338 Pension Department team, who walked Yolanda through the paperwork, step-by-step, and explained everything in detail. Yolanda says on her first day of retirement, she's going to throw her alarm clock away! "I am very lucky to be a Local 338 member," she said. We are very lucky to have had you as a member! Thank you for all of your years of service, Yolanda. Your Local 338 family will miss you dearly!

## 338 News is YOUR News Source

*Do you have a unique hobby, a special talent or a great accomplishment that you would like to share? Maybe you love to woodwork and have a back porch to prove it. Perhaps your coworker recently won an award but is too humble to brag about it.*

*Our unique abilities are what make us different but our togetherness as a union is what makes us strong. Contact Andrew Koven at 516-294-1338 Ext.1320 or email him at [AKoven@local338.org](mailto:AKoven@local338.org) to be considered as a feature in the next issue of 338 News.*







## Our First Suffolk County Community College Scholarship Winner

Earlier this year, we launched the Local 338 scholarship at Suffolk Community College and we are pleased to announce we have our first winner! Virginia Libretti is a Local 338 member who has worked at the ShopRite in Selden for the past two years. Virginia is enrolled in the Dietetic Technology program at Suffolk County Community College and she plans on using her knowledge of nutritional science to help others achieve a more healthy, productive lifestyle. After graduating from SCCC, Virginia plans on attending Queens College to further her education.

Virginia says being a member of Local 338 has helped tremendously to ensure she can work flexible hours while also being a student. "Every Local 338 member attending SCCC should apply for the scholarship. It's quick and doesn't hurt to apply. Winning the scholarship can be incredibly helpful to assist with paying for tuition." Congratulations to Virginia and best of luck in all your future endeavors! Your union will always have your back.

The Suffolk County Community College scholarship is open to all Local 338 members and their dependents who are enrolled at the college. One SCCC scholarship is still available this academic year for a student planning to attend SCCC for the first time and the recipient can receive up to \$2,000 towards tuition costs.

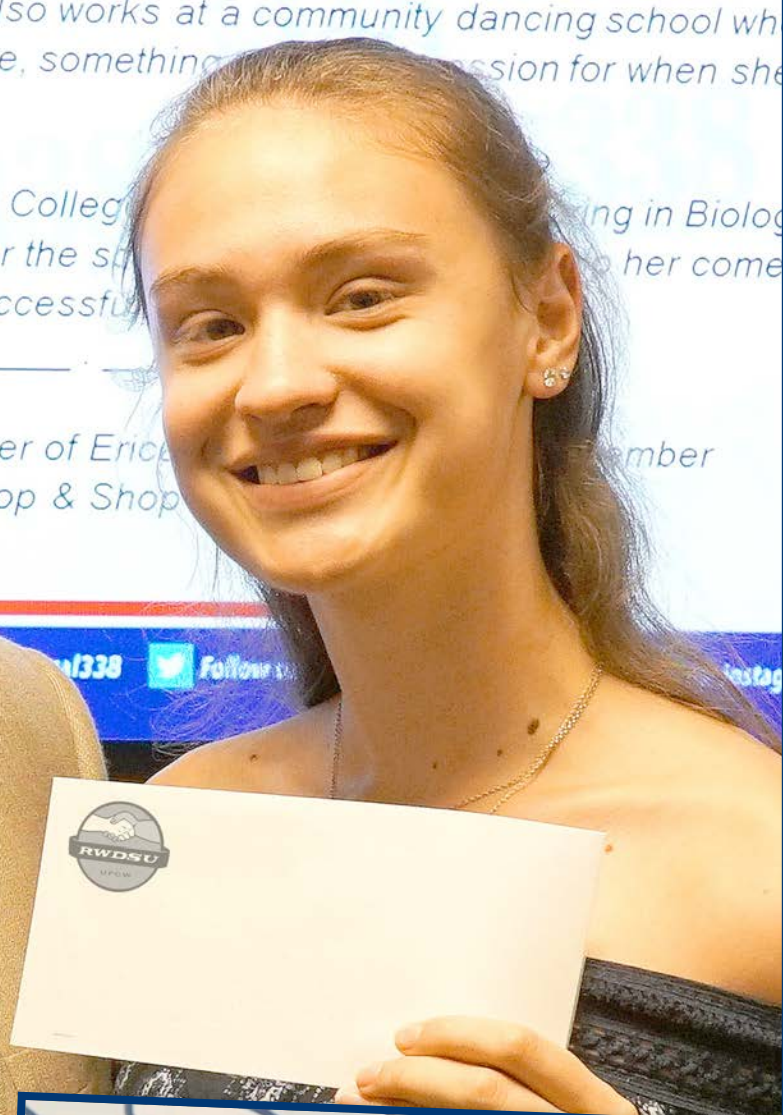
For more information and to apply, please visit: [local338.org/scholarships](http://local338.org/scholarships). The deadline to apply is April 24, 2020.



Pictured left to right: Fred Wren, Nikki Kateman, Virginia Libretti, and Local 338 President John R. Durso







## Congratulations to Our 2019 RWDSU Scholarship Winner!

We are proud to recognize McKenzie Rivera, who is the winner of the 2019 RWDSU Scholarship! Her mother, Erica Rodriguez, is a Local 338 member working at Stop & Shop in Belle Harbor. When she heard about the scholarship opportunity, she encouraged her daughter to apply for it! In the year since winning the scholarship, McKenzie has graduated high school and started studying at Mount Saint Mary College, where her major is biology with a pre-veterinarian track.



McKenzie has enjoyed school so far, and has been balancing class, homework and being a member of the dance team. She started dancing when she was 3, and when she was 16, she began teaching dance as well! After graduation, she wants to attend veterinarian school to become a vet. McKenzie said she is grateful for the opportunity given to her by the union and for the scholarship! Congratulations to you both, McKenzie and Erica!

The 2020 RWDSU Scholarship application will be live in the next few weeks. If you are interested in applying, please visit [local338.org/scholarships](https://local338.org/scholarships) for updates.

Pictured: Erica Rodriguez and McKenzie Rivera





# Don't Let This Great Scholarship Opportunity Pass You By!

The Local 338 Charities Inc. Scholarship is now accepting applications! We believe education is extremely valuable, and we want to help our members and their dependents pursue a college education. If you've been a member for one (1) year from the date the short form application is due, you are eligible to apply! We have a variety of scholarships and students currently enrolled as high school seniors or in college or trade/vocational school are encouraged to apply! The deadline for the short form application is March 20, 2020.

To start the application process, visit:

[local338.org/2020\\_scholarship\\_form.cfm](http://local338.org/2020_scholarship_form.cfm)



## LOCAL 338 MEMBER MEETINGS



### Manhattan

Monday, June 8th at 5pm

#### RWDSU Office

370 Seventh Avenue, Suite 501, Manhattan  
(7 Penn Plaza - Between 30th and 31st Streets)

### Staten Island

Tuesday, June 9th at 5pm

#### International Christian Center

1501 Richmond Ave. Staten Island, New York

### Long Island | Queens

Wednesday, June 10th at 5pm

#### Local 338 Office

1505 Kellum Place Mineola, New York

Refreshments and food will be served at each location  
starting at 4:30pm







WE'RE HERE TO HELP!

With **Jennifer Lipack**  
MAP Director



## *Help Support the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society*

This March, I'll be running a half marathon on behalf of Local 338 to support the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society. The LLS has made remarkable progress through its 71-year history towards treatments and potential cures for a variety of blood diseases. Their research has helped save thousands of lives, and their services are now available to Local 338 members.

The LLS understands the difficulties that come with being diagnosed with a blood cancer—processing the diagnosis alone is a huge challenge. However, they have resources for both the patients and the caregivers that can help them deal with the diagnosis and upcoming treatment. Information Specialists at the LLS can even help patients map the best route from diagnosis to treatment.

We've been fundraising since December, and we've hit our goal of \$1,300! However, we're trying to fundraise as much as we possibly can by March 15th, the day of the marathon.

**No donation is too small  
if you want to below to donate!**



[Click Here to view our video  
with Jennifer Lipack](#)



### *Update Your Information*

*Don't miss out on all of the member discounts,  
benefits, negotiations, news and other events  
that are important to you as a Local 338  
member or retiree!*

[Click Here To Update](#)

[local338.org/contact-form.cfm](http://local338.org/contact-form.cfm)



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# I Love My Union

"Because they give great benefits"  
~ King Ignacio Rectra  
Food Universe



"Because I have good benefits"  
~ Sabia Gkhter  
Food Universe



"Because I have job security"  
~ Assunta Ferrara  
Acme Markets



"Because I have job protection  
and guaranteed hours"  
~ Peter Morales  
Stop and Shop





"Because they are always helpful when we need them, and great programs like Grand Rounds and Guardian Nurses"

~ Lakiesha Watford  
Stop & Shop



"Because of my good contract and entitlements like vacation"

~ Olympia Probeck  
Stop & Shop



"Because they help us out"

~ Sharon Malley  
Edward Williams Elementary  
(Mount Vernon School Monitors)



"Because they always answer all my questions"

~ Lydia Heck  
Acme Markets



"Because they help me with my benefits"

~ Kate Anders  
Stop & Shop





"Because I have good benefits"  
~ Sabia Gkhter  
Food Universe



"Because it makes me feel protected and  
appreciated"

~ Stewart Johnson  
Stop & Shop



"Because they help keep a safe environment for  
all workers and scholarships for members"

~ Danielle Marchesano  
Stop & Shop



"Because they help us with everything,  
from contracts to personal matters."

~ Daniel O'Brien  
Food Universe





# You May Be Missing out on Thousands of Dollars Towards the cost of childcare!



As a union member you may be entitled to funding assistance through the Union Facilitated Childcare Enrollment Project, which provide funding assistance to help ease the high costs of quality childcare for working parents. Many Local 338 members have already been approved for the program and received thousands of dollars towards the cost of day care and after school programs for their children. In fact, over the last few years, almost \$400,000 has been distributed to Local 338 members!

## How Does it Work?

If you work at least 20 hours per week, have children under 13, and meet certain geographic and income requirements you might be eligible to apply for a subsidy to apply to the costs of childcare.

## How Do I Know if I'm Eligible?

### If You Live in New York City:

*If you live within the Five Boroughs, you can verify your eligibility and start the pre-screening process, by visiting: [local338.org/childcare](http://local338.org/childcare)*

### If You Live in Upstate New York:

*If you live in Albany, Erie, Monroe, Oneida, Onondaga, Rensselaer, Saratoga, or Schenectady Counties, you can verify your eligibility and start the pre-screening process, by visiting: [wdiny.org/childcare](http://wdiny.org/childcare)*

Please note that if you qualify for the program, you will be contacted by our partner organizations who will guide you through the full application process.

**Don't miss out on this opportunity for you and your family!**

\*This program is funded by New York State and is therefore currently only available for residents in certain Counties.





# *Wishing Our Members A Happy Retirement!*

(Local 338's recent retirees between January 1 - February 29, 2020)

<i>Cheryl Albers</i>	<i>Alejandro Higueta</i>	<i>Nasir Pirzada</i>
<i>Bosko Bajceski</i>	<i>Gilbert Igiehon</i>	<i>Karen Powers</i>
<i>James Balletti</i>	<i>Roy Jennings</i>	<i>Awilda Rodriguez</i>
<i>Robert Barnes</i>	<i>Amalia Jorquera</i>	<i>Michael Rogers</i>
<i>Joann Bavuso</i>	<i>Sofia Licon</i>	<i>Rafael Rosado</i>
<i>Kevin Brockdorff</i>	<i>Juan Madera</i>	<i>Dennis Ryan</i>
<i>Karen Brunetto</i>	<i>Abraham Martinez</i>	<i>Carlos Santiago</i>
<i>Nancy Capobianco</i>	<i>Adriano Martingano</i>	<i>Jesus Sarzo</i>
<i>Donna Carbone</i>	<i>William McGann</i>	<i>Roxanne Schwebel</i>
<i>Michael Cohen</i>	<i>Carol Mignoli</i>	<i>Michael Swarthout</i>
<i>Maria Diggs</i>	<i>Evelyn Molina</i>	<i>Martin Tims</i>
<i>Marwan Doleh</i>	<i>Sarojini Morales</i>	<i>Steven Vensky</i>
<i>Charles Dooner</i>	<i>Teri Noble</i>	<i>Gabriel Verastegui</i>
<i>Nellie Evans</i>	<i>Thomas O'Dell</i>	<i>Stephen Viddertosky</i>
<i>Margaret Foley</i>	<i>Ruth Pagan</i>	<i>Ethel Walters</i>
<i>Scott Friszell</i>	<i>Peter Palma</i>	<i>Linda Westerlund</i>
<i>Jose Gonzalez</i>	<i>Anthony Patchen</i>	<i>Debra Wunsch</i>
<i>Diane Harmon</i>	<i>Barbara Perez</i>	<i>Mayda Young</i>

*"Retired from my job, not from my union"*



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# For EVERYTHING Local 338 Follow Us On Social Media



## Or visit us at [MyLocal338.org](http://MyLocal338.org)

- Know your Rights: Download Your Contract
- Quickly Send Emails Directly to Local 338 Staff
- View Benefits you May Have and are NOT Using
- Learn about the Member Assistance Program
- Stay up to Date Union News & Events
- Articles about Fellow Members
- Scholarships for you and your Family
- Access to Free College Programs
- See Exclusive Member Discounts
- and much, much more!

***Be sure to stay  
involved with Local 338***







338 NEWS, the official publication of Local 338 RWDSU/UFCW,  
is published at the Office of Local 338 at 1505 Kellum Place, Mineola, NY 11501

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink.

Joseph Fontano  
Secretary-Treasurer

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink.

John R. Durso  
President

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink.

Neil E. Gonzalvo  
Executive Vice President

Writer and Editor: Andrew Koven, Nikki Kateman & Caroline Leddy | Layout and Design: John Falco

***Our Mission: To Better The Lives Of Our Members And All Working People.***

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