



Fall 2024

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REGIONAL LABOR REVIEW



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The New York Job Market in 2024-2025

by Gregory DeFreitas

The U.S. labor market began 2025 in very healthy shape, according to standard economic measures. Though the November election results reflected widespread popular anxiety about the pay, prices and housing options that many voters face, the latest payroll and hiring surveys of employers show that the year ended with a big bump in hiring and a rise in average worker pay, even after adjustment for inflation. But with a new Republican president and Congressional majority promising major changes in tariff, tax, environmental, regulatory and immigration policies, will those trends be maintained, improved or reversed? And how will blue states like New York fare in this fast-changing landscape?

Across all of 2024, the U.S. gained 2.2 million new jobs – more even than in the pre-pandemic year 2019. Where were most of the new jobs? According to the U.S. Labor Department’s massive employer survey, about half of this total were in private educational and health services. Other major growth sectors were: leisure and hospitality services, professional and business services and government.

Healthy job growth nationwide has kept unemployment at or below a low 4% rate these past three years (see Figure 1). Over the four years of the Biden-Harris administration, that rate fell from 6.4% in January 2021 to the lowest average jobless rate of any presidential administration in a half-century. Still, there remain marked discrepancies in job progress among racial, ethnic and age groups. The white unemployment rate was little changed over 2024 at about 3.6% (seasonally adjusted). But 6.1% of blacks were unemployed by year end, up from 5.2% last January. One in five black teenage jobseekers were unemployed by December and 16% of Hispanics, compared to just 11.1% of whites their age.

In the government’s separate job vacancies survey, the number of job openings was stable at about 8 million through most of autumn. Since the unemployed numbered 7.1 million, this means there was an average of roughly one opening for each unemployed person.

How has New York compared to these and other national trends? Over this election year, New York City in particular has been both denounced as a failed urban hellscape and praised for its steep recovery from the 2020 pandemic. On the right, it was labeled a crime-ridden wasteland, so jammed with undocumented and homeless migrants that it was turning into “a third-world country, if it isn’t already.”

By contrast, the city’s defenders describe 2024 as a “boom” year, marked by rapid job growth and record high levels of labor force participation and employment. As shown in Table 1, over the 12 months up to this November (the latest local data available), the city’s job growth (1.8%) exceeded the national average (1.5%). The availability of more jobs enticed more New Yorkers to join the labor force, pushing the city’s labor force participation rate to a record high 62.7% today. The share of jobholders in the adult population has also hit a record today: 59.3%.

Labor Force Participation & Employment/ Population Rates, NYC: Nov. 2019-2024		
	Labor Force Participation Rate (%)	Employment- Population Rate (%)
November 2019	60.1	57.8
November 2020	58.0	50.5
November 2023	61.7	58.4
November 2024	62.7	59.3

Sources: US Bureau of Labor Statistics & NY State Dept. of Labor.

In the first pandemic year 2020, among New York City residents ages 16 and over, the fraction of jobholders had dropped sharply from the 2019 pre-pandemic level (57.8%) to just 50.5% 12 months later. By November 2023, the employment-population and labor force participation rates had more than recovered and exceeded pre-pandemic levels. And both have continued to rise over the past year. However, the overall trend in labor force participation was driven largely by the city’s white women. The fractions of African Americans and Hispanics employed or seeking jobs fell slowly over this same period.

Throughout the past two years, unemployment rates in the city have held at about 5% of the labor force (seasonally adjusted). As shown in Figure 1, that is at least 1 percentage point more than the national average and two percentage points above the suburban Long Island rates. In pre-pandemic 2019, the NYC rate (3.8%) was just as low as the national rate. But the city, with its large, in-person entertainment and tourism sectors, was hit first and hardest by the 2020 COVID pandemic. Unemployment peaked that year at 21.5% in New York, compared to a national average of

13.2%. But the city's jobless rate plunged to 8.1% by 2021, before falling further to the 5% range the following year.

Where have the new jobs come from? As seen in Figure 2, two industries were dominant job generators: Health Care and tourism-related Leisure & Hospitality industries. Private Health Care & Social Assistance employers added 83,600 jobs since November 2023 – equivalent to nearly all the city's job growth. (The broader Eds and Meds sector was slightly lower due to a decline of 2,600 in private education positions). In addition, strong recovery of domestic and global tourism to New York added 15,100 new jobs in the Leisure and Hospitality sector, led by more jobs in hotels (+2,600) and restaurants (+6,600) over the year. In fact, the city welcomed more tourists in 2024 (65 million) than in any year other than 2019. Why has a “hellscape” city been more attractive than any other to so many visitors? It probably helped that – despite claims of political and media critics – NYC crime rates were actually 3% lower in 2024 and have fallen 81% over the last three decades.

While the city welcomes new jobs from any source, the fact that only two sectors are expanding while others are stagnant or declining is a cause for concern. Average earnings in these growing industries rank near the bottom: \$65,853 in Eds and Meds and just \$56,086 in Leisure and Hospitality. Job counts in high-wage sectors like Finance, Information and Professional & Business Services each shrank by several thousand over the past year. The result of this growing imbalance between growing low-wage jobs and shrinking high-wage jobs has been to worsen the city's already extreme levels of income inequality.

A fairly similar pattern has characterized the past 12 months in the Long Island suburbs (Figure 3). Of the total jobs increase of 18,900, nearly all was attributable to Eds and Meds (+12,300) and just Leisure and Hospitality (+6,600). The main exception was in construction, where the job count contracted (-7,800) in the city, but grew (+4,100) on the island. So both downtown and suburbs enjoyed substantial, but narrow job growth and continued on a path of rising economic inequality.

With the presidential transition starting in January 2025, potentially dramatic economic changes may be on the agenda. The promised extension of the regressive 2017 individual and corporate income tax cuts would likely both exacerbate inequality trends and deepen the already massive federal budget deficits. This in turn would raise the pressure on Congress to approve painful austerity budget cuts in wide swaths of spending, including federal aid to states and their urban areas. New York City currently receives about \$100 billion per year in federal funds of all sorts, including Social Security, food stamps and other safety net support. Of this total, some \$9.5 billion (8.3% of the year's NYC budget) is crucial federal categorical aid for public health and education, infrastructure and a wide variety of other needs. If Republican promises to end the city's new traffic congestion pricing, as well as challenge the infrastructure and green energy initiatives of the Biden administration's Inflation Reduction Act, both local and national efforts against climate change could be at serious risk.

Sharp new increases in U.S. tariffs on imported goods are likely to be employed as an economic weapon against selected countries these next few years. Most economists expect such a policy to both invite retaliation by the targeted countries and to heat up U.S. price inflation. This could reverse our progress in markedly lowering inflation from its near-double-digit annual rates in 2022 to the low 2.5-3% range of the past year. A revival of high inflation could, in turn, shrink the purchasing power of working families' earnings, and pressure the Federal Reserve to start raising interest rates again.

Finally, the new administration is preparing mass deportations of millions of undocumented immigrants. Aside from the myriad personal consequences for the migrants and their families, the costs and practical implementation issues of such a policy are considerable. The economic impacts in the New York Metro Area are likely to be particularly disruptive. A majority of New York City residents today are immigrants or immigrants' children. Immigrants alone account for about one-fifth of the local work force.

Out of the city's total foreign-born population of 3.1 million, an estimated 412,000 lack proper documents to live or work here. Many started arriving in early 2022 when Republican governors shipped them in busloads from the southern border. Any such sudden influx draws public attention and concern and imposes housing and schooling costs on the host society. But, of the 225,000 mostly Venezuelan and Central American migrants who arrived and moved into temporary shelters since then, about three-fourths had left the public shelters by December 2024. Many single adults were forced out by Mayor Adams' 30-60 day shelter limits. Over 47,000 took advantage of city-paid travel to other cities or states. Many Venezuelans, granted Temporary Protected Status, by the Biden administration began obtaining work permits and they and others began integrating themselves into the city's economic fabric. Should the new administration in Washington remove TPS status and embark on mass deportations, the city could lose much of its work force in immigrant-intensive sectors, as well as a significant source of population growth and dynamism.

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Figure 1:
Unemployment Rates in US, NYC & Long Island November 2022-2024
(% monthly, seasonally adjusted)

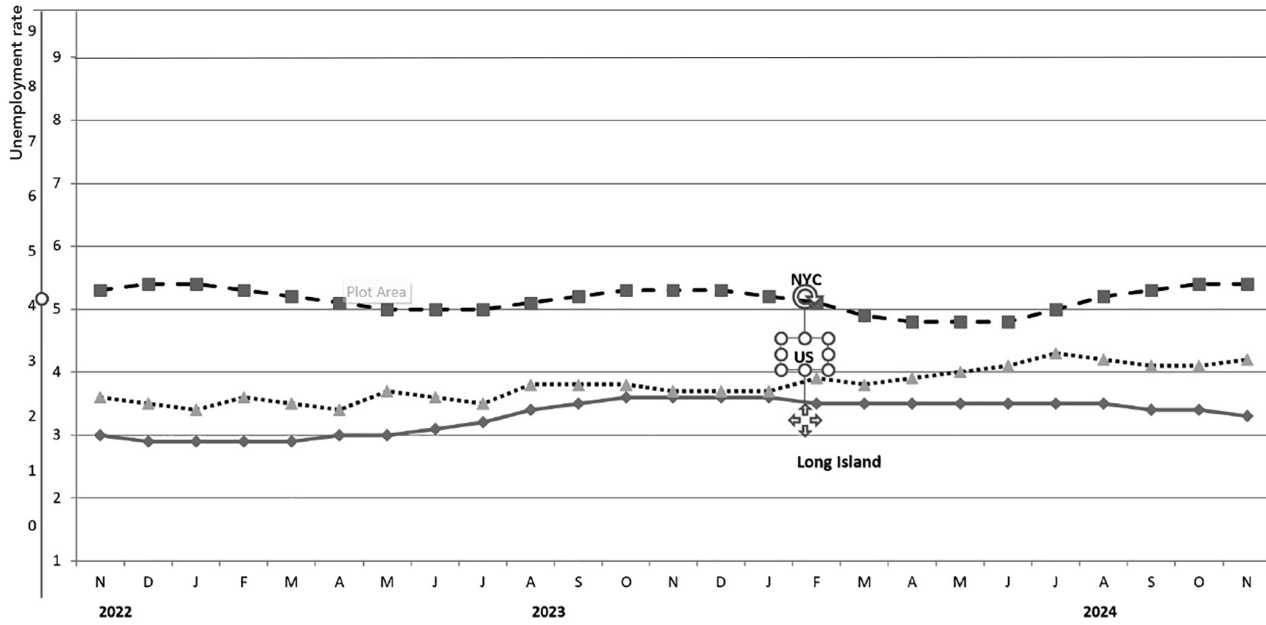


Table 1
Civilian Labor Force, Employment & Unemployment, 2023-2024
(in thousands, not seasonally adjusted)

AREA	Labor Force		Employed		Unemployed		Unemp. Rate	
	November 2024	November 2023	November 2024	November 2023	November 2024	November 2023	November 2024	November 2023
U.S.	168,164	167,976	161,456	162,149	6,708	5,827	4.0%	3.5%
NYS	9,643	9,744	9,239	9,336	404.1	407.6	4.2	4.2
NYC	4,202	4,157	3,973.0	3,935.0	228.9	222.0	5.4	5.3
LONG ISLAND	1,519	1,549	1,473	1,496	45.7	53.3	3.0	3.4
Nassau Co.	724	728	703	704	20.9	24.4	2.9	3.3
Suffolk Co.	795	810	770	781	24.8	28.9	3.1	3.6

Table 1 Source: CPS household survey data from NYS Dept. of Labor. Data reflect their regular revisions .

Table 2:
Number of Nonfarm Jobs:
New York City, Long Island
& All U.S., 2023-2024
(in thousands,
not seasonally adjusted)

	November 2024	November 2023	2023-2024 Change	
			Net Chg	% Chg
U.S.	160,600	158,300	2,300.0	1.5%
NY State	9,986.6	9,833.6	153.0	1.6%
NYC	4,818.0	4,732.0	86.0	1.8%
Long Island	1,378.3	1,360.0	18.3	1.3%

Table 2 Source: Establishment survey data from US Department of Labor. Note that data reflect regular revisions by Dept. of Labor.

Figure 2:
NYC Job Changes by Industry, November 2023-November 2024
(in thousands of jobs and % change)

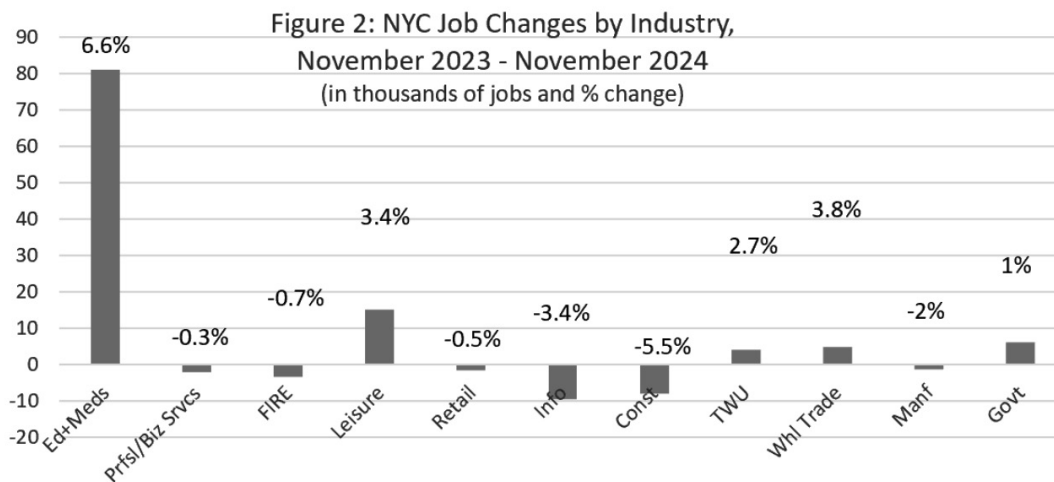
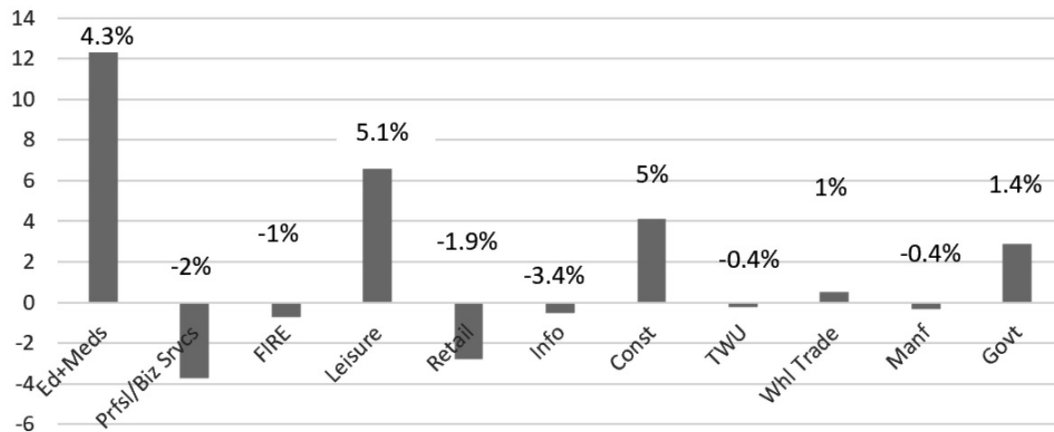


Figure 3:
LI Job Changes by Industry, November 2023-November 2024
(in thousands of jobs and % change)



Long Island Unions and the 2024 Election A Conversation with the LI Labor Federation Director

by Gregory DeFreitas

What role did labor unions play in the November 2024 elections and what impacts will the surprising results have on them and the millions of working people they represent?

New York City and Long Island are the most highly unionized metro area in the country. On Long Island alone, over one in four resident workers is a union member – over twice the national rate.¹ The Long Island Federation of Labor (LI Fed), is the umbrella coalition of over 160 AFL-CIO-affiliated unions, representing nearly 300,000 workers in Nassau and Suffolk Counties. Its current Executive Director is Ryan Stanton. A graduate of SUNY Binghamton and of Cornell University's Union Leadership Institute, he began his career in the central NY regional Office of Senator Charles Schumer (Dem, NY), before becoming Executive Assistant to long-time Congressman Steve Israel (Dem, LI). He is a member of the Suffolk County Workforce Development Board and serves on the Board of Directors of the United Way. He lives on Long Island with his wife and two young children.

Q: The November 5th election results could have big implications for working families. The exit polls say that about 55% of union households nationwide voted for Kamala Harris. The fact that over 40% of union households didn't vote for her has gotten lots of media comment – even though it's about the same, actually, as Biden got in 2020. What's your sense nationally, and on Long Island, of what factors lay behind that?

RS: As the executive director of the Long Island Federation of Labor, I am focused on Long Island. It's worth looking at the information you presented. If voter turnout for Harris among union members was at 55%, and she only garnered 49% of the national popular vote, we know that the Union movement is effective at communicating with our members. We are still a trusted institution and outperform the general public for pro-labor candidates.

Regardless of party affiliation, when we support a candidate, we bring a high level of engagement, voter participation and performance. And I would argue, that's a part of what our superpower is – not just that we can communicate with our members, but that they trust us. That's hard to find in institutions across the country at this moment in time.

Q: How would you describe Long Island unions' mobilization in the election? Were there some unions that explicitly came out for Donald Trump, or was it pretty uniformly pro-Harris?

RS: The LI Fed, because we're in New York State, was predominantly focused on Congressional, State Senate and State Assembly races. We targeted the 4th Assembly District in the New York State Assembly within our campaign to support John Avlon, who unfortunately was not successful in CD-1. The 4th Assembly District was represented by Steve Engelbright, for a long time, until he lost to Republican Ed Flood. We believed it would be exceptionally competitive this cycle. We also thought it was important for Long Island to have another voice in the majority in the New York State Assembly. We were fortunate to have a candidate, Rebecca Kassay, whose values and views on policy aligned with our views. She won by just a couple hundred votes. We certainly made the difference.

Unfortunately, we came up short in another assembly race. We supported Gina Sillitti in Nassau County. That was often overshadowed by everybody's focus on the 3rd Congressional District. The national discourse, and a conversation around who the next Speaker of the House would be played out here? Would it be Hakeem Jeffries, or Mike Johnson? Keeping the 3rd Congressional District was vital if we were going to have a Speaker from New York State.

Tom Suozzi is a phenomenal candidate, and an excellent member of Congress. We worked with him and his campaign in the special election, and then continued to support him in the General Election. And ultimately he was successful in getting elected, in a district that Trump won. Trump won the 4th Congressional district too. I haven't looked at the numbers lately, but, we know that in both the 3rd and the 4th districts, the Congressional candidates that we supported outperformed the top of the ticket. Unfortunately, we came up a little bit short in the 16th Assembly District, but we were clearly focused in the right areas.

Q: What do you think were the main issues that local voters had on their agenda – immigration, the economy, others?

RS: We know that nationally and locally, you have pundits that will say, 'Well, the economic indicators are good.' That was true.

But, it doesn't change the fact that working people, a disproportionate number of working people, are living paycheck to paycheck and struggling. It's objectively true that the economy has gotten better over time, and policy decisions have consequences. The Biden-Harris Administration adopted policies that invested in working people.

But nobody walks into the grocery store and goes: "You know, the bipartisan infrastructure law is really good, so I don't mind the increased cost of eggs." The price of eggs have gone up, the price of milk has gone up. And then Republicans, correctly messaged that: "Inflation, inflation, inflation – everything's more expensive. It's their (Biden-Harris's) fault. The governing party is the problem."

Republicans were very effective at tying the pain people were feeling to the decisions of the governing party, in this case Democrats. True or not, you can't (legitimately) lay the consequences of inflation at the feet of the Democratic Party. Inflation was experienced globally, and the American economy came in for the soft landing that many economists thought was impossible. Inflation was not just a result of the policies that were adopted. It's not that cut and dry. However, it doesn't change the fact that the people were feeling that way, and experiencing real difficulty, providing for their family, struggling to put food on their table, a shirt on their child's back, and being concerned about whether or not they have a roof over their head.

It's hard to measure the things that didn't happen. It's difficult to measure the number of lives that were saved as a result of the policies that were adopted. Unfortunately, not enough people tried to tell that story, or did so effectively, reminding voters about the people that were able to keep their homes, keep their jobs, keep their health care because of the decisions that were made. Not to mention, we need a better conversation connecting investments in our energy infrastructure to investments in working people.

When it comes inflation, there wasn't much discussion about the fact that corporate profits didn't go down. Why is it that so many pundits, economists, and public officials have accepted the philosophy that the only way to tame inflation is for millions of Americans to lose their jobs. We don't have to accept that. Leaders have to do a better job talking about all the ways good policy decisions put money in the hands of working people and how that is the solution to, and not the driver, of inflation.

Q: Right. Economists like Claudia Sahm have long argued that the Fed's anti-inflation strategy of raising interest rates is a blunt instrument. So, if you just rely on the Fed – slowing down job growth by raising interest rates -- that hurts people's ability to get an affordable mortgage as it hurts business investment. In contrast, the Biden Administration focused on fiscal policies, but they were competing with the Fed strategy. Also, of course, the inflation was not US-based: it was international and supply driven.

Critics say that Biden and Harris did not convey that very well. Since the election, some are also saying that there was a broader problem with the Democrats' approach, at least nationally: that Harris was too much of an unknown quantity. She wasn't as clearly pro-working class as Biden, and that the Democrats need to really explicitly present themselves as the working class party. Do you think there's something to that point of view?

RS: The trade union movement is here to talk about the issues of people who work for a living. We're interested in working with anyone in either party who's willing to engage honestly on policies that put money in the hands of working people. That's what drives our economy and makes life better for the people that we're fortunate to represent.

The U.S. economy, I would argue, is the envy of the world right now. Inflation is under control. The economy had a soft landing that everyone said couldn't happen. However, it's important to recognize that saying those things still doesn't make buying eggs and milk and clothes for your kids feel any better. It's necessary to acknowledge the real struggles of everyday Americans' and remind them that we're investing in you and your community. It's going to take time for those investments to work. We're asking you to trust us to see it through.

Talking about economic indicators and metrics without acknowledging what people are feeling at the grocery store is tone deaf, and not a winning strategy. You have to demonstrate that you understand what people are going through. The Trump campaign acknowledged the struggles of working people. I don't believe the policies from Project 2025, or others that they adopted in the first Trump administration are actually going to make life better for working people. But, working people felt heard by the Trump campaign. They acknowledged their lived experience.

Q: Okay, this is obviously speculative, but what do you think are the likely possible consequences once the new administration starts in Washington? Trump has made a rather surprising nomination for Secretary of Labor, with Laurie Chavez de Raymer. Apparently the Teamsters President suggested her. And, as a Congresswoman, she voted for the PRO Act (Protecting the Right to Organize Act).

What do you think about that?

RS: Supporting the PRO Act is a great start. If the Secretary of Labor nominee is going to be given the latitude to work with Capitol Hill to get things done that are in the PRO Act, and policies like that, there is potential.

It's just that's not likely to happen based on the first Trump administration's record. This nomination reflects the possibility, and potential, for collaboration on policies that benefit workers. Only time will tell whether or not that's going to come to be.

Q: Based on his first administration in 2017 to 2020, what do you think are unions' biggest fears about what might happen these next four years under Trump? Even if the new Secretary of Labor has some pro-union sympathies? In what areas do you think unions need to really build opposition as early as possible?

RS: My job is to work with our affiliates to get their agenda done. The National AFL-CIO will work with the international unions of our shared affiliates to set the union movement's federal policy agenda. We'll ultimately focus on what we all believe collectively will be the most impactful, and what has to be guarded against most vigorously.

Even with a labor secretary nominee who supported the PRO Act, the first Trump administration's record suggests things aren't necessarily looking good for working people. When you examine the rewriting of the tax law in 2017 you realize the effective tax rate for corporations reduced permanently, but teachers are no longer able to write off school supplies. Tax cuts that were made for people in the middle class have expired. This administration doesn't have to tell us where their priorities are. They have already shown us.

Q: Assuming that we're probably going to get more of the same, that may mean attempts to cutback on overtime pay, appoint a more pro-business NLRB (National Labor Relations Board) and threaten public sector unionization and collective bargaining rights nationally. Are there new ways that you think labor on Long Island should mobilize in the next year or so to try to make sure that unions remain a strong force?

RS: The Fed is focused on Long Island opportunities. If we remain focused on Long Island, we can continue to make life better for folks, regardless of what's happening in Albany and Washington. We'll do our part to defend attacks on working people coming out of those places, but we have opportunities right here at home to make life better.

For example, in the November elections 72% of voters adopted the Suffolk County Water Quality Restoration Act. Suffolk County has about 380,000 parcels that are unsewered and don't have any sort of treatment systems for wastewater. For a number of years there has been a subsidy program that incentivizes the installation of advanced onsite septic systems. The adoption of the Suffolk County Water Quality Restoration Act established a permanent funding stream for that program, sets up a Water Quality Restoration Fund, and extends the Drinking Water Protection

Fund. Passage of this referendum is going to deliver \$4 billion of investment in wastewater infrastructure over 50 years.

We're currently leaching nitrogen into our bays and estuaries. It's impacting our tourism economy. It's shutting down beaches. We're all going to benefit from the implementation of this law. It improves water quality on Long Island, whether it is in your community or neighboring communities, we all stand to benefit. Not to mention the direct investment in wastewater infrastructure puts the building and construction trades to work.

The union movement has been a driver of the law's adoption. We were at the center of passing a referendum that 7 in 10 voters in Suffolk County agreed on. Find me any other issue that 7 in 10 voters agree on.

We know how to connect with working people of both parties. We'll continue to do that to deliver a better future for our children and our grandchildren. Civilization can't survive without clean water.

Q: And how would you describe the Long Island Fed's role in trying to expand wind power locally? Is promoting more alternative energy sources a continuing campaign for your members?

RS: Absolutely. And you picked the perfect day to ask that question. I don't know if you caught the latest issue of Newsday, but today they published an Op-ed by John Durso, our president.

He's asking New York State to go big in NYSERDA's upcoming solicitation decision. It's an investment in our energy, infrastructure.

We can invest in a cleaner, brighter future that builds out offshore wind, puts people to work, and invests in our communities. We can have baseload generation to ensure reliability. Our political discourse sets up false choices for the public all the time. We can have both.

South Fork Wind and Sunrise Wind are examples of how investments in energy infrastructure can be a bipartisan initiative. Suffolk County has a Republican County Executive in Ed Romaine. Both projects began under a Democratic County Executive (Steve Bellone), and a Republican town supervisor (then-Ed Romaine.) The council person who represented the district where the cable landing happened is a Republican (Dan Panico), who's now the Brookhaven Town Supervisor. The Republican controlled County Legislature passed a Home Rule message for a parkland alienation bill, which made the cable landing for Sunrise Wind possible.



Ryan Stanton supporting Starbucks union drive in Lynbrook
Photo Credit: Long Island Federation of Labor.

It's noteworthy that the lead sponsors on the state companion parkland alienation bill were Republicans. Furthermore, it was signed by Kathy Hochul a Democratic governor who has championed offshore wind. Democrats and Republicans worked together at the state, county, and town levels to move things forward. And, this all got done with the Biden-Harris administration permitting the projects. Bi-partisan at every turn.

Q: Many people express surprise that unions went beyond their own direct wage/benefit issues to play a leading role in fighting for more alternative energy sources. But, I interviewed Chris Erickson, the Local 3 electrician union leader, recently, and he said that they're confident there's going to be lots of new jobs in green energy going forward. There's really a demand for a lot more skilled workers that unions can provide. Would you agree with that assessment?

RS: Yes. On Long Island, the environment and the economy, are intertwined and should never be considered separately. Supporting renewable energy is a win and must create good union jobs. We don't need to accept the narrative that you can either have one or the other. We can and must continue to support our brothers and sisters in the utility sector. And, we can build renewable energy infrastructure to have a cleaner grid and a cleaner economy. We can and must do both.

Q: Another proposed project that supporters say could be a job generator is the Sands Resort complex that's been proposed for the Nassau Hub. What would you say to those who argue, for example that nearby roads are already congested and it's on the edge of a university campus, so maybe it should go somewhere else.

RS: The Sands has so far only obtained an operational lease on the property. All that did was provide economic certainty for the people that currently rely on the Coliseum for employment. 400 full-time equivalent jobs are now supported by the Nassau County Veterans Memorial. Coliseum. As a Long Islander, I don't think we should jeopardize them.

Q: Are those mostly union jobs?

RS: Yes, a significant share are union jobs. It's important to note that at the end of the day the union movement fights for policies, like paid family leave and increased minimum wage, and all sorts of initiatives that benefit union members and non-union workers alike. We are a movement of people who are interested in and invested in making life better for working people, whether they're currently a member or not. One of the several reasons the union movement is invested in seeing the Sands integrated resort proposal be successful is there are tens of thousands of jobs, union jobs at stake, both construction jobs as well as permanent operations jobs. New York State has a proprietary interest. Thus, they've put labor standards in place the increase or in some case almost guarantee they will be union jobs. A project labor agreement is going to govern the construction of the integrated resort proposal.

It's important to mention that less than 10% of the proposal is dedicated to gaming. Therefore, 90 to 94% of a \$6 billion proposal is invested in non-gaming initiatives and entertainment. That's money invested in the people of Long Island. It's meant to be an integrated resort and entertainment hub that is going to make Long Island a destination. We have unbelievable assets here, a national seashore, Montauk, and everybody knows the Hamptons. And then you have a whole swath of Long Island that is beautiful and is unknown to the outside world.

This is an opportunity to create tens of thousands of union jobs, invest \$6 billion in our region, and invest in a sustainable way. It is going to create recurring tax revenue, not just for the host county, but the host town, as well as a smaller amount for the neighboring county. This is not just an investment in the private sector. We are sustaining the public sector in a way that's not on the backs of the people that call this place home. It's going to create sales tax from people traveling here as a destination.

Long Islanders' biggest issues are traffic, taxes, and economic certainty. And you can see, through the public draft environmental impact statement, a number of proposals that they've made, including investment in the Meadowbrook Parkway and other measures to mitigate traffic. We have an organization that's willing to attack the traffic challenges we face directly, and make investments in our roadway infrastructure in a way that, without that that \$6 billion investment, would not necessarily be possible.

And we're making it a destination, you know, if I have to read one more article in the newspaper about the brain drain going on Long Island and New York State, and that we don't have opportunities ... Well, here's an opportunity. There are tens of thousands of union jobs at stake, and union jobs are good jobs. As a region we shouldn't be turning our nose up at that. Fortunately, most people haven't. The vast majority of people have decided to support the SandsNY project.

If the opponents of the Sands integrated resort are successful, gaming is not going away. The members of our communities, young and old, can access gaming on their phone. They do now. They do today. What they don't have is an institution that's going to invest resources in identifying people with problem gambling. There isn't private sector investment to identify people with addiction, and then turning around and funding initiatives to do something about it. The organizations that have an app on your phone are not investing in our community to make sure that those with a problem get the help they need. If the integrated resort is developed there will be trained human professionals with access to those who are currently gambling on their phones and underground. The Family and Children's Association, and many others who are leading experts in the region to address these issues, have spoken directly about the initiatives proposed to help those who need it.

Q: Anything else you'd like to share about unions or working families on Long Island?

RS: Yes, job safety. We've worked with building trades affiliates to establish an OSHA30 safety standard on Long Island. Some towns have adopted it, others have not yet.

I work in an office, right? I walk out the door of my home every day, knowing I'm likely to return. My work environment is pretty safe. But, if you read the Skyline Report by NYCOSH (New York Committee on Occupational Safety and Health) you will learn that a construction worker dies once every 5 days in the State of New York, and 86% of those are non-union jobsites. More than 3 in 4 deaths occur on non-union job sites.

If you're on a non-union job site, or working an open shop project, where you have a mix of union and non union you're facing serious risk. The union part of the workforce was trained to work safe, but you don't know about the rest of the workforce. Maybe they were trained to work safe, but maybe not. We don't know. In the non-union sector there is no regulated training apparatus, like the New York State certified apprenticeship programs that are administered by the building trades unions.

Their apprenticeship programs put the most skilled workers on a job, and they know how to work safe. We're not going to towns and asking people to regulate union or non-union. We are asking them to regulate the industry and set a standard for what it means to work safe. We were fortunate that in the town of Brookhaven. Dan Panico stepped up and worked with the Town Board to adopt it. Others have adopted it, but there is more work to do.

The day of the Brookhaven press conference announcing that they were adopting it, I told a story, a true story. I walked out of my door that day, and there's not a day I walk out that I don't forget my keys or my wallet, or something. My 3-year-old was sitting at the dining room table, and he goes: "Oh, Dad, you forgot your keys." And I said, "No, no, I got him right here, Buddy." Then he says: "Dad, you forgot your gym bag." And I go: "No, no, William, I went to the gym this morning." and finally he goes: "Oh, dad, you forgot your hug."

I hug my son and my daughter, and I give them a kiss every day when I walk out the door. On that day I only gave him a kiss. I tell this story, because I'm pretty confident that I'm going home every day after work. The Skyline Report makes clear that when you work in construction that's not a guarantee. When you work on an open shop job, or in a non-union setting, it is less and less likely that you're going home at the end of the day.

The least we can do, union or non-union, is set a safety standard that contractors and workers have to live up to. We're fortunate to have members of both the Republican Party and the Democratic Party on Long Island that are willing to work with us to get that done. That is some of the most important work we do. You know,

everybody thinks about unions as delivering economic benefits and advantages and increases in pay, and that's good, and that's true. We also ensure that the workplace is safe, and that people get to go home at night and hug their kids. I want everyone to have what I have.

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NOTES

¹ DeFreitas, Gregory, "The State of New York Unions 2022," *Regional Labor Review* (Fall 2022).

Advice to Organizers: Jane McAlevey's Legacy

Reviewed by Alan Singer

Jane McAlevey was one of the most successful union organizers in the United States during the last three decades. Sadly, she died from cancer in July 2024 at age 59. After she was diagnosed with cancer in 2010, she spent much of her time earning a doctorate in Sociology from the CUNY Graduate Center and writing. Her advice to progressive organizers was always to convince the unconvinced instead of preaching to those who already agree with you. In magazine articles, five books, classrooms, and podcasts McAlevey argued that labor unions led by rank-and-file activists were the best way to challenge economic inequality and the institutionalized political power of the rich. Classes and workshops she offered through the Berlin-based Rosa Luxemburg Foundation and the University of California Berkeley Labor Center had thousands of participants and were translated into dozens of languages.

Key to McAlevey's approach to building a progressive working-class movement is spending more time in what she called deep organizing and less time in shallow mobilizing. McAlevey was also dismissive of advocacy as a substitute for grassroots organizing. For McAlevey, organizing involves listening to the people you want to reach so you can respond to their concerns, show how they are addressed by progressive action, and recruit them to the movement. Mobilizing is important because it brings together people who agree with you, but McAlevey argues it does not change minds or bring in new people. McAlevey argues that the labor movement of the 1930s and the African American Civil Rights movement were successful because they established structures people could become part of: unions, churches, and community groups, that sustained struggle over a long term. Mobilizations are temporary and then people go home. Advocacy involves lobbying by so-called experts who are part of the existing system; it ignores the need to build a grass roots movement and accepts the class power structure, albeit with some modification. McAlevey explained her approach to organizing in "Building the Power to Win," a video available on YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0SDcB3Ifqw0&t=21s>).

We can see the impact of all three of versions of union action in a comparison between AFT locals in Chicago and New York City. In *NO SHORTCUTS: Organizing for Power in the New Gilded Age* (Oxford University Press, updated in 2018), which was based on her doctoral dissertation, McAlevey examined the Chicago Teachers Union's campaign to build community support prior to its 2012 strike. The CTU built a broad coalition by portraying the mayor and the Chicago School Board as the enemy of teachers, parents, and children (131-135).

In *NO SHORTCUTS*, McAlevey completely ignored the New York City teachers' union local, the United Federation of Teachers that I am more familiar with, probably because she considered them an example of how unions are not supposed act. Both the CTU and the UFT use mobilization marches and protests as strategies. However, while the CTU built alliances by addressing the shared concerns of teachers, parents, and students and encouraging the staff's sense of mission as educators, the UFT acts as if it is a partner with the city's Department of Education. It sells the union to its members as a fee-for-service and advocacy agency headed by professional leaders who support union members by working with city and state officials, negotiating contracts, and ensuring that grievance procedures are followed. Increasingly this has been a disastrous approach. In the past the UFT traded away pension benefits for new hires to secure raises for its current members, but as the new hires became a larger portion of the teaching force and union membership, they became highly critical of the UFT leadership. More recently, the UFT leadership and New York City agreed to reduce retiree health options which led to an open rebellion against the union leadership and the election of an opposition slate to represent retiree interests.

In a new edition to *NO SHORTCUTS* published in 2018, McAlevey argued that Donald Trump was elected President of the United States in 2016 by "turning the working class not against bosses and bankers but against one another." The messages she believes the labor movement must promote as they organize workers and defeat the reactionary forces that support Trump are that unions are essential for ensuring decent lives for the working class and that "Without basic economic justice to underpin it, democracy cannot thrive – or survive" (New Preface, 2018 edition).

Some of McAlevey's key recommendations for union organizers are that they must convince workers that the union is their organization, the "collective experience of workers in struggle," not a fee-for-service agency provided by union officials. She explained that organizers should see worker anger as a positive force for change and not try to defuse it; that organizers had to believe it was possible to defeat the bosses, but they also needed to be honest with workers about the risks they faced as they built unions; that organizers should never underestimate the ability and power of the people they are trying to organize; and that organizers had to communicate excitement, energy, and urgency, but shouldn't talk too much while doing it. They must make sure the people they want to organize have voice (Opening insert in the 2016 edition).

McAlevey did not cite Paulo Freire, but her approach is similar to the organizing strategy Freire promoted in Brazil in the 1960s and described in his book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Seabury, 1973). For Freire, the key to successful organizing is liberating the voice of the oppressed so they realize their collective power. McAlevey's focus on developing grassroots organic leaders like the Norma Rae character played by Sally Fields in the 1979 movie *Norma Rae* is very similar to the approach advocated by Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci in his *Prison Notebooks* (International Publishers, 1971). Gramsci argued that organic intellectuals from the working class were the crucial connection between grassroots movements and radical political parties (122), they are the teachers who convey broader ideas about society to workers, but also explain the insights and experiences of workers to movement leaders. McAlevey documents the way successful union organizers in the 1930s studied pre-existing working-class social groups to identify and target the community's organic leadership, including the wives of workers (34-37). These are the people who sustain worker agency during difficult struggles (39).

In *NO SHORT CUTS*, McAlevey is very critical of the top-down John L. Lewis-style business unionism adopted by "New Labor" in the 1970s that dominates the AFL-CIO and unions like the UFT, especially their advocacy of collaboration with management as a junior partner that manages labor as one factor of production (18-19). As part of this approach, the AFL and CIO (who did not merge into one organization until 1955) drove their most effective grassroots organizers out of the labor movement in the 1950s because of their radical beliefs, radicalism that had made them so effective. McAlevey believes the business unionist New Labor approach to unionization is contemptuous of workers and cites discussions within the AFL-CIO where national organizing directors complained that workers got in the way of their plans (51). She argues that the repeated abandonment of the successful union organizing strategies of the 1930s and the shift to a managers of labor concept of unions intended to appease corporate power and maintain control by the union's hierarchy is one cause of the weakening of the labor movement in the United States.

According to McAlevey, appeasement never works because corporations maximize profits and maintain political power by undermining union organizing efforts. I agree. The AFT mobilized for the election of Barack Obama in 2008, only to have Obama as President and Arne Duncan, his Secretary of Education, impose testing mandates to evaluate students and teachers and value-added models that the union opposed, that blamed teachers for student failure, and profited major publishers and testing companies like Pearson. Defeating Donald Trump in 2024 is a teachers' union priority, but once again the AFT provides uncritical support for the Democratic Party candidate instead of insisting on input into the party's platform position on education.

Superficially, McAlevey seems to echo Saul Alinsky's strategy in *Reveille for Radicals* (Vintage, 1946) and *Rules for Radicals: A Pragmatic Primer for Realistic Radicals* (Vintage, 1971) that organizers should focus on listening to the concerns of the people

they hope to organize and the importance of grassroots movements, however, in *NO SHORTCUTS*, McAlevey is very critical of the Alinsky approach. Alinsky believed that the organizer should not bring their own values, what he called dogma, into the struggle; McAlevey is very clear that she is championing member-run democratic labor unions and challenging both entrenched bureaucracy and corporate power. McAlevey, unlike Alinsky organizers, wants to fundamentally alter the power structure that keeps workers and unions in check, not just modify it to achieve short term benefits (40-41). While Alinsky claimed his goal was maximizing freedom within a capitalist society, McAlevey argues that the capitalist workplace is far from a zone of freedom (43). She also points out that Alinsky's ideology-free pragmatic approach to organizing has been employed by the Tea Party, Christian nationalist groups, opponents of abortion rights, and assorted rightwing activists in campaigns to limit freedom (41-42).

McAlevey opened the concluding chapter of *NO SHORTCUTS* with a quote from Poor People's Movement by Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward (Vintage, 1977: 6). Piven had been McAlevey's doctoral advisor and a major influence on her academic work. Piven and Cloward wrote "the poor are led to believe that their destitution is deserved, and that the riches and power that others command are also deserved." McAlevey argues that the self-blame of those without and their acceptance of the legitimacy that some have so much is "the biggest success of the neoliberal project" because it "demobilizes people" (199). Since most of the remaining unionized workforce in the United States is in the public sector and is employed by different levels of government, McAlevey believes that rightwing attacks on government and calls for tax cuts are part of their coordinated effort to break unions and leave workers totally subject to the power of the wealthy (200). She also believes that working people have an underlying belief in class solidarity despite the culture of self-blame that can be marshaled to defeat corporate power (202).

On Long Island and across the United States, campaigns to unionize Starbucks workers appear to be successfully deploying a McAlevey approach to union organizing. The organizing drives operate on a very local store-by-store level, leadership is coming from workers in the stores, and besides wage and hour demands, we see insistence that employees be treated with dignity by the corporation and by its customers. Winning has become contagious. Despite the fact that Starbucks has fired union activists on trumped up charges, the more stores that organize local union chapters, the more workers demand the right to organize. Being fired by Starbucks for union activism has almost become a badge of honor.

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Are You Really Paid What You're Worth?

You're Paid What You're Worth: And Other Myths of the Modern Economy, by Jake Rosenfeld (Harvard U. Press, 2021)

Reviewed by Kyle Mastroni

In America today, a fair day's work is supposed to get you a fair day's pay. This principle has long defined the mindset of many workers, but Jake Rosenfeld asserts that it may not actually be true in his book *You're Paid What You're Worth: And Other Myths of the Modern Economy*. He designed this book mainly for economists searching for a new way to examine the labor market but also for workers seeking to understand how they get paid. A Professor of Sociology at Washington University in St. Louis, Rosenfeld's new work builds on top of his 2014 book *What Unions no Longer Do*, as well as his writings for sources like *Harvard Business Review* and the *Washington Post*. *You're Paid What You're Worth* ultimately constructs a new, nuanced approach to the labor market that diverges from past theoretical frameworks.

The author begins by defining four factors that influence the labor market before critiquing modern wage-setting theories. Afterwards, he proposes critical solutions to ensure that American workers are paid what they are worth. Pay and wages impact everyone, so we must examine Rosenfeld's arguments carefully to assess their value. My conclusion from doing so is that, for all his valuable analysis of the labor market status quo, the book can be faulted for a lack of tangible solutions or practical methods of implementing needed changes.

Before delving into Rosenfeld's arguments, we must understand the four underlying factors that he asserts ensure workers are not paid what they are worth: power, inertia, mimicry, and equity. In the context of wage setting, Rosenfeld states that power pertains to the control that an employer has over employees and how it increases an employer's control of wages. Powerful employers exert influence to hinder a worker's ability to get paid fairly by manipulating inertia, mimicry, and equity, making it arguably the most important of the aforementioned factors. When the employer is in control, employees lose leverage in the marketplace and the ability to pursue higher wages. Next, inertia surrounds how past struggles to increase wages legitimize current wage rates, making it difficult to push for higher wages afterwards. For example, if fast food workers successfully win the fight for \$15, getting paid more than \$15 becomes exponentially more difficult because they just proved to and agreed with employers their labor was worth \$15.

The third factor is that businesses engage in mimicry, replicating the policies and wages of other competitors to produce a seemingly stable 'market rate' to produce a facade of fairness. When employers mimic each other, employees lose the ability to use the wages of competitors to bargain for higher pay in their own company or seek employment elsewhere. Lastly, there is equity, which is the pressure on employers to provide people with wages that give workers their fair share. Workers who know they are not getting their fair share grow disgruntled and unproductive, making equity a counterbalancing force against business desires to keep wages low. Given these factors, Rosenfeld depicts a world where wages are largely shaped by the historical context of past labor movements as well as the power and leverage of businesses with the slight counterweight of employee demands for equity.

After laying out the tenets of what guides the labor market, Rosenfeld targets two leading wage-setting theories to demonstrate the necessity of his framework. Leading wage theories claim that employers either set wages equal to somebody's performance or set wages to coincide with specific jobs both do not encapsulate labor market nuances. Rosenfeld first dissects the human capital theory idea that companies set wages based on performance. The model suggests that a worker's value is derived from their productivity and training done to increase said productivity. The most compelling reason for this theory's shortcomings is its reliance on implausible assumptions for the real world, such as perfect access to information and competition. Firstly, companies implement specific policies to prevent employees from knowing if they are being paid fairly. For example, companies bar employees from discussing their pay to prevent wage comparisons. Such policies are crippling to employees, because people can only advocate for fair pay when they know they are being underpaid. Such policies are why actress Saoirse Ronan was secretly paid less than male counterparts for years until a Sony hack revealed the pay differential. When pay data was openly accessible to employees, however, pay was on average 5% higher compared to companies where pay data was secret, a clear demonstration that pay information suppression suppresses pay itself.

Furthermore, employers limit competition through noncompete clauses that limit a worker's mobility to move to competing firms and no-poaching agreements which prevents competing companies from taking workers from other firms. By eliminating the ability to seek out higher wages elsewhere or use the threat of doing so to negotiate higher pay, imperfect competition further hurts workers. The existence of imperfect information and competition coupled with issues such as concentration of power, difficulties in defining and measuring performance, and a duty to provide benefits to shareholders at the expense of workers attacks the theoretical legs upon which the performance theory stands on. In doing so, Rosenfeld proves its lackluster ability to capture how our labor market works and causes it to crumble.

Rosenfeld then critiques the idea of paying set wages for specific jobs, which seems rational in theory until we consider how 'good jobs can go bad' and 'bad jobs can turn good.' First, good jobs can go bad, given how declining unionization and reclassification have damaged traditionally good jobs with strong pay and benefits. Declining unionization rates reduce the potency of a critical employee bargaining tool used to maintain fair wages. Jobs that benefited from unionization and its wage premium now have lower wages despite demanding the same labor. Furthermore, union and non-union workers performing the same job can have two different paychecks. Similarly, reclassification is damaging jobs. For one, previously full-time jobs are becoming temporary, outsourced positions that key employment protection laws do not apply to. As a result, workers doing the same work get paid less depending on who hires them. Additionally, labor shortages push workers into new positions without training or additional compensation to make ends meet in the business, meaning they are getting paid the same to do more.

These examples depict extraneous factors outside of the job itself influencing pay. When nothing about the job changes but the pay does, we must raise the question of if the job theory of wage setting is an applicable theory. Rosenfeld further obfuscates the job theory by proving that bad jobs can become good. The job theory suggests that workers in the same position in different areas would receive the same pay, but a study of the US and Denmark challenges this. In Denmark, 'bad' American jobs are appreciated because the factors that make them bad, such as, "... poor pay, unpredictable schedules, lack of benefits, and occupational risks," are not present. As a result, a Danish Burger King worker made \$20 in 2014, compared to anywhere from \$7.25-15 in the US. This country-to-country analysis further demonstrates that workers performing identical work can receive incongruent paychecks. On both ends of the spectrum, we see that jobs and the pay that they offer ultimately do not correlate with the actual work done, meaning that employees are not being paid what they are worth, just what people think they are worth. Exogenous influences upon wages crystallize the foolhardiness of asserting that wages could be tied to specific jobs alone. In a dynamic labor market, fluctuating circumstances will always influence wages, limiting the value we glean from a theory which attaches a set wage to specific jobs.

After challenging the two traditional methods of examining the labor market and wage setting, Rosenfeld explains why wage inequality exists and proposes a myriad of solutions. Initially, Rosenfeld claims that unequal pay is due to flat earnings for average workers, extreme financial gains for the elite, and growing pay differences between workers of similar skill levels and occupations. Given this framework, Rosenfeld proposes we fix wage inequality by raising the pay floor, expanding the middle, and lowering the ceiling.

These solutions sound appealing, but further examination proves that they lack tangible next steps. Rosenfeld starts with raising the floor. The most efficient way to do this is increasing the minimum wage. Rosenfeld provides a plethora of statistics and case studies to back up his proposal but fails to determine a way to get such a policy implemented. In fact, Rosenfeld admits that we essentially need to wait for the elites in Congress who oppose minimum wage increases to retire before implementing the policy. Granted, there are other policy options such as reforming and expanding the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and establishing wage and standard boards. These policies have broader support than a minimum wage increase because of their less direct distortions on wages but are also evidently less effective. The EITC gives low-income workers, "... a credit to defray their tax obligations," but it also subsidizes companies who pay poverty-level wages and incentivizes workers to work these positions by providing benefits that seemingly offset the poor pay, essentially not raising the floor but simply making the floor slightly more bearable. Wage and standard boards are another option, promoting organizing in hard-to-unionize positions like Uber drivers, but they are another subpar solution because they can only help negotiate pay and have no legitimate authority to make change. Until we can guarantee the most straightforward, effective, and ideal policy of increasing minimum wage can be passed by Congress, Rosenfeld's argument for raising the floor is greatly hamstrung by leaving us with the choice of either pursuing unfeasible or less effective policies.

This issue is compounded given how Rosenfeld's arguments for expanding the middle hinge upon an increase in the floor. He asserts that spillover effects from the increases in minimum wage will make it so that employees who are making just above minimum wage will demand wage increases as well to continue staying above the minimum. But this argument feels flimsy when Rosenfeld provides no tangible mechanism to increase the minimum wage. Furthermore, Rosenfeld admits that other options to expanding the middle, such as creating internal labor markets, are not universally enforceable, stating that, "a clear-cut policy intervention to mandate the creation of internal labor markets is unavailable, alas." Barring a national policy that uniformly expands the middle class, Rosenfeld subjects his solutions to the same issues he calls out by creating a patchwork of different state systems for pay which produces inequality across the country.



Lastly, Rosenfeld proposes we shrink the ceiling, but fails to propose any modicum of reasoning as to why this may be feasible. He suggests raising taxes for the top, overturning rules that enable stock manipulation, and ensuring employee representation on company boards, but when the people at the ceiling are the ones in positions of power, they have undue influence over wage setting and even policy making to a point where they could help block tax changes and policy changes and water down the voices of employees. Until there is a surefire way to curb said influence, Rosenfeld's solution seems to be more of a dream than a reality. Therefore, because of Rosenfeld's inability to address the core issue of how we can implement his policy propositions, his suggestions fall flat because without a feasible method of implementation, they are nothing more than words on paper.

Ultimately, Rosenfeld's work is a useful description of the historical and theoretical context of our labor market and is a testament to the value of political economy. It demonstrates an undeniable need for change and new policies to promote welfare and a fair labor market. However, it falls short of providing next steps to making sure people are truly paid what they are worth. Rosenfeld offers solutions while simultaneously acknowledging that we are not currently in a position to truly realize said solutions. So I would suggest that this book should best be seen as a foundation for future research, providing an excellent starting point and theoretical foundation for anyone hoping to create or consider future wage-setting policies.

Kyle Mastroni is an Economics and Political Science graduate of Hofstra University.

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Why So Many Prime-Age Men Opt Out of the Work Force

Men Without Work: Post-Pandemic Edition, by Nicholas Eberstadt (Templeton Press, 2022)

Reviewed by Christopher Holder

This book aims to explain two seemingly contradictory realities: at a time when employment and job growth are unusually strong, a growing share of American men are acting as if they are trapped in a severe recession.

Author Nicholas Eberstadt delves deep into an often-overlooked issue plaguing the American workforce. Educated at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, he first investigated this in his 2016 edition of the book. Now he offers a post-pandemic update on what he deems America's "invisible crisis." He describes this as the steady decline in workforce participation among prime-age men over the past half-century. Their flight from the labor market, Eberstadt claims, has remained too-little noticed, despite its profound societal and political implications.

His journey to uncover this crisis led Eberstadt to pull on a thread that unraveled a complex web of socio-economic challenges affecting the United States. Eberstadt's credentials are robust, with a Harvard PhD. and a career dedicated to analyzing controversial economic and social issues. Recent publications by the author, like his previous book *Nation of Takers*, have gained significant traction, particularly in conservative circles. Given his background and knowledge in economics, the book offers a data-driven analysis of the issue, underpinned by thorough research and compelling narratives. Despite the controversial nature of focusing on a gender-specific issue, he argues that the collapse of work among men aged 25 to 54 is a pressing concern that demands attention.

This provides the book with a clear purpose, shedding light on an urgent problem, challenging prevailing narratives, and stimulating meaningful discussions that could lead to meaningful policy changes. Eberstadt's central hypothesis seems aimed at providing a balanced answer to the issue at hand. Of course, often the more passionate an author is about his subject, the more likely some biases may turn up. However, the book maintains an objective approach by relying on data from widely recognized sources.

The intended audience for this book is broad, encouraging anyone in the general public interested in understanding the complexities of the American workforce to read. The book is relevant not only to

the future of the American work force, but also to issues like unemployment, income inequality, and social welfare. Additionally, the book is structured in a way that makes it easy for readers who are not academics or familiar with these topics. It begins by laying out the historical context and evolution of the problem, followed by an in-depth analysis of its causes and consequences.

The crux of what Eberstadt argues is that the ongoing decline in the male labor participation rate is not a demand-driven trend. Before the first release of his book in 2016, the mainstream thinking in the academic and political sphere was dominated by a singular narrative that believed this arose from a demand-sided issue in the labor market. This stemmed from less demand for low-skilled work due to the decline of manufacturing, outsourcing overseas, and the globalization of trade. However, he illustrates that this doesn't explain much of what is being seen. In conventional economic wisdom, if this were a demand-sided phenomenon, the labor market would seek equilibrium. But the proportion of American men with no paid work has risen relentlessly. This has snowballed into a situation where the proportion of men without paid work is now only slightly higher than in 1940s, at the end of the Great Depression.

Eberstadt continues to defend and support this claim through numerous studies by independent researchers and the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. The evidence proves compelling, as he relies on a neutral data-driven analysis. There are numerous graphs demonstrating the current rate of men without paid work is higher than during the Great Depression, with one in seven men between the ages of 25 and 54 not working.

The book delves into the shift from unemployment to a new category of men who are neither working nor looking for work. This retreat from the workforce by prime-aged men has shown an almost straight-line increase since 1965, indicating a consistent trend rather than a response to economic fluctuations or globalization. Eberstadt goes on to hypothesize why this phenomenon is occurring, what activities these men are engaging in instead of working, and how they sustain themselves financially despite their lack of employment.

Eberstadt's second edition of the book *Men Without Work: Post-Pandemic* added a new dimension to America's work crisis with a labor scarcity across all regions and lines of work. Despite a severe drop-off in the workforce numbers, there's been a surge in job openings, exacerbating the labor shortage issue. Eberstadt challenges the prevailing wisdom that the decline in labor force participation is solely due to economic and structural changes, arguing that this narrative doesn't fully explain the persistent trend. Furthermore, the book discusses the impact of government responses to the pandemic, such as monetary and fiscal policies, which may have inadvertently disincentivized work. Policies like pandemic unemployment benefits and stimulus checks increased disposable income and savings, potentially reducing the urgency to return to work.

Eberstadt, a senior fellow at a right-leaning think tank, the American Enterprise Institute, has an approach and conclusions of a more conservative tilt, emphasizing individual responsibility and critiquing government interventions that may disincentivize work. This helps explain his skepticism towards popular policies like unemployment benefits.

While agreeing with parts of Eberstadt's analysis, some fellow economists on the other side of the political aisle have disagreed with his favored solutions to help this problem. Most notably, Lawrence Summers, former U.S. Secretary of the Treasury, current Harvard Professor and advisor to Democratic candidates, argues against attributing the phenomenon of nonworking men primarily to an increasingly generous welfare state. He points out that while there have been increases in the number of people on disability insurance and changes in government support programs, this alone does not explain the situation. Instead, he proposes that the answers lie more in sociology than economics, indicating a collective change in attitude among the population, possibly influenced by benefits, generosity, and structural changes in opportunities. He discusses the intertwined relationship between marriage rates and desire to work, highlighting the difficulty in determining causality. Summers emphasizes the importance of prioritizing education for boys and improving the transition from school to work, criticizing the influence of intellectual elites on educational experiences and the emphasis on self-esteem over achievement. He suggests that addressing these issues is crucial for tackling broader societal challenges.

Eberstadt provides a compelling narrative transcending mainstream explanations, enriching the understanding of this pressing economic and societal issue. However, while the economic factors are extensively discussed, there could be more research and exploration into the societal and psychological factors contributing to this trend, as Summer argues. Eberstadt relies heavily on statistical data, graphs, and time-use surveys to support his arguments, making the case more compelling. But, while the economic factors are well-addressed, the book could delve deeper into the societal implications of this crisis by seeking answers to such questions as: What drives men are out of the workforce to begin with? What are the long-term

consequences for families, communities, and society? Additionally, there is much room to explore the sociocultural shift in the last century that could contribute to this phenomenon and see how these men's mental health and well-being could offer a more holistic understanding of the issue.

In conclusion, Nick Eberstadt's book, *Men Without Work: Post-Pandemic Edition*, comprehensively explores a deeply entrenched societal issue that has largely gone unnoticed—the decline in workforce participation among prime-age men in the United States over the past half-century. Eberstadt's journey to unravel this crisis began with the perplexing dichotomy between record-low unemployment rates and widespread belief in an ongoing recession among Americans. Eberstadt presents a data-driven analysis of the issue, challenging prevailing narratives and stimulating meaningful discussions. Despite the controversial nature of focusing on a gender-specific issue, the author provides a compelling narrative that transcends mainstream explanations, enriching our understanding of this pressing societal issue and advocating for meaningful policy changes. However, further research into the societal and psychological factors contributing to the crisis and its long-term consequences could offer a more comprehensive understanding and guide future efforts to address the issue effectively.

Christopher Holder is an Economics graduate of Hofstra University.

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How Can The Labor Movement Be Saved?

ReUnion: How Bold Labor Reforms Can Repair, Revitalize and Reunite the US, by David Madland (Ithaca, NY: Cornell U. Press, 2021)

Reviewed by Isaiah C. Figueroa

In *ReUnion: How Bold Labor Reforms Can Repair, Revitalize and Reunite the Us*, David Madland takes on an ambitious subject: the erosion of the American Dream – the stagnant wages, diminished economic mobility, shrinking union protections and increasing insecurity that plagues too many American workers. Madland seems well-suited to the task of expanding our understanding of its causes and consequences. He previously authored a book on the decline of the U.S. pension system and another on *Hollowed Out: Why the Economy Doesn't Work Without a Strong Middle Class*. The author received his doctorate in government from Georgetown University and is now a senior fellow to the American Worker Project at the Center for American Progress.

Drawing on Madland's extensive background reporting on unions and the employment system, *ReUnion* explores the connections among globalization, technological advancements, and policy changes over the last few decades and the prospects for revitalizing the union movement. Madland argues that there is a need for a new labor system that would take the best of what works elsewhere in the world and adapt it to U.S. economic, cultural and political norms. Thus, for example, the book evaluates the various pros and cons of Denmark's "Flexicurity" system, a model that combines job market flexibility with social security protections for workers. Denmark's system could prove beneficial to the American labor system if its improved social protections promoted greater worker adaptation to new training and technologies, thereby enhancing workforce resilience to market forces. On the other hand, Denmark's system could be cumbersome and difficult to translate to our bigger, more diverse economy, it could be too costly and could face some resistance from U.S. employers.

Overall the author makes the case for policy makers, employers, and citizens to prioritize labor reform and unions. The book as a whole strives to be a "call to action" for the American public and does so through the introduction as well as the six subsequent chapters with varying themes and ideas.

Madland breaks down his work into six chapters, each touching varying issues and solutions to the labor and political problems the United States is facing. Chapter 1 begins with describing,

"The Plan." Madland makes a proposal for a new American labor system that seeks to push union density higher than ever in U.S. history. His reasoning is to ensure that some form of collective agreement can be met on wages and benefits for most workers. The author then delves into the step-by-step plan for what the new labor system should include. In particular, he discusses how the reform proposals should be built around public policy supporting unions and an encouragement of collective bargaining.

Chapter 2 provides a more theoretical basis for advocates of stronger unions. This chapter provides a deeper investigation into what unions do in the economy and explains why organized labor is so important in addressing the country's challenges. Madland breaks down the current political and economic problems facing the United States and how their solution requires revitalized unions. He elaborates on how the middle class is withering away, social cohesion is breaking down, the government does the bidding of the rich, and many more social and political issues. Unions help raise wages, reduce economic inequality and help in rebuilding trust and reducing racial and gender discrimination. Madland argues that this is possible by bringing up the bottom and middle class and finding a way to make politicians more responsive to ordinary citizens. This can be a difficult task, however, due to the politics of gathering support for unions. Overall, Madland strives to emphasize that unions in the US serve a vital role. But he bolsters this claim by weighing their benefits and costs. These benefits are defined further in the next chapter.

"The Contours of Modern Labor System", Chapter 3 discusses how organized labor plays a vital role in making democracy and the economy work for "regular" people. This chapter highlights how America's problems cannot be solved unless there is a change to the current labor system we have in place. Some of the research done in the U.S. and in other countries has shown how much stronger unions are when they successfully recruit members and have funding. Similarly, this chapter also acknowledges that without active support, unions cannot survive or be an asset. For decades, government policies have made it difficult for unions, particularly in the United States but in many other countries as well. As a result, unions struggle to achieve their goals and

expand their size and power. In Madland's words, stating that "Unfortunately, U.S. labor policy is not well crafted but rather is structured in many ways that are designed to weaken unions" (64). For these reasons, Madland contrasts how other nations' labor laws compare to U.S. labor laws in chapter 4, "Lessons From Canada, Britain, and Australia". He uses the weaknesses of our labor laws as a fulcrum to make comparisons to a host of European countries including: Sweden, Denmark, Belgium, Germany, France, and the Netherlands. These countries all have interestingly different labor systems and offer lots of different ideas in implementing unions. For example, Canada's "more friendly version of US law" (87) and how Canada's distribution of power and income differs from the US as a result and Denmark's aforementioned "Flexicurity" system. The author readily offers compelling evidence on their strengths and weaknesses relevant to potential reforms in American labor relations.

Moreover, in Chapter 5 "Answering Skeptics", we see what a new labor system might look like and what the challenges in implementing such a system are. Madland also discusses how union structures are not always best suited for broad-based bargaining or dealing with the pressures exerted by employers and why, due to this, they sometimes may fail. Broad-based bargaining refers to a collective bargaining approach where various employers within an industry negotiate with one or more unions on how to reach a resolution. Additionally, Madland makes it clear how, even for a relatively workable system, there are also potential alternatives and changes to the law that could have a meaningful impact and could also strengthen unions, depending on how the policies are structured.

Lastly, in Chapter 6 on "Creating The New System," he explores how a new labor system can feasibly be implemented to help address the country's economic and political challenges. To pass any kind of labor law reform, however, Madland is well aware of the powerful corporate forces blocking passage of any pro-labor legislation. Enough elected officials and other political insiders will need to believe that the public strongly backs a new labor system that can fix the alleged problems Madland highlights. There are favorable paths for both political parties to take in gathering support and funding. But overall, far more ambitious labor innovations and legislation are crucial in order for there to be any broad change. "Not enough union leaders have championed large-scale labor reform to help drive the policy" (152). Despite the real difficulties of implementing such changes, this chapter ends by alleging that, even though the U.S. does face deep and enduring challenges: "The hope of this book is that it can play a role in making bold labor reform more likely by making the case for a new American labor system" (159).

A new labor system is critical to raise wages, reduce inequality, and make democracy more responsive to the people. Due to a variety of factors including globalization, technological advancements, and policy choices over the last few decades that have weakened labor unions and worker protections, the United States faces the erosion

of its once-strong working-class culture. "The American Dream" Madland asserts is in trouble and unless there is labor reform, most working families are also in trouble. Overall, Madland does a fine job in describing the labor problem this nation faces, offering much insight and information, and providing a thought-provoking body of work that aims to help bring about change. But he also provides alternative perspectives and critiques of his own ideas, acknowledging the need to advance a vital conversation between labor advocates and critics.

Isaiah Figueroa is a Sociology graduate of Hofstra University.

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CALENDAR

Local & National Events: 2024-2025

NY METRO

September 10 – Annual NYC Labor Day Parade. Starts 10am at 47th St. & Fifth Ave., Manhattan. For info, www.nycclc.org.

Oct. 30, 2024 – “The White House & Working America: What the Election Means for Jobs & Democracy. At Hofstra’s Guthart Cultural Center Theater, 11:20 a.m.-12:45 p.m. Featured speakers: Tay Zaccarro (AFL-CIO); Onika Shepherd-Bernabee (1199SEIU) & Michael Zweig (SUNY Stony Brook). Free admission; No Reservations. Hofstra’s Labor Studies Program and the Center for Labor & Democracy organized this timely event with co-sponsorship by the Center for Civic Engagement and the Public Policy & Public Service Program. For more information, visit: hofstra.edu/cld.

March 12, 2025 – Labor & Employment Research Association/ Long Island Chapter meeting, with speaker. At Spuntino Restaurant, 687 Old Country Road, Dix Hills. For info, see: <https://lerachapter.org/longisland/contact/>

April 6-9 – United Association for Labor Education (UALE) Conference: “Reaching the Hearts of Workers. At Biltmore Hotel in Los Angeles, CA. For info. and registration, visit www.uale.org/conference.

May 1 – “Mayday At The Movies: Tragedy & Comedy At Work,” annual festival of new and classic films on work and working people. At Hofstra U. Student Center Plaza Rooms. For schedule, visit: www.hofstra.edu/laborstudies.

June 9-10 – 77th Annual NYU Labor & Employment Law Conference. For info, visit: <https://www.law.nyu.edu/centers/labor>

June 12-15 – “Promoting Authentic Dialogue in Polarized Times,” 77th Annual Meeting of Labor & Employment Relations Assoc. (LERA), at Seattle Westin in Seattle, WA. For info. visit www.leraweb.org.

August 5-9 – United Association for Labor Education (UALE) Northeast Union Women’s Summer School. At Univ. of Massachusetts, Amherst. In-person, full-day sessions for activists and scholars alike with popular education workshops and cultural events. For info. and registration, visit www.uale.org.

September 6 – Annual NYC Labor Day Parade. Starts 10am at 47th St. & Fifth Ave., Manhattan. For info, www.nycclc.org.

RELEASE DATES FOR MONTHLY LABOR MARKET INDICATORS

2025 RELEASE DATE	NATIONAL			NY STATE & NYC/LI METRO		
	Employment & Unemployment	Job Openings & Turnover	Real Earnings	Jobs Count	Unemployment Rates	NYS Job Openings
JANUARY	10	7	15	23	28	17
FEBRUARY	7	4	12			19
MARCH	7	11	12			20
APRIL	4	1, 29	10			16
MAY	2	-	13			20
JUNE	6	3	11			18

Sources: National Statistics – U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS): *The Employment Situation; Job Openings and Labor Turnover (JOLTS); & Real Earnings*: <http://www.bls.gov>

NY State and Local Statistics – NYS Dept. of Labor: Press Release: www.labor.state.ny.us & BLS: State JOLTS data.

NOTE:

If you know of upcoming labor-related meetings or conferences, collective bargaining contract expirations or renewals, or other events you would like considered for our next Calendar, please send us a brief description, together with the time, place, contact person, and their telephone number. Please email us at: laborstudies@hofstra.edu.

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