

# UAW, Teamsters win government workers

By Mary Rodrigue  
staff writer

An odd alliance is taking shape in Michigan between industrial unions and government workers.

Once aligned solely with heavy industry, unions such as the UAW, Teamsters and United Steelworkers are now representing the interests of city, county and state employees.

"It's not a new trend, but it certainly is accelerating," said Aldo Vagnozzi, of the AFL-CIO News.

Industrial labor unions are merging with government workers in other states, such as Ohio and California, and both are benefitting from the marriage.

"THE DROP in membership of industrial unions has been due mainly to deregulation of the trucking industry," said Vagnozzi, of Farmington Hills.

Foreign competition and new technology also have been responsible for lost jobs in the manufacturing fields. Realizing power in numbers, industrial unions are courting government

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groups across Michigan.

The state's largest union, the UAW, which represents 390,000 workers across Michigan, now has jurisdiction over 21,000 state employees after winning elections against the Michigan State Employees Association.

In the metro area, the UAW represents lawyers working for the cities of Detroit and Warren, librarians employed by the Detroit Public Library, probation officers of the 36th District Court, and clerical workers of the 38th (Macomb County) and 43rd district courts (southern Oakland County).

The UAW represents workers employed by the state Department of Social Services and state Department of Health, primarily in the human service and administrative support units.

"HAVING PUBLIC employees in the union gives us a closer connection with looking at what the problems are and what can be done," said Reg McGee, a spokesman for the UAW.

"We are responding to the need in the 1980s to represent public employees and women employees. We will respond to them accordingly in our over-

all context of organizing."

The UAW will continue its emphasis on representing workers in the manufacturing fields, McGee said.

Outstate, recent labor elections have put the United Steelworkers in charge of all full- and part-time clerical workers in the city of Alpena. Teamsters now represent regular part-time clerical employees of Lapeer, mental health workers in the Grand Traverse/Leelanau area, and Berrien County employees.

The UAW recently added building, plumbing and heating inspectors for the city of Mount Clemens to the municipal groups it represents.

"We did lose membership over the last five years or so as millions of Americans lost assembly-line jobs," McGee said. "But many of the factories that closed had no union representation."

"Auto membership is coming back, but the agricultural field is still bad.

Michigan is not as bad as other parts of the country."

PUBLIC EMPLOYEES in Michigan have had the right to bargain collectively since 1945. Civil service employees won the right during the 1970s, but still found themselves under civil service constraints regarding pay scales and other job guidelines.

The 25,000-member Michigan State

Employees Association was the predominant organization representing state workers before industrial unions made inroads. Prison guards and state police have their own unions. And about 5,000 state workers are represented by the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME).

"Even 25,000 members is too small to be powerful," Vagnozzi said.

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