



A bold voice for transportation workers

HONORING THE SERVICE, VISION AND LEADERSHIP OF EDWARD WYTKIND

The Executive Committee of the Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO (TTD), salutes and honors Edward Wytkind for his visionary leadership, dedication to the labor movement, and more than 20 years of service to the millions of men and women who work on the frontlines of our nation's transportation system.

Today, TTD is a leader in the federal transportation arena. The organization is known for providing expert policy analysis on complicated transportation issues, working with political leaders on both sides of the aisle, and fighting for the basic rights of working people to form and join unions, earn a living wage, and maintain safety at work. The unique achievements and well-respected reputation of this organization would not be possible without the vision and leadership of Ed Wytkind

Ed helped launch TTD, and over the course of more than two decades built it into an organization that consistently and successfully advances the interests of transportation workers and their unions. Under Ed's leadership, TTD grew from 18 unions to 32 and became a results-driven organization widely respected by elected officials and other policy makers for its bipartisan approach to advocacy. Because of Ed's efforts, TTD is a player in any major debate involving federal transportation issues.

Ed started at TTD in 1991. In 2003, the Executive Committee elected Ed as the organization's first full-time president, and he was re-elected to this position at TTD's Conventions in 2005, 2010, and 2015. He has only ever been elected by acclamation, a testament to his strong record of accomplishment and philosophy as a labor leader.

At the heart of Ed's success are a number of core principles. Among them, the belief that transportation workers, their unions, and the entire labor movement are strongest when they come together as a united front. Under Ed's watch at TTD, solidarity has been both emphasized and never taken for granted. Ed helped facilitate consensus among unions on often complex and sometimes divisive issues, but also respected the rights of individual unions to pursue their own course. When consensus could not be reached, he always offered TTD's support on issues of agreement. Ed operated under the belief — and instilled into the work of the organization — that affiliates know what is best for their members, and therefore drive TTD's agenda.

Ed also recognized that TTD's success was and is dependent on bipartisan support. He excelled at building relationships with Democrats and Republicans on Capitol Hill and in the Executive Branch. As part of this effort, Ed also cultivated allies in the business community and among transportation employers to find common ground wherever possible. Ed utilized the close professional relationships he built to secure votes and other affirmative actions that supported transportation workers represented by TTD unions. He always checked his politics at the door and adopted a political strategy that suited the needs of TTD and its unions.

At the same time, Ed understood that persuasive public messaging and smart media strategies are essential to winning TTD's most important battles. He was a forceful and aggressive advocate in securing positive media coverage of the policy fights affecting transportation workers, and regularly used his abilities as a skilled writer to amplify TTD's agenda. At a podium, rally, or Congressional hearing, Ed demonstrated that he was a passionate labor leader not afraid to combine some fist pounding with a logical, winning argument.

The results of these strategies cannot be denied. It would be impossible to chronicle the countless battles waged and victories secured under Ed's watch. There are few transportation investment bills considered over his tenure that were not shaped by his advocacy and the organization he oversaw. The protections he championed have made workplaces safer and more secure for both union and non-union transportation workers alike, and have enhanced the rights of all working people to come together to demand a say in the workplace policies that affect them.

Ed understood early on that bad trade deals could ravage the rights and jobs of transportation employees, and fought for protections against unchecked corporate greed. To those who support mindless outsourcing, avoid collective bargaining, or encourage the contracting-out of transportation services to the lowest bidder, Ed has always been a fierce and effective opponent. At every turn, he has fought to prioritize and strengthen labor protections and policies that promote middle-class job creation.

He has never been afraid to adopt novel strategies to advance TTD priorities or to respond to new challenges. When U.S. bus and train manufacturers kept losing out to foreign competitors despite current Buy America requirements, Ed knew that a new approach was needed. He partnered with like-minded organizations to help launch the Jobs to Move America (JMA) coalition to champion local procurement reforms so that companies that maximized U.S. production and offered good jobs and training opportunities could fairly compete for contracts. This strategy, still in its early stages, has already resulted in procurement victories for several union bus and rail manufacturers, and has created the kinds of good-paying, middle-class jobs our economy is so desperately lacking. Ed has always believed that a strong transportation investment program could support good jobs in manufacturing, and through the JMA coalition, that vision is being transformed into a reality.

Ed also understood that in unprecedented moments, strong, uncompromising leadership from transportation labor is required. In the wake of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, Ed mobilized TTD unions to ensure the economic viability of the aviation sector and crafted a coordinated response to the new security challenges faced by all transportation employees. He also embarked on a long and eventually successful effort to secure extended unemployment benefits for those out of work as a result of changing economic dynamics caused by the tragedy.

Now, as we enter the age of driverless vehicles and related autonomous technologies, Ed has once again emerged as a thoughtful and visible labor leader as he responds to threats posed to both transportation workers and the safety and security of our transportation network. He was appointed last year to the Department of Transportation's Advisory Committee on Automation in Transportation, and is the only labor voice on this panel. He has engaged technology experts in

this field to better understand the types of automation likely to occur, and to identify non-traditional allies to support policies that address the substantial job loss that is predicted. Ed has also insisted that as transportation automation advances, it is used to enhance safety, service, and efficiency, and not as a tool to crush wages and jettison millions of middle-class jobs.

It wasn't only when dealing with those in positions of power, speaking in front of rooms full of union members, or while testifying before Congress that Ed supported working people. In his own career as an organizational manager and mentor, he led by example, treating all colleagues and employees with respect. He took pride in hiring motivated, passionate staff, and helping them develop as policy and communication professionals and advocates for working families. TTD alumni hired and trained by Ed have gone on to key positions on Capitol Hill, with affiliated unions, and in allied organizations. His mentoring and free advice were not limited to TTD employees — he was always willing to offer counsel to those looking to pursue and advance their careers or improve issues he cared strongly about.

Through it all, Ed never forgot the true meaning of his work. What drove, and continues to drive him are his deep-seated beliefs that all those who work for a living should be treated with respect. That all work has dignity. And that this country belongs not to wealthy corporations owned by the rich and powerful, but to the people. For more than 20 years, TTD has helped create positive change in the lives of the millions who make a living working on the frontlines of our nation's transportation network. Because of Ed's thoughtful leadership and dogged determination, that work will not only continue, but it will thrive. Ed may be stepping down as president of TTD, but the legacy he leaves will shape this organization, its work, and the lives of America's frontline transportation workforce for years to come.

July 18, 2017