

Hello brothers and sisters!

My name is Lorraine Montemayor, and I have the honor of representing more than 250,000 Texas union members as the Secretary-Treasurer of the Texas AFL-CIO.

Welcome to Dallas, Texas!

Lots of people think Texas isn't a union town. But union membership in Texas has continued to grow because workers continue to organize and fight for one another—and that includes everyone in this room.

It's especially meaningful for me to welcome you here to Dallas. Fifteen years ago, I left my rank-and-file job to organize for AFT. I joined the Texas labor movement right here in this city. Since then, I've had the privilege of organizing alongside workers across our state—from my time at AFT to Dallas Central Labor Council to now serving as Secretary-Treasurer of the Texas AFL-CIO.

One thing I've learned over these 15 years is that our greatest victories happen when we come together.

Speaking of coming together, can we give a round of applause for the amazing leadership of President Steve Wade and Vice President Amanda Swain and the entire executive board for bringing us together today.

I know that keeping a coalition together and building unity is no easy task. I know this as a union leader—and as a former high school drum major.

We can't have everyone marching to their own beat and expect to make something beautiful. It takes trust. It takes discipline. It takes listening to one another. And sometimes, it means making sure everyone's moving in the same direction—even when it's hard.

That sounds a lot like organizing to me.

I've come to appreciate that making music and organizing is about so much more than playing the right notes or saying the right thing. It's about showing up for one another. It's about practice, commitment, and trusting the people standing beside you.

Because unions aren't built by one person. They aren't built by one workplace. They're built when people decide they're stronger standing together than they are standing alone.

And that's why I love the theme of this conference: STANDING TOGETHER.

I don't know about y'all, but I can't think of a more important message for this moment.

We're living through difficult times. We're watching attacks on workers' rights, public education, immigrants, our LGBTQ+ siblings, and our democratic institutions. We see politicians trying to divide working people every single day because they know something we know to be true—when working people stand together, we are powerful.

And that's exactly why your work matters.

People often think about the labor movement and imagine picket lines, organizing drives, or legislative fights. And of course, that's part of our work. But movements don't survive on policy alone. They survive because people have hope. They survive because people feel connected to one another. They survive because they can imagine something better.

Art does that. Music does that.

Music has always been part of our movements. It's how we celebrate our victories and mourn our losses. It's how we tell our stories. It's how we remind ourselves that we're not alone.

The labor movement has always had music—from "Solidarity Forever" to the songs sung on picket lines and marches across this country. Working people have always used music to remind one another that we're going to make it through together.

So when I say that your work matters right now, I mean that deeply. Bringing joy into our communities is important work. Creating spaces for people to gather is important work. Giving people something beautiful in difficult times is important work.

And all of that is worth fighting for.

The good news is—you don't stand alone.

The Texas AFL-CIO, the North Texas Area Labor Federation, and our broader labor movement are proud to stand alongside you. Because none of us can do this work alone.

And when I say our labor movement is standing with you, I mean a growing labor movement.

We're at a 25-year high in union membership here in Texas, and we're not stopping now.

People ask me all the time how labor continues to grow in a state like Texas.

The answer is simple: we show up for one another.

We don't ask what union card someone carries before we stand beside them. We don't ask whether they're a plumber, a musician, a state worker, or a professional athlete. If working people are fighting for dignity, fairness, and respect on the job—that's our fight too.

That's what solidarity means.

It's why we've continued to grow despite anti-worker attacks. It's why we've continued to organize despite broken labor laws and corporate union busting. And it's why, when one group of workers wins, we all win.

You can see proof of that everywhere—but you don't have to look any further than North Texas.

This year, our labor movement has been winning **boldly**.

DART paratransit workers won historic contracts with 21 percent wage increases.

Workers at Lockheed Martin won no mandatory overtime and historic wage increases in their new contract.

The staff at the Fort Worth Report successfully unionized.

And just a few months ago, we elected Brother Taylor Rehmet as our first-ever rank-and-file union member in the Texas Senate.

Now, I love sharing these victories because on the surface they may all seem different—a transit worker fighting for a fair contract, journalists organizing a union, workers electing one of our own to the Texas Senate. But to me, they're all the same story.

They're the story of working people coming together, doing the work, and refusing to give up on one another.

That's what solidarity looks like.

And that's how we've built this movement. Not by waiting for someone else to do the work, but by deciding that we're going to do it together.

And I know those words aren't lost on anyone in this room. Whether you're rehearsing for a performance, bargaining a contract, or organizing your coworkers, you know there are no shortcuts. The work matters.

And right now, we're gearing up for one of the most consequential elections for working people in Texas.

This November, we'll have a record fourteen union-first, rank-and-file members on the ballot. We've trained many of these union siblings, and now we're ready to send their union organizing skills to city halls, school boards, county commissions, and the halls of power across our state.

But none of that happens if we don't put in the work.

So, it's time for me to put on my Union Organizer hat and make my ask.

Will you pledge today to talk with your coworkers, your family, and your neighbors about the upcoming midterm elections?

Audience: YES!

Will you pledge today to attend one locally organized block walk or phone bank to help turn out the union vote?

Audience: YES!

Will you pledge to continue standing together—not just for yourselves, but for every worker fighting for dignity and respect on the job?

Audience: YES!

Now that's what I wanted to hear.

Because that's how we win. We win when we do the work. We win when we organize. And we win when we stand together.

So one last time, when I say STAND, I want you to say TOGETHER.

STAND!

TOGETHER!

STAND!

TOGETHER!

STAND!

TOGETHER!

Thank you for the music you bring into our communities. Thank you for being union members. And thank you for standing together with the labor movement as we continue building a Texas that works for all working people.

Solidarity forever!

