



WILLIAM BRENNAN INSTITUTE FOR

LABOR STUDIES



Jim Begley, director of the
William Brennan Institute of
Labor Studies

From the director:

**“When you are finished
changing, you are
finished.” - Benjamin
Franklin**

**As we know, the only constant
in life is change. However, the
fear of change is also a
constant. We tend to enjoy our
routines, which makes us feel
in control of our lives.**

**When that fear of change
becomes irrational, our
inability to control it becomes
a major impediment to our
well-being. The feeling that
change is occurring at such
warp speed that we feel left
behind, often leads to despair,
which can seriously impact
our professional and personal
lives.**

Continued...

From the director continued...

However, there are legitimate concerns about the effects of rapid change in our society, especially as it relates to our jobs. Nothing causes more consternation among wage earners than forces seemingly out of our control that may threaten our livelihoods.

The upcoming Nebraska Works! Conference sponsored by the William Brennan Institute for Labor Studies will attempt to educate and inform labor and community leaders on changes we all experience due to changes in technology and science.

The theme for this year's conference is "The Future of Work." The conference takes place on Friday, April 26, from 8 a.m. to noon at the Barbara Weitz Community Engagement Center on the UNO campus.

Our featured speaker is Dr. Garrett Schneider, Research and Policy Director for the AFL-CIO. He will provide an insightful exploration of the future of work, delving into how evolving trends will affect workers both positively and present challenges

Topics will include a presentation and panel discussion on artificial intelligence (A.I.), the energy sector and new job creation.

I hope you and members of your local organization register to attend the conference to help assuage fears among wage earners of these changes to our economy and society as we all adjust to the new reality.

**In Solidarity,
Jim**

Nebraska Works! What the future of work holds for historically redlined communities in Omaha.

By Penjani Banda

The annual Nebraska Works! Conference brings together leaders in labor and business to delve into critical issues facing the future workforce.

The conference is slated to kick off at 8 a.m. on Friday, April 26 at the Barbara Weitz Community Engagement Center at UNO Dodge campus.

“I’m excited that the conference is happening at a time when we have the undesigning red line initiative on campus,” says Dr. Terri Crawford, JD, who is Community Fellow at UNO’s Service Learning Academy, “People will have an opportunity to see the exhibit and find out more on how the practice of redlining has impacted industry, labor disparities and union exclusion.”

Redlining is a discriminatory and illegal practice that puts services, mostly financial, out of reach for residents living in certain areas based on race or ethnicity.

Dr. Crawford, who is also an instructor of Black Studies, will be one of the expert speakers at this year’s conference.

She teaches classes in criminal justice, criminology and political

science. Her classes cover topics around race and power disparities in the criminal justice system. Her teaching also involves other intersected disciplines that relate to Blacks and police encounters. She has examined historically what these issues look like in the American jurisprudence system.

“This year’s theme on the future of work ties in perfectly with the topic of redlining since it allows people to consider historically red-lined communities,” Dr. Crawford says.

She explains how certain policies and practices excluded red-lined communities from social benefits and financial services such as mortgages, insurance and banking.

She notes that these policies impacted educational outcomes, job opportunities, economic development, upward mobility and other-related factors tied to the workforce.

“When redlining was beginning to spread in the 1930’s, this was also a time when there was union exclusion of certain types of workers and that included agricultural workers and domestic workers, whom, generally were from these red-lined communities, specifically Black people,” Dr. Crawford says.

She adds that this exclusion together with a lack of access to certain jobs in red-lined communities, has prevented them from having an equal opportunity to create generational wealth at the same rate as other communities. This has had a long-term impact in those communities because today we still see that here is a



Dr. Terri Crawford
Community Fellow, UNO
Service Learning Academy
Instructor

generational wealth gap as a She says “So as we talk about what work in the future looks like, we have to go back and revisit exactly what redlining did to these communities.

“And then, how do we reframe, reinvest and redesign what those communities look like, so that we can assure that those job opportunities do not only exist in certain parts of our city and our

country,” she says, “but for everyone else in every zip code and Census track.”

As a Community Fellow, Dr. Crawford leads the Addressing Redlining Through Community Engagement initiative, which is on exhibit at the CEC, which addresses the issues of redlining through service learning and community engagement.

Dr. Crawford says one of her main tasks when she stepped into the role of Community Fellow, was to create a community board that worked with affected people and at the same time, elevated community voices.

“We wanted people who lived in, who worked in, who played in, and who had more than just a passing existence in redlined areas. For us in Omaha, that's North, Northeast, and a portion of South Omaha, which was originally red blind through these governmental policies,”

Dr. Crawford says. “When we put together the board, we wanted those with lived experiences, so that we could hear the voices of the community rather than bringing our own voices to the community.”

Dr. Crawford says the initiative has opened more broader conversations around labor disparities and union exclusion.

“Although these policies are no longer legal today, they still have had an impact as the historical piece in our racist past that left minority communities unionized and without the support and protection that unions provided for other workers,” she says.

Dr. Crawford adds that the redline initiative also incorporates a service-learning project in which her students work with an Omaha Public School partner to conduct soil testing since redlined communities were subjected to contaminants.

Dr. Crawford reiterated that there is need to revisit the uncomfortable past in order to properly address and create equal opportunities in the future of the work today.

“When we talk about reinvesting in these community, we mean much more than just reinvesting financially, because that's only one piece of it,” she says “The reinvesting is going to require us to rethink what these communities look like, and how we had disinvested, and what we now need to do to pour back into those communities so that all communities are thriving.”

Upcoming Event:



2024 Nebraska Works! The Future of Work

When: Friday, April 26, 2024 | 8 A.M. - 12 P.M. | Registration begins at 7:30 AM

Where: Barbara Weitz Community Engagement Center | 6001 Dodge St, Omaha NE 68182

Cost: \$35 (includes coffee and continental breakfast)

To register email Jim Begley (jamesbegley@unomaha.edu) with the name(s) of people attending.

NPPD looks to expand generation portfolio in Omaha

By Penjani Banda

Nebraska Public Power District (NPPD) is the largest electric utility in the state of Nebraska, extending its services to 84 parts of 93 counties within the state.

As a publicly-owned utility, NPPD owns and operates Cooper Nuclear Station (CNS), which is the largest single-unit generating facility in the state of Nebraska. NPPD serves a corporate support function for Cooper, making it one of the only 21 companies in the United States that currently have an operating nuclear plant.

Daniel Buman, NPPD's director of Strategic Asset Management and Nuclear Oversight says the utility plant is considering expanding its generation portfolio in order to build new plants by creating a sustainable workforce.

"We are looking at expanding some of our generation portfolio, so we are working on attracting more construction workers since there's going to be a lot of new construction in the generation portfolio, Buman says, "We need a reliable workforce to handle that infrastructure."

Buman says Cooper Nuclear Station is a very valuable asset as it is one of the ways NPPD maintains a strong workforce.

Cooper Nuclear Station has roughly 600 to 650 people normally who are assigned to work there, but once every two years, the utility has a refueling outage where it has to supplement with additional workers.

"So, we go out and hire anywhere from 1,000 to 1,400 additional people to come in on site to be able to work and bring the reactor back," he says.

Buman says the power utility company is working on strategies to attract more workers in the construction and technical trades field, who will be able to support the NPPD's generation expansion plans.

However, he notes that national trends indicate that lot of people working in the technical trades, including electricians, technicians, welders and pipe fitters, are leaving at a faster rate than those being retained.

"One of the things we're looking at is how do we keep the technical trades going and how do we keep the professional development going because we still need a lot of engineering and management support for various aspects of our workforce development," he says.



Daniel Burman
Director of Strategic Asset Management
and Nuclear Oversight

Buman says the NPPD has worked with a consortium of companies in Nebraska regional hydrogen hub in the Midwest. The Unicameral's nuclear and hydrogen workforce development working group has assisted these efforts. Buman says part of NPPD's endeavors to attract a new generation workforce of future industry leaders. The utility has increased its outreach efforts in local schools and community colleges within the state. Buman says this has been paid back dividends.



Cooper Nuclear Station

Whenever we have a Career Day for the local high and middle schools, it is important to let the students know what opportunities exist in the industry, especially if they would like to get into more hands-on work," Buman says, "So, when we take them to Cooper Nuclear Station for example, we talk to the students about careers in the industry and they see what sort of work is there."

Buman says NPPD is not only looking to attract a new workforce but is also focusing on how to maintain the next generation in the professional

development process. This will allow NPPD to grow the talent it needs to safely continue operating its generation facilities.

"Southeast Community College is one of our partner schools and we provide certification for their students so that if they wanted to pursue work in nuclear power, whether it's at Cooper, or somewhere else, they can get a certification, which gives them a leg up in the market," he says.

Buman says the NPPD strives to ensure that they have generation to support their wide customer base, of which around 60% of the energy provided is carbon free.

"The Energy Institute has listed Nebraska as the eighth lowest state in the country for electricity emissions, Buman says, "One of the ways that NPPD has helped contribute toward this is through our diverse energy portfolio consisting of coal, gas, hydro, solar, wind, and nuclear because we understand that there is no one perfect source."



Listen to our podcast on Spotify:



Follow us on socials:



@wbils_



William Brennan
Institute for Labor
Studies



William Brennan
Institute for Labor
Studies