

**ENDORSEMENT**  
**State Highway Historical Marker**  
**Garrett County Road Worker Strike of 1970**

Roadside Historical Marker Program  
Maryland Historical Trust  
100 Community Place-3<sup>rd</sup> Floor  
Crownsville, Md. 21032-2023

Dear Friends,

2020 will mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 227-day strike for union recognition by 139 Garrett County Roads Department Workers.

Over the course of the eight-month strike, county citizens and community leaders launched dozens of efforts in support of the strikers' appeal for union recognition by the Garrett County Commission.

The community's efforts included meetings between the commissioners and several local ministers who offered to help mediate the dispute, testimony at commission meetings by individual citizens concerned about county roads falling into disrepair during the strike and editorials or letters to the editor in *The Republican* and *Citizen* newspapers calling on a constructive settlement of issues.

Support for roads workers grew over the course of the dispute, with caravans of supporters arriving from Baltimore and Cumberland with food and clothing for the strikers.

Roads workers and community members ultimately launched political efforts to help resolve the dispute. Three newly elected commissioners pledged to recognize the union upon a vote by its membership, agreed to a tentative settlement of all issues and began rehiring strikers on Nov. 19, 1970.

In the five decades since that settlement, workers and managers at the Garrett County Roads Department workers and the Garrett County Commission have enjoyed an uninterrupted and constructive collective bargaining relationship, evidenced every day in the excellent maintenance of nearly 700 miles of county roads serving thousands of residents and tourists alike, often facing challenging storms and harsh winters.

The Garrett County Roads Department Strike was an important event in Maryland history and the longest public worker strike in U.S. history.

I am writing to request that the Maryland Historical commemorate the Garrett County Roads Department strike of 1970 with a Highway Historical Road Marker.



H. Wayne Wilt

Positions held:

Garrett County Deputy Sheriff (1960-1967)  
Supervisor, Maryland Dep't. of Juvenile Services (1967-1992)  
Garrett County Commissioner (1994-1998)  
Garrett County Orphan's Court Judge (2002-2018)  
Garrett County Ethics Commission (2004-2018)  
Garrett County Republican Central Committee (2004-2018)  
Member, American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME)



Executive Vice President  
Dick Bissell

**Roadside Historical Marker Program**

**100 Community Place, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor**

**May 12, 2019**

**Crownville, MD 21032-2023**

**Dear Maryland Historical Trust Members,**

**It has come to my attention that a group of citizens, some of them Retired Americans, is seeking to establish a Roadside historical marker to commemorate a long Strike by working Americans for recognition of their union, the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees bargaining unit.**

**In a time when older Americans of the “baby boomer” generation are departing, it is important to mark Labor History which helped to create the middle class of this country for future generations to remember the personal sacrifices made.**

**I understand that this strike, which lasted 8 months, is one of the longest by public workers in U. S. History. Please place this marker where all visitors can see it and reflect on how much progress we have made because of people like these workers.**

**Sincerely,**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Susan C. Flashman".

**Susan C. Flashman, President**

**Maryland/ District of Columbia Alliance for Retired Americans**

(301)334-9444

THOMAS B. DABNEY, JR.

Fax (301)334-1714

*Attorney at Law*  
124 North Third Street  
Oakland, Maryland 21550  
[tomdabneylaw@gmail.com](mailto:tomdabneylaw@gmail.com)

May 12, 2019

Elizabeth Hughes, Director  
Maryland Historical Trust  
Roadside Historical Marker Program  
100 Community Place, Third Floor  
Crownsville, MD 21032

Re: Garrett County Road Workers Strike of 1970  
Memorial Plaque

Dear Ms. Hughes:


I wish to endorse the application for an official Maryland State Road Marker to memorialize the Garrett County Road Worker Strike in 1970. There are several important reasons to officially recognize this event.

First, it represented an important step forward in labor-management relations. At that time, in the private sector, labor and management had for many years been dealing constructively with resolving their issues through arbitration and negotiation. Collective bargaining, as part of governmental functions, involving the interests of labor was limited in experience, at least in Maryland at that time. In the end, our workers and their families were able to raise their standard of living, have job protection and overall improve the quality of life in our community.

The other important reason for this memorial is to commemorate the citizens of this community. We are used to seeing communities pull together in natural disasters. But I don't believe I've ever seen one where the community united together not just to support the condition of the road workers demands, but also to support the road workers as community members. I assisted Len Shindel doing some research to prepare his article. Just from the research and the interviews that he did, one really appreciates how many levels there were to this strike which few recall today. I think this speaks volumes not only about the tenacity of the workers to seek justice and fairness for their cause, but, just as importantly, about this community which sacrificed itself for the common good.

In approving this memorial plaque, you will be endorsing more than just an event. You will be endorsing and memorializing the spirit of a community bound together by their common needs and concerns. Thank you for your time and attention.

Very truly yours,



Thomas B Dabney, Jr.

From: Gene Bruskin  
genebruskin@gmail.com  
May 16, 2019

**ENDORSEMENT State Highway Historical  
Marker Garrett County Road Worker Strike of  
1970**

Roadside Historical Marker  
Program Maryland Historical  
Trust 100 Community Place-3rd  
Floor Crownsville, Md. 21032-  
2023

Dear  
Friends,

2020 will mark the 50th anniversary of the 227-day strike for union recognition by 139 Garrett County Roads Department Workers.

Over the course of the eight-month strike, county citizens and community leaders launched dozens of efforts in support of the strikers' appeal for union recognition by the Garrett County Commission.

The community's efforts included meetings between the commissioners and several local ministers who offered to help mediate the dispute, testimony at commission meetings by individual citizens concerned about county roads falling into disrepair during the strike and editorials or letters to the editor in *The Republican* and *Citizen* newspapers calling on a constructive settlement of issues.

Support for roads workers grew over the course of the dispute, with caravans of supporters arriving from Baltimore and Cumberland with food and clothing for the strikers.

Roads workers and community members ultimately launched political efforts to help resolve the dispute. Three newly elected commissioners pledged to recognize the union upon a vote by its membership, agreed to a tentative settlement of all issues and began rehiring strikers on Nov. 19, 1970.

In the five decades since that settlement, workers and managers at the Garrett County Roads Department workers and the Garrett County Commission have enjoyed an uninterrupted and constructive collective bargaining relationship, evidenced every day in the excellent maintenance of nearly 700 miles of county roads serving thousands of residents and tourists alike, often facing challenging storms and harsh winters.

The Garrett County Roads Department Strike was an important event in Maryland history and the longest public worker strike in U.S. history.

I am writing to request that the Maryland Historical commemorate the Garrett County Roads Department strike of 1970 with a Highway Historical Road Marker.

As a longtime MD citizen I fully support this effort to highlight this important moment in county history.

Sincerely,  
Gene Bruskin

May 16, 2019

Roadside Historical Marker Program

Maryland Historical Trust

100 Community Place – 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor

Crownsville, MD 21032-2023

Dear Friends:

Unions contributed to building a vibrant middle class in America which supported strong communities and families. When I was in college, I had no money and had to work. I was fortunate to get a job represented by the Teamsters Union. I received a wage that allowed me to support my wife and son while in college and to graduate with no college debt. We need to recognize and celebrate the contributions, and struggles, of unions in America.

2020 will mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 227-day strike for union recognition by 139 Garrett County Roads Department workers. The newly elected county commissioners agreed to recognize the union upon a vote by its members, agreed to a settlement of all issues and rehired striking workers. Since the strike was resolved, the road workers and County Commissioners have worked collaboratively to provide excellent services to the citizens of Garrett County and the workers continue to have strong community support.

This was the longest public worker strike in U.S. history and was an important event in Maryland and Garrett County history.

I am writing to request that the Maryland Historical Trust commemorate the Garrett County Roads Department strike of 1970 with a Highway Historical Road Marker.

Sincerely,



Michael Bell

Garrett County Taxpayer

and

Beneficiary of excellent services from the Road Department

**ENDORSEMENT**  
**State Highway Historical Marker**  
**Garrett County Road Worker Strike of 1970**

Roadside Historical Marker Program  
Maryland Historical Trust  
100 Community Place-3<sup>rd</sup> Floor  
Crownsville, Md. 21032-2023

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Next year marks the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 227 day strike for union recognition by 139 Garrett County Roads Department Workers.

Garrett County citizens and community leaders launched dozens of efforts in support of the strikers appeal for union recognition by the Garrett County Commission over the course of the eight-month strike.

During the strike there meetings between the commissioners and several local ministers who offered to help mediate the dispute, testimony at commission meetings by many citizens who were extremely worried about county roads falling into disrepair during the strike. Many wrote editorials or letters to the editor in *The Republican* and *Citizen* newspapers calling on a constructive settlement of issues surrounding the standoff.

Grassroots community support for road workers grew over the course of the strike. Caravans of supporters from Baltimore and Cumberland came to Garrett County with food and clothing for the strikers.

Roads workers along with citizens of Garrett County towns and communities organized political efforts to resolve the dispute. Three newly elected commissioners pledged to recognize the union upon a vote by its membership, agreed to a tentative settlement of all issues and began rehiring strikers on Nov. 19, 1970.

In the fifty years since that settlement, the general employees and managers of the Garrett County Roads Department workers and the Garrett County Commission have successfully participated in an constant and constructive collective bargaining relationship, which is recognized every day in the excellent maintenance of nearly 700 miles of Garrett County roads which serve thousands of residents and tourists who facilitate a major revenue source for the county, which more often than not requires many long days involving challenging storms and harsh winters.

The Garrett County Roads Department Strike was an important event in Maryland history and the longest public worker strike in United States history.

I am writing to urge and encourage the Maryland Historical commemorate the history making Garrett County Roads Department strike of 1970 with a Highway Historical Road Marker.



J. Mark Richards  
1002 N. Main St.  
Mt. Airy, MD 21771

Charter Member and Past President of IAFF Local 2000, Howard County Professional Firefighters  
Charter Member and Past President of the Howard County Fire Officers Association  
Pipe Major, The Fire Brigade Pipes & Drums of Greater Baltimore  
Assistant Chief (Retired) Howard County Department of Fire and Rescue Services

Endorsement

State Highway Historical Marker

Garrett County Road Worker Strike of 1970

Roadside Historical Marker Program

Maryland Historical Trust

100 Community Place - 3d Floor

Crownsville, MD 21032-2023

*May 17, 2019*

Dear Friends:

2020 will mark the 50th anniversary of the 227 day strike for union recognition by 139 Garrett County Roads Department workers. During the course of the eight month strike, county citizens and community leaders launched dozens of efforts in support of the strikers' appeal for union recognition by the Garrett County Commission.

The Garrett County Roads Department Strike was an important event in Maryland history and the longest public worker's strike in American history. As a long time resident of Garrett County, I am writing to request that the Maryland Historical Trust commemorate the Garrett County Roads Department Strike of 1970 with a highway historical road marker. Maryland has been slow to recognize our rich history and ties with the American Labor Movement. While Pennsylvania has fifty-five (55) markers commemorating labor events and people, Maryland has only two (2). With the approval of a state highway historical marker recognizing the Garrett County Roads Department Strike of 1970, our state can begin to remedy that oversight.

The community's efforts during the strike included meetings between the commissioners and several local ministers who offered to help mediate the dispute, testimony at commission meetings by individual citizens concerned about county roads falling into disrepair during the strike, and editorials and letters to the editor in The Republican or Citizen newspapers calling for a constructive settlement of the issues. Support for the workers grew over the course of the dispute, with large numbers of supporters arriving from Cumberland and Baltimore with food and clothing for the strikers and their families.



The workers and community members ultimately prevailed. Three newly elected commissioners pledged to recognize the union upon a vote by its membership, agreed to a tentative settlement of all issues and the county began rehiring the strikers on November 19, 1970.

In the five decades since the settlement, workers and managers at the Garrett County Roads department have enjoyed an uninterrupted and constructive collective bargaining relationship, evidenced every day by the superb maintenance of nearly 700 miles of county roads serving thousands of residents and visitors alike, often facing harsh winters, challenging storms and bad weather throughout the year.

I urge you to honor the actions of the men, women and strikers of Garrett County by approving the placement of an historical marker commemorating the event, so that their children, their children's children and all the members of the Garrett County community will know how their lives were improved by the successful ending of the strike.

Sincerely yours,



Kevin O. Faley,

17 Liftside Drive, PO Box 728, McHenry MD 21541



May 25, 2019

Roadside Historical Market Program  
Maryland Historical Trust  
100 Community Place-3<sup>rd</sup> Floor  
Crownsville, Maryland 21032-2023

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing in support of a road marker commemorating the 1970 Garrett County Maryland Roads Department workers strike. This strike was the longest public worker strike in U.S. history. Next year marks the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this strike. Hence, the erection of a road marker is timely.

In 1970, I was employed by a newly formed Community Action Agency. Having lived through this period, I believe the strike was notable both in its goal of affiliation with the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, but also in the manner in which it was carried out. While the goal of affiliations was achieved, it was done so without violent measures or continuing animosity.

Garrett County is a historic county for many reasons, including visits by U.S. presidents, and Henry Ford and others. Please allow the 1970 road marker, yet another milestone of Garrett County progress.

Sincerely,



Lowell Bender

**Dr. Robert J. Spear**  
**Dr. Mary Helen Spear**  
**190 South Shore Road**  
**Swanton, Maryland 21561**  
**(301) 441-1063**  
**email: [bob\\_spear@hotmail.com](mailto:bob_spear@hotmail.com)**  
**[mary\\_helen\\_spear@hotmail.com](mailto:mary_helen_spear@hotmail.com)**

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May 27, 2019

Roadside Historical Marker Program  
Maryland Historical Trust  
100 Community Place – 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor  
Crownsville, Maryland 21032-2023

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are writing to encourage you to place a roadside marker to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the 1970 strike by the Garrett County Roads Department workers.

Their successful eight-month-long strike was the longest strike by public employees in the United States. It resulted in recognition of the union as well as continuing collective bargaining agreements that have lasted for fifty years. During the strike, the community slowly came together, recognized the workers' legitimate grievances, and finally voted for county commissioners who negotiated a settlement. Today the Garrett County Roads Department remains a model of labor-management cooperation and union effectiveness.

Maryland as a state has always been very supportive of working class people. It is only fitting that we mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Garrett County Roads Department strike with a commemorative marker along US 219 or I-68.

Thank you for listening!

--Bob Spear

--Mary Helen Spear, member, Maryland State Teachers Association



4 June 2019

Roadside Historical Marker Program  
Maryland Historical Trust  
100 Community Place, 3rd Floor  
Crownsville, MD 21032-2023

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing in full endorsement of placing a Historical Marker in Garrett County, MD, to mark the Garrett County Road Worker Strike of 1970. This strike was and remains the longest workers' strike in US history. Next year is the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the strike, and Garrett County would be well served by having an historical marker with which to commemorate the occasion and help inform future residents and visitors.

The text proposed for this marker is as follows:

***Garrett County Road Worker Strike of 1970***

*On April 7, 1970, 139 employees of the Garrett County Roads Department went on strike asking the Garrett County Commission to recognize their affiliation with the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME). After months of active involvement by citizens, including members of the clergy and political leaders, the strike was settled on November 19, 1970. It was the longest public worker strike in U.S. history.*

I fully support this text, which is being proposed by local resident Len Shindel, who has done an incredible job of interviewing strikers and other involved in the strike who are still living and members of their families. The fact that there is little, if any, mention of the strike and the amicable resolution after such a long time in our Garrett County Historical Museum is unfortunate. I believe that this marker can, in part, fill the void of recognition along with the historical booklet that Len ultimately will share with the community.

IF there is something in particular that our community can do to better advocate for this marker, I hope you will let me know. There are so many of us that are supportive of this proposal! It would not be hard to collect additional names and letters of support.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Judy A. Carbone  
871 Harvey Peninsula Road  
Swanton, MD 21561  
301-616-5036  
judy@corgi-cottage.com

Dear Sir or Madam,

June 5, 2019

I am writing in support of the proposal to erect a road marker honoring the Garrett County Roads Department Workers. The historic nature of their struggle and the service that the Road Department continues to provide to our rural community certainly qualifies for this honor. It has been more than 49 years since the strike for dignity and economic security began. The recent historical work by Len Shindel paints a vivid picture of a community that supported the workers while maintaining a senses of community and civility. I urge you to honor these virtues by approving the proposed road marker.

Thank You for your consideration.



Patrick Hunt

940 Blue Goose Road  
Friendsville Maryland, 21531



1111 Woods Hall  
4302 Chapel Lane  
College Park, Maryland 20742-7415  
301.405.1423 TEL 301.314.8305 FAX  
www.anth.umd.edu

June 10, 2019

Roadside Historical Marker Program  
Maryland Historical Trust  
100 Community Place -- 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor  
Crownsville, MD 21032-2023

Dear committee members;

I enthusiastically support the nomination of a roadside historical marker for the Garrett County Road Workers Strike of 1970. The road work strike is the longest public worker strike in US history. It should also be recognized for the civic involvement by the various communities affected by in the strike. I believe this compelling history it is worthy of commemoration with a roadside historical marker.

In 1969 the road workers of Garrett County were seeking over time in lieu of comp time. With the hope of gaining more leverage to support their case, they voted in favor of merging their association into American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME). In March 1970, they asked for formal recognition of AFSCME from the Garrett County Board of Commissioners. The Board of Commissioners declined this request and on April 7, 1970 employees of the Garrett County Roads Department went on strike. The Board of Commissioners fired the employees and over the next 8 months the surrounding community engaged in unprecedented civic activities. Nine ministers tried to mediate with the Commissioners, however they were rebuffed. The governor of Maryland offered to send a mediator, however, the Commissioners refused the offer. Union supporters came from as far as Baltimore with food and clothing to support the strikers. The striking workers urged their community to vote for Commissioners that would support the road workers. The three Commissioners were replaced and on November 19, 1970 the incoming commissioners signed a memorandum that recognized the union and rehired the striking workers.

The community and civic engagement related to this long strike is unprecedented. The efforts by working class people to fight for what they saw as a form of social and economic justice needs to be recognized. While little is known in the national public memory of this strike, the commemoration of this event with a roadside historical marker will go a long way to making the Garrett County Road Workers Strike part of our state and national history.

Sincerely,

Paul A. Shackel  
Professor and Chair



District 8

Ernest R. Thompson  
District Director

James Strong  
Assistant to the Director

June 18, 2019

Peter Kurtze  
Roadside Historical Marker Program  
Maryland Historical Trust  
100 Community Place-3<sup>rd</sup> Floor  
Crownsville, MD 21032-2023

Dear Mr. Kurtze,

I am writing to support the request of the Western Maryland Central Labor Council (AFL-CIO) in its request for a roadside historical marker commemorating the Garrett County Road Workers Strike of 1970.

The United Steelworkers is proud of our history representing thousands of workers in Maryland's industries, helping them fulfill their aspirations for decent wages, benefits and a shared prosperity that can lift their families to financial prosperity and stability.

While our union primarily engages in collective bargaining with *private* employers, we appreciate the need for all workers in Maryland to have a voice and empowerment on the job. The influence of organized labor is truly bolstered whenever *public workers* join our ranks.

In this context, The Garrett County Road Workers Strike of 1970, coupled with the political activism of workers in its wake, is a pivotal moment in Maryland's labor history.

Our members are now dealing with devastating shutdown of the Verso Paper Mill in Luke, Maryland, adjacent to Garret County.

Losing so many good union jobs will have a devastating impact on the surrounding community and the tax base we depend upon for public services. We are, therefore, grateful to have the support of members of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) whose own struggles going back to the 1970 road workers trike make them the kinds of citizens who stand by their neighbors in times of challenge.

We hope our brothers and sisters in AFSCME receive the honor they deserve with a historical road marker educating travelers about their historic strike.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Ernest R. Thompson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

Ernest R. Thompson, Director  
USW District 8  
85 C. Michael Davenport Blvd., Suite B  
Frankfort, KY 40601





# Metropolitan Washington Council, AFL-CIO

815 16<sup>th</sup> Street, NW, • Washington, DC 20006 • (202) 974-8150 • Fax (202) 974-8152

*An AFL-CIO "Union City"*

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Dave Richardson (AFGE 12)

June 18, 2019

Peter Kurtze  
Roadside Historical Marker Program  
Maryland Historical Trust  
100 Community Place  
Crownsville, Md. 21032-2023

The delegates of the Metro Washington Council AFL-CIO on June 17, 2019 unanimously approved the enclosed resolution calling on the Maryland Historic Trust to erect a historic roadside marker to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Garrett County Road Worker Strike of 1970.

The strike lasted for 8 months ending in victory, making it the longest public employee strike in American history.

Don't hesitate to let me know if you have any questions.

Yours,

Jackie Jeter, President  
Metro Washington Council AFL-CIO



# Metropolitan Washington Council, AFL-CIO

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## Executive Board

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*3rd Vice President (IBT/BLET)*

Cynthia Collins

*Secretary (SEIU 400-PG)*

Eric Bunn

*Treasurer (AFGE District 14)*

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Robin Burns (DCNA)

Carl Carson (DC APRI)

Chuck Clay (IATSE 22)

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Wanda Shelton-Martin (NUHCE 1199DC)

Gina Walton (AFGE 1975)

### Trustees

Djawa Hall (1199 SEIU)

Robert Hollingsworth (AFSCME 2776)

Dave Richardson (AFGE 12)

## Resolution

### to Commemorate the Garrett County Road Worker Strike of 1970

WHEREAS, in March 1970, in Garrett County, Maryland, the workers of the county roads department requested recognition of their union, AFSCME – the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, AFL-CIO; and,

WHEREAS, these workers were seeking paid overtime in lieu of comp time, seniority improvements and the right to sign a collective bargaining agreement with the union of their choice; and

WHEREAS, following the refusal of the Garrett County Board of Commissioners to recognize their union and sign an agreement with them, 139 out of 144 road workers went on strike on April 7, 1970; and

WHEREAS, these striking workers walked the picket line and with the help of their families and the community, established a food bank, solicited the support of ministers from the Mountaintop Ministerial Association, engaged in political action and coordinated relief efforts with AFSCME; and

WHEREAS, the strike lasted for 8 months ending in victory, making it the longest public employee strike in American history; and

WHEREAS, next year (2020) will be the 50th anniversary of the strike; and

WHEREAS, through their determination and sacrifice these workers made a significant contribution to the labor history of Maryland and to the improvement of its citizens; therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED, That the Maryland Historic Trust erect a historic roadside marker to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Garrett County Road Worker Strike of 1970.

*Unanimously approved June 17, 2019 by the delegates of the Metro Washington Council AFL-CIO*

**Bringing Labor Together Since 1896**

**[www.dclabor.org](http://www.dclabor.org)**

**Roadside Historical Marker Program**

**Maryland Historical Trust**

**100 Community Place, Third Floor**

**Crownsville, MD**

**Subject: Endorsement of State Highway Historical Marker**

**Dear sir/madam,**

I am writing in support of a state highway memorial marker to commemorate the April 7, 1970 strike by Garrett County Roads Department public employees, a strike which became the longest public labor strike in U. S. history. The year 2020 will mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this historic strike.

Garrett County is the westernmost county in the state, situated on top of the western flank of the Appalachian Mountains, known as the Allegheny Highlands. This mountainous area covers some 650 square miles, with elevations reaching over 3000 feet, which combine to make the construction and maintenance of county roads and bridges a daunting task--a task that falls on the shoulders of Garrett County Roads Department, both past and present.

Prior to 1970, the employees of the Roads Department had a history of successfully negotiating labor issues with the county government through the auspices of their employees association. In 1970 the employees voted to merge with the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME). The County Board of Commissioners subsequently refused to recognize the workers' new bargaining agent. In response to the county's refusal, 139 of the department's 144 employees went on strike to protest the county's actions. Refusing to return to work until the county recognized their union, the striking employees were fired.

The strikers remained on strike for the ensuing nine month period. During that time they received support from many county citizens, as well as from local pastors and newspapers. Governor Mandel offered his support in an effort to mediate a solution. With winter approaching and no agreement in sight, citizens of the county voted to replace the entire Board Commissioners with a new slate of commissioners who were more amenable to negotiating with the striking workers. Finally, on November 19, 1970, the new commissioners reached an agreement with the employees that successfully ended the strike.

The significance of this strike is not just the fact that it was the longest public worker strike in our history. The strike, and its subsequent resolution, exemplifies the importance of all members of a community working together to find a fair and just resolution of the strikers' demand for union representation. In a county of some thirty thousand residents, the strikers and their fellow citizens were often friends and neighbors. It is significant that there have been no strikes in Garrett County since 1970, a result of the collaborative working environment between the union workers and the Board of Commissioners. The strike, its resolution, and the resulting atmosphere of mutual respect that has existed since the strike serves as a model for

how public employees and local governments can resolve labor issues in a way that serves the interest of the community.

Having lived in Garrett County for a number of years, I can attest to the dedication of these public employees in serving the citizens of the county. In an area that receives well over 100 inches of snow a year, I have never been unable to navigate the roads in times of extreme weather. It is not unusual to see signs and billboards around the county expressing gratitude for these public servants. I cannot help but feel that the mutual trust between these public employees and the local government can be traced to the historic strike of 1970.

Accordingly, I respectfully request that the Maryland Historical Marker Program approve a road marker that commemorates the historic Garrett County Roads Department strike of 1970.

Thank you for your consideration.



Richard A. Carroll

**BS, Business Management, George Mason University, 1976**

**MA, U.S. History, George Mason University, 2004**

**2005 – 2012: Adjunct Professor, Northern Virginia Community College**

**2012 – Present: Instructor, U.S. History, Continuing Education Dept., Garrett College**

**Former Board Member, Garrett Institute for Lifelong Learning**



TACOMA  
July 8, 2019

Peter Krutze, Roadside Historical Marker Program  
Maryland Historical Trust  
100 Community Place, 3<sup>rd</sup> floor  
Crownsville, MS 21032-2023

To Peter Krutze and whom it concerns,

I write to support local efforts to erect a marker in memory of the "Mountain men" in the hills of western Maryland. They worked six-day weeks and nine-hour days at poverty wages, and for thirteen years sought union recognition. In 1970, they joined AFSCME (American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees), the same union that in 1968 had supported black sanitation workers in Memphis in a successful strike. Martin Luther King died supporting the rights of those black public employees to belong to a union. In Maryland, County commissioners stonewalled these white workers forcing their strike for union rights that went on for 225 days, the longest public employee strike in U.S. history. They obtained a victory, and the union and the county have worked closely together ever since. Maryland currently has no tribute to these rural road workers; a marker would provide a reminder that working people, once organized, can make history. I urge your support for this overdue history project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michael Honey". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Michael K. Honey, author of *Going Down Jericho Road: the Memphis Strike, Martin Luther King's Last Campaign* (W.W. Norton), and Professor, University of Washington Tacoma

July 15, 2019

Edward Mohler  
6560 Six Sons Farm Place  
La Plata, MD 20646

Peter Kurtze  
Roadside Historical Marker Program  
Maryland Historical Trust  
100 Community Place, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor  
Crownsville, MD 21032

Dear Mr. Kurtze:

Next year marks the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Garrett County Road Worker Strike of 1970, the longest public employee strike in American history. I am writing to urge you to recognize this important event in Maryland Labor History by designating a historic marker to commemorate this important anniversary.

I am the former president of the Maryland State/DC AFL-CIO, a position I held for 25 years. As a leader of Maryland's labor movement I represented the interests of Maryland's unionized workers located in local unions, district councils and central labor bodies throughout the state. Prior to being elected president of the Maryland state federation I served as an AFSCME representative for 10 years. These years I served under the leadership of Jerry Wurf, AFSCME International President and Ernie Crofoot, Executive Director of AFSCME Council 67 – two distinguished labor leaders who supported the Garrett County road workers and celebrated with them when they achieved recognition and a signed contract.

The effort to achieve collective bargaining rights for Maryland's public employees has been a difficult one. The sacrifice and determination of the workers of the Garrett County Roads Dept. – and their families – deserve to be recognized. Their strike is an important event in Maryland labor history.

I urge the Maryland Historic Trust to recognize their contribution to the well-being of workers in our state by erecting a historical marker in 2020.

Sincerely,



Edward Mohler  
President Emeritus



AMERICAN FEDERATION OF  
STATE, COUNTY AND MUNICIPAL  
EMPLOYEES, AFL-CIO

**Main Office**  
1410 Bush Street  
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Baltimore, Maryland 21230

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800-727-3332 (Toll Free)  
410-752-1848 (Fax)  
afscme67@afscme67.org

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**Glenard S. Middleton, Sr.**  
*Executive Director*

July 16, 2019

**Dale Chase**  
*President*

Peter Kurtze

**Roland Johnson**  
*Vice President*

Roadside Historical Marker Program  
Maryland Historical Trust

**Dorothy Bryant**  
*Treasurer*

100 Community Place – 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor  
Crownsville, MD 21032-2023

**Wendy Smith**  
*Secretary*

Re: Roadside Marker – Garrett County Road Worker Strike of 1970

EXECUTIVE BOARD

**David Basler**

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**Dr. Rhonda Wallace**

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Dear Mr. Kurtze,

I am writing to ask for your support to commemorate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Garrett County Road Worker Strike of 1970 with the placement of a roadside historical marker. The anniversary will take place in 2020.

In 1970, Garret County Roads Department workers launched a strike for recognition of their bargaining unit which was (and still is) affiliated with the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME). This strike would become the longest public worker strike in U.S. history, lasting eight months.

Currently, only two Maryland historic road markers commemorate labor events and people – in Adelphi at the site of Mother Jones's death in 1930, and in Baltimore, at Camden Station, marking the Great Railroad Strike of 1877. Pennsylvania, by contrast, has fifty-five such markers that are labor related.

Occurring just two years after the 1968 Memphis Sanitation Workers Strike, this strike was part of a larger struggle to bring union rights to America's public workers. It is important that we remember, on the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the sacrifices which these workers and their families made. A roadside marker will give citizens and visitors a window into an important time of struggle and civic engagement in Maryland and the United States.

Attached is the Resolution to Commemorate the Garrett County Road Worker Strike of 1970.

In Solidarity,

Glen Middleton, Sr., Executive Director  
Maryland Public Employees, AFSCME Council 67, AFL-CIO

Cc: Maryland Historical Trust Board of Trustees,  
Lee Saunders, President, AFSCME  
Elissa McBride, Secretary-Treasurer, AFSCME  
Saul Schniderman, Retired, AFSCME  
Len Shindel, Retired, IBEW  
Kory Blake, Chief of Staff, AFSCME Council 67





AMERICAN FEDERATION OF  
STATE, COUNTY AND MUNICIPAL  
EMPLOYEES, AFL-CIO

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**Resolution**  
**to Commemorate the Garrett County Road Worker Strike of 1970**

WHEREAS, in March 1970, in Garrett County, Maryland, the workers of the county roads department requested recognition of their union, AFSCME – the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, AFL-CIO; and,

WHEREAS, these workers were seeking paid overtime in lieu of comp time, seniority improvements and the right to sign a collective bargaining agreement with the union of their choice; and

WHEREAS, following the refusal of the Garrett County Board of Commissioners to recognize their union and sign an agreement with them, 139 out of 144 road workers went on strike on April 7, 1970; and

WHEREAS, these striking workers walked the picket line and with the help of their families and the community, established a food bank, solicited the support of ministers from the Mountaintop Ministerial Association, engaged in political action and coordinated relief efforts with AFSCME; and

WHEREAS, the strike lasted for 8 months ending in victory, making it the longest public employee strike in American history; and

WHEREAS, next year (2020) will be the 50th anniversary of the strike; and

WHEREAS, through their determination and sacrifice these workers made a significant contribution to the labor history of Maryland and to the improvement of its citizens; therefore,

**BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Maryland Historic Trust erect a historic roadside marker to commemorate the 50th anniversary of Garrett County Road Worker Strike of 1970.

Unanimously approved July 16, 2019 by AFSCME Maryland Council 67 Executive Board.



American Postal Workers Union, AFL-CIO  
 BALTIMORE FRANCIS "STU" FILBEY AREA LOCAL  
 4 NORTH HIGH STREET  
 BALTIMORE, MARYLAND 21202



**Resolution to Commemorate Garrett County Road Workers Strike of 1970**

*Affiliated With*

BALTIMORE COUNCIL, AFL-CIO UNIONS  
 MEMBER POSTAL PRESS ASSOCIATION  
 MARYLAND STATE AND D.C. AFL-CIO  
 MARYLAND STATE A.P.W.U.

Whereas, the year 2020 will mark an historic milestone for the state of Maryland and its dedicated public workers and labor history. 2020 will be the 50th anniversary of the Garrett County Maryland Road Workers Strike of 1970.

SHERRY C. MCKNIGHT

*President*

(410) 837-4868 / (410) 837-4872

FAX: (410) 837-4873

G.M.F.

I.M.F.

V.M.F.

Whereas, the Road Workers of Garrett County were attempting to improve their working conditions by establishing a seniority system and winning pay for overtime in lieu of comp time with the recognition of their union, the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) by the Garrett County Board of Commissioners.

Whereas, after the refusal of the Board of Commissioners to recognize the workers' union, on April 7, 1970 139 of 144 road workers began a 227 day strike. This historic strike lasted for eight months and is the longest public worker strike in United States History.

Whereas, the Road Workers were able to gain the support of surrounding communities and citizens from all across the great state of Maryland with caravans of supporters coming from Baltimore and beyond. This support led to unprecedented civic engagement and activity that was highlighted by local and state media outlets.

Because of the support and engagement of the community with the road workers' persistence; three new Commissioners were elected to the Garrett County Board—agreeing to recognize the AFSCME as Road Workers' bargaining unit representative after a formal vote was conducted.

Whereas, since the strike public workers have had healthy and constructive relationships with the Garrett County Board of Commissioners and many citizens of Garrett County credit the strike with being a catalyst for community development in the area.

Whereas, the members of the American Postal Workers Union Baltimore Francis 'Stu' Filbey Area Local #181 share history with the brave road workers who went on strike in 1970 as that year was also the Great Postal Strike of 1970— where Postal Workers across the nation went on a wildcat strike demanding better compensation, benefits and working conditions. Our struggles and triumphs in the labor movement are intertwined.

Be it resolved, the Maryland Historic Trust erect a historic roadside marker to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the Garrett County Road Worker Strike of 1970.

Unanimously adopted by the members of the American Postal Workers Union, AFL-CIO Baltimore Francis "Stu" Filbey Area Local #181 on June 8, 2019.

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August 26, 2019

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Peter Kurtze  
Roadside Historical Marker Program  
Maryland Historical Trust  
100 Community Place  
Crownsville, Maryland 21032

Dear Mr. Kurtze:

The duties of my job allow me to travel across Maryland on a frequent basis. As I travel from the Mountains of Garrett County to the shores of Ocean City, I constantly see historical markers along the highways and byways. I do my best to pull over and read them because they signify something that is important to the community in the area, or the state as a whole, and I want to know why.

Forty-nine years ago, the members of AFSCME Local 1834, members of the Garrett County Roads Department went out on strike to demand a better way of life for their families and community as a whole. Their plight for fairness on the job is the longest recorded public employee strike in the history of our nation, it lasted for eight months, and all of the strikers were offered their jobs back.

This event is not just an important point in Garrett County's or labor's history, it is an important part in America's history; one that needs to be acknowledged with a historical marker. I hope you consider moving forward with a historical marker in Garrett County celebrating the accomplishments and sacrifices of these public servants.

Respectfully,

Patrick Moran



LABOR HERITAGE FOUNDATION  
815 16<sup>th</sup> Street, NW, Washington, DC 20006  
202-202-639-6204 [www.laborheritage.org](http://www.laborheritage.org)

August 26, 2019

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Peter Kurtze  
Roadside Historical Marker Program  
Maryland Historical Trust  
100 Community Place  
Crownsville, Maryland 21032

Dear Mr. Kurtze:

Next year – 2020 – marks the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Garrett County Road Worker Strike – a significant event in Maryland history. I am writing to urge the Maryland Historic Trust to commemorate this event by erecting a historical marker to honor the sacrifices made by the county road workers – and their families – to achieve recognition of their union and a collective bargaining agreement. The 139 road workers who went on strike on April 7, 1970 stayed out for eight long months, making this the longest public employee strike in American history.

Fifty years ago collective bargaining rights for public employees were not well-established in our state. This meant that workers did not have a voice in determining their benefits or conditions of employment. Because the strike ended with a signed agreement between the parties, the Garrett County Road Worker Strike of 1970 served as a clarion call for management and labor to resolve their differences at the negotiating table. The resolution of the strike led to the establishment of AFSCME Local 1834 and the ushering in of good labor relations in Garrett County. The effects of the long strike were felt throughout Western Maryland and the state.

As the Chair of the Labor Heritage Foundation – a non-profit arts and cultural organization – I direct the Inventory of American Labor Landmarks. This is a project which identifies, catalogs and helps preserve labor history sites and events in the United States. In 2001 you and I worked together to place the first labor history landmark in Maryland at the site of Mother Jones' death (1930) in Adelphi, Maryland. And I was present at the ceremony commemorating the second marker dedicated to Maryland labor history – the Great Railroad Strike of 1877 marker at Camden Station.

In her essay, "The Life of a Roadside Historical Marker," (Maryland Historical Trust Blog, 5/8/17) Nancy Kurtz, the former director of the Trust's historical marker program, stated that the marker program – which began in 1933 – maintains, through the State Highway Administration over 800 markers in our

*Dedicated to strengthening the labor movement  
Through the use of music, arts, and culture*

state. Could it be that only two of these markers – in Adelphi and Baltimore – are related to labor history and heritage?

People, places and events which are associated with labor history, including the development of unions, are seriously underrepresented in the Maryland historical marker program. The marker program in the neighboring states of Pennsylvania and West Virginia, for example, are much more robust in regards to labor history. This underrepresentation is a serious deficiency that needs to be corrected. Maryland's working people have made significant contributions to social and economic progress in our state. When the Trust tells Maryland's story to the nation and to the world, we don't want to be left out.

I am enclosing some copies of photographs of the Garrett County workers who participated in the 1970 strike. These photos were sent to me by Leonard Shindel, who lives in McHenry. Mr. Shindel is in the process of interviewing strike participants – both labor and management – and documenting the event through oral history. When you view these photographs I hope you will agree that these hard-working county employees deserve recognition by the Maryland Historical Trust for their contribution to our state's labor history.

Please add my name to the many citizens and organizations who have written to you requesting that a marker be placed, in 2020, to commemorate the Garrett County Road Worker Strike of 1970.

Sincerely



Saul Schniderman  
Chair

306 Lincoln Ave.  
Takoma Park, Md. 20912



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September 13, 2019

Peter Kurtze  
Roadside Historical Marker Program  
100 Community Place – 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor  
Crownsville, Maryland 21032-2023

### RE: REQUEST FOR HISTORICAL ROAD MARKER

Dear Mr. Kurtze:

I am writing to you to offer my support of Len Shindel's request for a historical road marker to be installed on Rt. 135 named *Garrett County Road Worker Strike of 1970*.

This marker would signify a time in history when 139 employees of the Garrett County Roads Department went on strike asking the Board of Garrett County Commissioners to recognize the Union. This strike, which occurred almost 50 years ago, is one of the longest public worker strikes in US history.

The Garrett County Department of Public Works – Roads Division has the responsibility for maintaining 680 miles of roadway and 127 bridges. With the average snowfall of 106 inches of snow, they have the challenge of maintaining and clearing roadways for the safe travel of our citizens.

Today's mission of Garrett County Government is to provide our citizens the highest quality service in a timely, efficient, and courteous manner and I feel the employees with the Garrett County Government exemplifies this motto. This monument will be a testament to the county road workers past, especially to their place in national history in the labor movement and their willingness to sacrifice for what they believed in. Thank you for your time.

Respectfully,



Paul C. Edwards  
Chairman