2018 ANNUAL REPORT

Workers Defense Project
Proyecto Defensa Laboral
In 2018, your support transformed Workers Defense Project into an organizing powerhouse, which ensured the flame of justice could continue burning brightly throughout Texas. Thank you for fueling our movement.

As you know, our members continue to face endless attacks at the state and federal level; however, by organizing and advocating for their rights they also continue fighting for the dignity of all low-wage workers, immigrants and families within our great state and beyond.

In 2018, our work began changing the face of Texas by:
- Winning our first ever policy victory in Houston
- Passing two local policies that help protect immigrants and people of color against SB 4
- Winning historic paid sick time ordinances in Austin and San Antonio
- Laying the 2019 groundwork plans to pass paid sick time in Dallas

**We promise Workers Defense Project will not back down when livelihoods are under attack, when working conditions are inhumane, when families are torn apart, or when policies limit the ability of working people to engage in their democracy.**

In 2019, Workers Defense Project will continue fighting for basic rights like paid sick time and safety protections while simultaneously fighting back against racist laws like SB4 and family separation with the full support of our resources.

We are proud to stand with Co-Executive Directors Jose Garza and Emily Timm, as well as the incredible members, donors, partners, supporters and staff of Workers Defense Project. Our persistent champions continue to inspire us as they demand justice from Texas institutions and refuse to take “No” as an answer.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I promise: **Contigo, podemos.**

In Solidarity,

Val Benavidez

Board President
Workers Defense Project
2018 AT A GLANCE

SYSTEMIC CHANGE
- Won a Houston ordinance requiring developers receiving tax abatements to provide workers with OSHA safety training.
- Passed an Austin “Freedom City” policy to limit the harmful effects of the anti-immigrant law SB 4.
- Won a Dallas Independent School District policy that ended their practice of notifying ICE about undocumented students.
- A Travis County policy to include Better Builder® standards for construction sites on all county projects above $1 million through the year 2020.

EDUCATION
- Provided ESL education to 169 workers.
- Educated 1,729 workers on their labor rights.
- Graduated 70 workers from OSHA-10 safety training.
- Provided immigration Know Your Rights training to 10,347 people.

ADVOCACY
- Recruited 533 new members.
- Together with coalition partners, passed progressive paid sick leave ordinances in Austin and San Antonio.
- Better Builder-certified monitors corrected 51 safety violations and identified 141 misclassified workers.
Texas' construction industry economic impact:

$94.2 BILLION

Every 3 days:

A construction worker dies in Texas

45%

Texas' construction industry = Immigrant workers

Our Mission:

Organize and educate low-wage and immigrant workers.

Advocate for pro-worker, pro-immigrant policies in the workplace and in Texas' criminal justice system.

Two-Part Mission

1. Organize and educate low-wage and immigrant workers.

2. Advocate for pro-worker, pro-immigrant policies in the workplace and in Texas' criminal justice system.

By bringing together workers' rights, immigration and criminal justice reform, in 2018 we advanced our mission of empowering low-income workers to achieve fair employment through education, direct services, organizing and strategic partnerships.
OUR STRATEGY

CHANGE IS ONLY POSSIBLE WHEN IT IS LED BY THOSE IMPACTED BY INJUSTICE. THAT’S WHY LOW-WAGE WORKERS ARE THE INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE HEART OF HOW WORKERS DEFENSE PROJECT BUILDS POWER TO EFFECT CHANGE.

INDIVIDUAL
Individuals come to Workers Defense Project having experienced injustices such as stolen wages, which can have devastating effects for low-income families. Our legal services, training and leadership programs help members become effective advocates for themselves and their communities.

COLLECTIVE
The system is stacked against low-wage workers in Texas. Our members disrupt this system, building collective power and organizing at scale across the state. They pass local and statewide policies to raise workplace standards and make our communities safer for immigrant families.
As of 2017, more than 4 million Texans didn’t have access to earned paid sick time. As a result, they often had to make the impossible choice between taking care of their health and putting food on the table.

That changed in 2018, when Austin and San Antonio became the first cities in the southern United States to pass ordinances guaranteeing paid sick time for working people. These new policies are unapologetically progressive, applying to all industries, a variety of part-time workers, and a broad range of healthcare needs.

The paid sick time ordinances came after months of organizing more than 250,000 grassroots supporters and building two powerhouse coalitions: Work Strong Austin and Working Texans for Paid Sick Time. Thanks to our innovative, multi-city, coalition-based strategy, as many as 573,000 working people in Austin and San Antonio will gain access to paid sick time, and will no longer have to choose between paying the bills and taking care of themselves or their loved ones.
BETTER BUILDER

Workers Defense Project’s innovative Better Builder® program has paved the way for good, safe construction jobs for more than 19,000 Texas workers. In 2018 alone, the program secured policy victories in two cities and impacted more than 4,000 construction workers.

AUSTIN

Publicly-funded construction should benefit the community by creating good, safe jobs. Unfortunately, we know from experience that this isn’t always the reality. A construction worker dies in Texas every three days; one in five has at some point not been paid for their work; and approximately 52% make poverty-level wages. We know we can do better.

So in 2018, we campaigned for higher standards for Travis County construction workers - and we won! The county passed a groundbreaking policy requiring trained staff, accredited by the Better Builder® program, to monitor wage and safety conditions on all county construction projects worth more than $1 million. This policy will ensure that county funding goes toward good jobs with fair wages, potentially improving conditions for thousands of workers.

In addition to this policy win, in 2018 Better Builder® certified monitors helped ensure good, safe jobs for an estimated 4,378 workers on Austin construction sites. Approximately 28% of these workers received basic OSHA safety for the first time as a result of the program, and an estimated 23% received workers’ compensation for the first time.

HOUSTON

In May 2018, Workers Defense Project and our partners won a Houston ordinance requiring employers to provide workers with OSHA-certified safety training, and make good-faith efforts to hire at least 25% low-income Houstonians. This marked our first-ever policy victory in Houston, and an enormous step toward better, safer jobs for Houston’s massive construction workforce.
In 2018, Workers Defense Project remained at the forefront of protecting and uplifting Texas' immigrant communities. From passing pro-immigrant policies to educating immigrants on their rights and defending their community from attack at the Texas legislature, we continued to lead the charge in demanding justice for our neighbors and friends.

**FREEDOM CITIES POLICY**
- Passed an Austin “Freedom Cities” policy that limits the harmful effects of anti-immigrant law SB 4 by reducing discretionary arrests, requiring full vetting and reporting on requests by ICE for Austin Police Department resources, and more.

**DALLAS INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT**
- Won a Dallas Independent School District policy to end their practice of notifying immigration enforcement when they encounter undocumented persons, including students.

**KNOW YOUR RIGHTS TRAINING**
- Provided immigration “Know Your Rights” training to **10,347 people** via social media networks and in-person trainings.

**DETENTION AND DEPORTATION DEFENSE**
- Together with a coalition of allied organizations, successfully moved every major city in Texas to join a lawsuit against the state over **SB 4**, a Texas law that forces local governments and law enforcement agencies to do the work of federal immigration officers.
2018 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Christine Owens
Executive Director; NELP

David Rolf
President; Service Employees International
Union 775

Erica Smiley
Organizing Director; Jobs with Justice
YOUR DONATION MAKES A DIFFERENCE!

- $10 = Supplies for 5 direct actions to advance worker and immigrant rights.
- $25 = 1 Facebook ad to reach 3,935 new people in 5 days.
- $50 = Trains 5 members to testify to policymakers about workplace injustices.
- $75 = Legal advice for 3 members on wage theft or workplace abuse.
- $100 = 1 “Know Your Rights” labor workshop for 25 workers.
- $250 = 2 WDP members’ deportation and detention legal defense costs.
- $500 = Graduates 10 members from an 8-week Leadership course with Workers Defense.
- $750 = Graduates 50 workers from OSHA-10 & OSHA-30 safety classes in 2 Texas cities.
- $1,000 = 1 Workers Defense immigration forum in Austin, Dallas, and Houston.
- $2,500 = 1 worker-led canvass for 5,000 workers in Dallas, Harris or Travis county.
- $5,000 = 1 worker-led policy campaign for 10,000 workers in Dallas, Harris, or Travis county.

Donations to Workers Defense Project directly support our efforts to elevate the voices and issues of working people, and are 100% tax-deductible. Learn more at workersdefense.org/donate
To give by mail, please make a check payable to Workers Defense Project and mail to:
Workers Defense Project
Attn: Development Department
5604 Manor Road
Austin, TX 78723

For more information on donating, please contact us at info@workersdefense.org

MAKE A CONTRIBUTION
You can stand with us by donating to Workers Defense Project.

GET INVOLVED
Our fight is fueled by people just like you. From internships to volunteer nights, there are many ways to get involved. Learn more by visiting workersdefense.org and sign up for our monthly e-newsletter!

FIND MORE INFORMATION
www.workersdefense.org