



GRIEVANCES AND ARBITRATIONS¹

Mid-America Carpenters Regional Council Arbitrations

MARBA received one arbitration demand in the month of March involving an alleged violation of Article 20.9 (notice to the Union before work begins).

Laborers Joint Grievance Committee

The Laborers JGC did not meet in March. The next meeting will be held on April 14, 2026, at the Laborers District Council office in Burr Ridge beginning at 9:00 a.m. There are currently four (4) cases to be heard (all filed against the same contractor).

Operating Engineers Joint Grievance Committee

The Operators JGC did not meet in March. The Union will advise the Committee of the number of grievances to be heard at the next session of the JGC which is scheduled to be held on May 6, 2026, beginning at 8:30 a.m. at the Operators offices in Countryside.

Teamsters Joint Grievance Committee

The Teamsters JGC did not meet in March. The next meeting date is scheduled for April 30, 2026, at 9:00 a.m. at the MARBA office should there be any grievances.

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING/LABOR ISSUES

MARBA Negotiations Concluded

MARBA has reached successor agreements with the Laborers District Council which are set to take effect on June 1, 2026. The Laborers agreements, which have been ratified by both parties, are a five-year extension with economic increases of 4.25% (\$3.77), 4.25% (\$3.93), 4.25% (\$4.09), 4.00% (\$4.02), & 4.00% (\$4.18). There were no changes made to any of the existing language.

MARBA and the Cement Masons also reached an agreement that is pending ratification by Local 502 (Local 11 has already held its ratification). Upon Local 502's ratification, which is scheduled for early April, additional information regarding the settlement will be shared.

In the interim, contractors that have not yet delegated their bargaining rights to a MARBA Association are encouraged to contact their Association and make sure this process is completed. If you have any questions about the delegation process, please feel free to contact the MARBA office.

Information concerning non-MARBA trades that are scheduled to conduct negotiations later over the next

few months will be sent out via email in the weekly Negotiation Update email that goes out on Fridays (beginning last week). If you are not on the Negotiation Update email list but would like to be added, please email Aaron Janik at ajanik@marba.org.

Labor Relations Intake Form

MARBA has developed a Labor Relations Intake Form designed to be completed in just a few minutes. The purpose of this form is to collect feedback and observations related to field operations under the various MARBA collective bargaining agreements. Responses submitted through the form are transmitted directly to MARBA and will assist in identifying trends, improving contract administration, and supporting ongoing labor relations efforts. As always, if a matter would benefit from further discussion, please feel free to contact Aaron Janik, Executive Director, at ajanik@marba.org. The Intake Form can be found [here](#).

INDUSTRY NEWS

RLB Crane Index Shows an Increase in Cranes in Chicago

According to the Rider Levett Bucknall’s Crane Index, the Chicago area has seen an uptick in the number of tower cranes operating. While still lagging behind the 30-40 cranes that filled the skyline in the 2010s the increase from six to nine cranes is a welcome development. The RLB Index also indicated that the Chicago area is one of four markets in North America (three in the United States and one in Canada) to see an uptick in the number of cranes dotting the landscape. *Building Up Chicago*, a blog that tracks Chicago construction, reports that there are roughly 4-6 more crane permits pending. Each tower crane is estimated to support approximately \$100–\$250 million in associated economic development.

STATE OF THE ECONOMY

Economic Indicators

Unemployment Rate	February 4.4% (January 4.3%) Illinois 4.6% (38 th – Dec 25)
Labor Participation Rate	February 62.0% (January 62.5%)
CPI All Urban	February 2026 over February 2025 = 2.41%
Consumers	2025 Half Year 1 = 2.59%, Half Year 2 = 2.78%
CPI Chicago All Items	February 2026 over February 2025 = 2.02% 2025 Half Year = 3.62%, Half Year 2 = 2.63%, Annual = 3.08%
CPI Midwest All Items	February 2026 over February 2025 = 2.80% 2025 Half Year = 2.84%, Half Year 2 = 2.84%, Annual = 2.78%
Union Membership	2025 = 10.0% (Private Sector 5.9%) 2024 = 9.9%, 2023 = 10.0%
Unionized Construction Workers	12.0% (2025), 11.2% (2024), 11.4% (2023), 11.7% (2022)

30 Year Fixed Mortgage	As of 3-26-26 6.38%, down 0.27% over the prior year. Annual Average 6.52% (25), 6.90% (24), 6.61% (23), 5.34% (22)
15 Year Fixed Mortgage	As of 3-26-26 5.75%, down 0.13% over the prior year. Annual Average 5.72% (25), 5.93% (2023), 4.58% (2022)
Brent Crude Oil Price	\$101.38 per barrel (as of March 31, 2026) \$145.61 per barrel all time high July 2008 \$2.23 per barrel all time low May 1970
Privately Owned New Housing Building Permits	5.4% below revised December rate 5.8% below January 2025 rate
Privately Owned New Housing Starts	7.2% above revised December rate (+/-13.7%) 9.5% below January 2025 rate (+/-16.5%)
GDP	Q4 2025 (2 nd) +0.7% Q4 2025 (Adv) +1.4% Q3 2025 +4.4%
DJIA	46,341.51 as of March 31, 2026 (4:00 p.m.) 48,977.92 as of February 27, 2026 (4:44 p.m.) 48,892.47 as of January 31, 2026 (4:00 p.m.)

JANIK’S J.D. – AN UPDATE ON LABOR/CONSTRUCTION/LEGAL ISSUES
AARON JANIK- MARBA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Sixth Circuit Deals Blow to NLRB Adjudicatory Authority with Recent Ruling

In 2023, the NLRB issued its decision in what has become known as the *Cemex* case. That decision overturned nearly 50 years of Board precedent. The *Cemex* standard made the issuance of a bargaining order the default remedy in certain instances where an unfair labor practice (“ULP”) is alleged during an organizing or election campaign. Under *Cemex*, an employer that declines to voluntarily recognize a union and commits a ULP prior to an election may be ordered to bargain with the union—even if the union ultimately loses the election.

Earlier this month, the Sixth Circuit held that the NLRB overstepped its authority by adopting a framework that effectively changed the default remedy from a new election to the issuance of a bargaining order. The case, *Brown-Forman Corp. v. NLRB*, involved a distillery in Kentucky—the maker of Woodford Reserve—that was the subject of an organizing campaign by a Teamsters local. The campaign followed an increase in demand for the employer’s product, which led to a ramp-up in production. During this period, the employer implemented a \$1.00 per hour wage increase. Dissatisfied with the increase, employees sought representation from the Teamsters.

The employer declined to voluntarily recognize the union and instead engaged in individual discussions with employees, during which it offered significantly larger wage increases, enhanced merit pay, expanded pay progression, and the ability to carry over vacation hours during the December holidays.

Additionally, each employee was given a bottle of bourbon prior to the election. The union ultimately lost the election by nearly a 3-to-1 margin.

An administrative law judge (“ALJ”) found that the employer had interfered with employees’ rights to organize and issued an order requiring the employer to bargain with the union. The Board adopted the ALJ’s findings and remedy but modified the underlying reasoning. Rather than applying the framework established in *Gissel*, which considers whether a bargaining order is appropriate after setting aside an election due to an employer’s severe misconduct, the Board applied *Cemex* and issued a bargaining order based on the employer’s alleged ULPs.

On appeal, the Sixth Circuit concluded that the NLRB exceeded its adjudicatory authority and remanded the case to the Board for further analysis consistent with its statutory authority. The court emphasized that it was not addressing any “potential substantive shortcomings” of the *Cemex* decision itself. The decision can be found [here](#).

UPCOMING SEMINARS AND EVENTS

UCA SPRING SHOWCASE

THE UCA SPRING SHOWCASE IS A GREAT OPPORTUNITY FOR MEMBERS TO SHOWCASE THEIR PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

DATE: TUESDAY, APRIL 7, 2026
 TIME: 4:00 P.M. TO 8:00 P.M.
 LOCATION: VENUTI’S BANQUET HALL AND RESTAURANT
 2251 W LAKE ST.
 ADDISON, IL 60101
 COST: CONTACT UCA
 CONTACT: LAUREN@UCA.ORG

CALENDAR

APRIL 9	8:30 A.M.	RCEC ECONOMIC FORUM (WOODALE)
APRIL 10	8:30 A.M.	CHICAGO FED ADVISORY COUNCIL (CHICAGO)
APRIL 14	9:00 A.M.	LABORERS JGC (BURR RIDGE)
APRIL 28	9:00 A.M.	LABORERS JGC (BURR RIDGE) REGULARLY SCHEDULED DATE
APRIL 30	9:00 A.M.	TEAMSTERS JGC (MARBA)

¹ Information for MARBA Matters was obtained from the following sources: BNA Construction Labor Reports, Crain’s Chicago Business, Northwest Times of Indiana, Chicago Tribune, and Sun-Times, CDQ, and the BLS, as well as various websites and other publications.

Did You Know?

One theory traces April Fool’s Day to the shift of the new year from April 1 to January 1 under the Gregorian calendar. Those who continued celebrating on April 1 were dubbed “April fools.”

