

The Debs Foundation Newsletter

PO BOX 9454 ■ TERRE HAUTE INDIANA 47808-9454



Summer 2025

Bernie Sanders To Receive Eugene V. Debs Award

On October 25, 2025, the Eugene V. Debs Foundation will present the Eugene V. Debs Award to Senator Bernie Sanders. Bernie Sanders is serving his fourth term in the U.S. Senate after winning re-election in 2024. His previous 16 years in the House of Representatives make him the longest serving independent member of Congress in American history. A long-time Debs supporter, Senator Sanders produced one of the first documentaries on Debs. He has consistently mentioned Eugene Debs as one of his political heroes, along with Dr. Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. and President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, all “standing with working families.”

Born on Sept 8, 1941 in Brooklyn, New York, Sanders has been one of the most influential voices for economic and social justice in America. Throughout his decades long career, Senator Sanders has embodied the spirit and conviction of Eugene V. Debs, championing the rights of working people, challenging



corporate power, and envisioning a more equitable and democratic society. He has consistently fought for universal health care, a living wage, tuition-free college, and stronger labor protections. Like Debs, his groundbreaking presidential campaigns brought democratic socialism into mainstream politics.

The Debs Award dinner will be held October 25, 2025, in Debs’ hometown of Terre Haute, Indiana.

Workers Memorial Day: A Solemn Event

Anne D’Orazio

To the strains of Amazing Grace, members of the Terre Haute community filed into the rows of chairs in the lawn of the Eugene V. Debs House. Families, friends, public officials, and labor representatives had come to pay their respects to the fallen workers of Terre Haute’s labor force. The solemnity of the occasion was marked by the North High School ROTC Honor Guard presentation of the Colors to begin the event. After a welcome and invocation, the program consisted of the origin of Workers Memorial Day, followed by a statement of the issues of past and present safety and health in the workplace, greetings of the ISU President, and proclamations read by the mayor and members of the city and county councils. The central part of the gathering was the somber reading of each of 53 names from IBEW Local 1393, UA Local 157 and IBEW 725. A bell was rung for every name followed by a moment of silence. The son of one of the workers spoke movingly about having lost his father when he was a child. The melancholy sound of the bugler playing taps concluded the event.

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The Debs Home is a National Historic Landmark

EUGENE V. DEBS FOUNDATION NEWSLETTER
Summer 2025

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Box 9454
Terre Haute, IN 47808

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Benjamin Kite, Treasurer

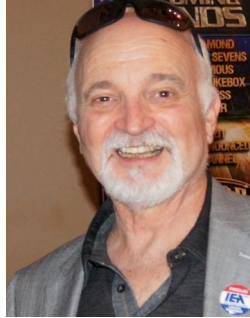
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The Debs Foundation Newsletter is published twice yearly for distribution to supporters and friends of the Foundation. The Eugene V. Debs Foundation is a non-profit, private organization which maintains the home of Eugene and Kate Debs as a museum and shrine to labor, and carries on educational and informational programs which aim to honor and promote the goals for which Debs struggled: industrial unionism, social justice, and peace. For those wishing to become supporters, a donation form is provided elsewhere in this issue.

From the Executive Vice-President

Dave Rathke

“I used to eat cheeseburgers and fries in Gene Debs’ backyard”



Years ago, I worked a strike against two clay tile plants along the Ohio River in Northern Kentucky. Driving back and forth on US 41 from Chicago to Kentucky through Terre Haute, I would stop for lunch on the bench in back of the Debs Home.

The strike dragged on for a year with the company determined to break the union. A tough economy provided the scabs, and the Kentucky State Police provided corporate protection. The union was finally decertified with the majority of voters being strikebreakers. Against the backdrop of a wave of plant closings, mass deindustrialization, and mass de-unionization, this was up close and personal.

Watching the lives of these workers, families, and communities being destroyed by a soulless multinational corporation was overwhelming for a young person experiencing this tragedy. It all seemed hopeless. Those moments eating lunch thinking of Gene Debs reminded me there could be a different world. Debs’ life said we are part of a tradition of struggle that came before us and that we will pass on to the next generation. Over the years, I have continued to stop when I can. The Debs Home and Museum is important to me as it is to so many others, even those who have never visit-

Continued on page 6

From the Secretary

Lisa Phillips



For the last twenty-two years, I have joyfully taught courses on the history of labor, women and gender, race and ethnicity, capitalism, Disney, among so many other fascinating topics.

Starting this past June, the Indiana state legislature now requires all of the state’s universities to cut programs that enroll fewer than fifteen students. Sounds reasonable, right? As of this moment, over 300 programs across the state have been cut, many of them, yes, no longer operational and perhaps irrelevant. Indiana State University’s master’s degree in history has, however, also been cut. It graduated 5-10 students per year, many of whom researched labor-related topics, everything from Eugene Debs and his attempt to create his own college (you may not have known that Debs was one of the first to promote a Howard Zinn-type people’s history) to the Working Class Union (a Black, White, and “Indian” labor union that originated in Oklahoma in the 1910s) to the United Mine Workers’ response to automation in the 1950s-60s. They were thrilled to study in Debs’ hometown and often volunteered their time at the Debs House and Museum.

We have just admitted two students, one from here in Indiana and the other from Ghana, both of whom are pursuing labor-related topics. We have to

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Museum Director's Report

Allison Duerk

Have you visited the Debs Museum lately? There's almost always something new at the 1890 home of Eugene and Kate Debs. Check out the ever-evolving exhibit spaces, browse through labor and political periodicals (historic and current), pick up a new souvenir at the gift shop, spend extra time appreciating the John Laska Murals, have lunch with friends in the garden, or simply enjoy a tour with a fresh perspective. Whether this is your first or fifteenth visit, the Debs Museum is here to welcome you.

Attendance continues to climb, and 2024 closed with nearly 1500 annual visitors. Some visited virtually with live Zoom tours, but most attended in person. These guests hailed from 46 states, 30 countries, and six continents. The appeal of Debs is as wide as the world! The Debs Museum also hit the road with guest presentations for the Vigo County History Center, Bloomington's Grandfalloon Kurt Vonnegut Festival, the Greater Lafayette Chapter of the Democratic Socialists of America, and the 2025 Socialism Conference in Chicago.

Nearly 100 years since his passing, Eugene Debs still makes the news. Museum staff have been recently interviewed for WFIU Bloomington Public Radio's programs Inner States and Noon Edition, NPR Illinois's program Crashing the Political Party, and the University of Oxford's U.S politics podcast Last Best Hope. These conversations all connect Debs to today's ongoing struggles for economic and social justice.

No museum is an island. This work would not be possible without the generosity and commitment of our supporters near and far. Please consider starting a recurring monthly donation at www.debsfoundation.org. Your support ensures that we can keep the museum doors wide open today and for many years to come. See you in Terre Haute!



Get on the Job and Organize

Jaz Brisack

I'm thrilled to report that my first book, **Get on the Job and Organize: Standing Up for a Better Workplace and a Better World**, came out last month from Simon & Schuster! It tells the story of the Starbucks Workers United campaign, from its origins in previous union efforts to other campaigns it helped contribute to, from Tesla to Ben & Jerry's. I wrote the book to help de-mystify the organizing process for other workers and to encourage everyone to understand that if you have a job, you should have a union!

Here's a short excerpt from the book about why organizing a union is a fundamentally important fight:

Labor history is full of heroic struggle, courage, care, solidarity, collective action, fortitude, hope, joy, defeat, and martyrdom. This is not to say that people always get involved in organizing efforts because of their commitment to grandiose ideological visions or their desire to transform society. Most people start organizing out of material necessity, because it offers the hope of escaping poverty, of creating a better life, of winning the right to sit across the table from the boss on an equal footing instead of submitting to the workplace hierarchy.

Organizing campaigns and strikes often force companies to make concessions. For example, to try to dissuade us from voting yes in our union elections, Starbucks granted workers seniority pay, compensating long-term workers for their tenure with the company, for the first time in the company's fifty-year history. But deciding to take on the risks of organizing—declaring current conditions untenable and rallying one's coworkers to fight for change—is no small matter. People don't start unions to extract small improvements: They start unions to fight for their rights, a voice, workplace democracy, and greater dignity and freedom. Organizing enables workers to define themselves in terms of their humanity, not in terms of their productive value to a corporation.



From the Treasurer

Benjamin Kite



When I am asked about the health of the foundation's finances, I find it hard to give a simple answer. We make a modest amount from our supporters, and some additional funds through proceeds from the banquet and sales of memorabilia from our gift shop. Occasionally we have a large expense, such as the recent roofing and plumbing work that cost \$175,000 or so. Occasionally we have a very generous donation or an especially good year with our banquet income.

While forecasts suggest that we can sustain the foundation's operations and keep the museum open for many years to come, we could easily spend \$1,000,000 on restoration of the house if we followed the recommended course and followed best practices for preserving every ballustrade and frieze. Our current endowment could not sustain that kind of expenditure, at least not all at once, so we do the most important work first and carry on.

As it stands, the endowment must hold \$500,000 in non-spendable funds, but in the future it may make sense to increase that non-spendable limit to \$1,000,000, ensuring that we can sustainably maintain and staff the museum for decades to come with investment income and without too much worry about fundraising.

In order to reach that goal, our fundraising committee has been considering various campaigns to both fund additional work to be done on the Debs home and to increase the endowment's non-spendable fund so that the fund can grow to keep up with inflation and changing times as well as reinforce our other income to ensure that our operating expenses are covered in perpetuity.

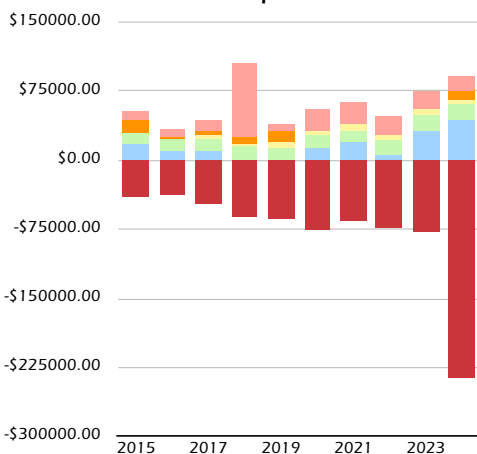
While we always avoid aggressive fundraising methods out of respect for our donors, the coming days may nonetheless bring an increase in fundraising appeals going out to our partners and supporters. We hope you can bear with us through this necessary although sometimes uncomfortable process of asking for donations.

One sure way to lessen that, of course, is to beat us to the punch and make a donation today if you can.

10-Year Profit/Loss Comparison

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Dues, Donations and Support	\$ 11175.00	\$ 8848.20	\$ 11834.00	\$ 80388.48	\$ 7521.53	\$ 25180.16	\$ 24171.21	\$ 21022.00	\$ 18132.71	\$ 16732.00
Banquet Income	\$ 13165.00	\$ 1216.00	\$ 6228.00	\$ 7709.70	\$ 12581.37	\$ 0.00	\$ 0.00	\$ 1507.00	\$ 1043.76	\$ 9951.00
Memorabilia Income	\$ 196.00	\$ 1442.00	\$ 3211.00	\$ 2112.13	\$ 6287.77	\$ 4582.06	\$ 5102.79	\$ 3067.00	\$ 6133.47	\$ 4581.00
Investment Income	\$ 11874.00	\$ 12612.00	\$ 13280.00	\$ 14261.24	\$ 13249.47	\$ 13032.70	\$ 12612.00	\$ 17962.00	\$ 16635.76	\$ 16142.86
Capital Gains (Realized)	\$ 17489.00	\$ 9176.00	\$ 9347.00	\$ 0.00	\$ 0.00	\$ 13425.82	\$ 19920.17	\$ 4875.58	\$ 31593.00	\$ 44318.43
Total Revenue	\$ 53901.00	\$ 32421.00	\$ 54526.00	\$ 104471.55	\$ 41499.06	\$ 56220.74	\$ 61806.17	\$ 48438.00	\$ 73545.92	\$ 91725.60
Expenses	\$ (40028.00)	\$ (37865.00)	\$ (46056.00)	\$ (61652.10)	\$ (63344.07)	\$ (74991.84)	\$ (66959.82)	\$ (74419.00)	\$ (78702.53)	\$ (235845.07)
Net Income (Loss)	\$ 13873.00	\$ (5444.00)	\$ 8470.00	\$ 42819.45	\$ (21845.01)	\$ (18771.10)	\$ (5153.65)	\$ (25981.00)	\$ (5156.61)	\$ (144119.47)

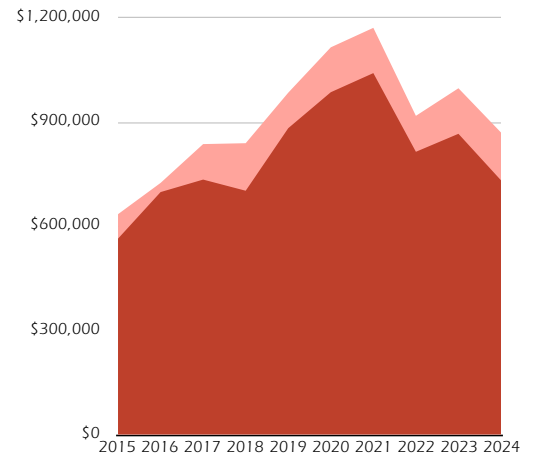
Income/Expenses 2015-2024



Total Assets 2015-2024

Year	Endowment	Total
2015	\$ 565,523.00	\$ 635,847.00
2016	\$ 699,399.00	\$ 725,775.00
2017	\$ 735,333.00	\$ 837,433.05
2018	\$ 703,254.00	\$ 839,993.91
2019	\$ 883,156.05	\$ 985,256.05
2020	\$ 986,614.00	\$ 1,115,716.15
2021	\$ 1,041,624.38	\$ 1,171,802.00
2022	\$ 815,277.62	\$ 918,689.00
2023	\$ 867,008.50	\$ 998,033.00
2024	\$ 733,202.39	\$ 870,720.00

Total Assets 2015-2024



Departed Comrade

Randy Schmidt

There have been many, many progressive activists who have turned a lifelong admiration for the life and accomplishments of Eugene V. Debs into decades of service to the Foundation that bears his name. They come from a solidarity with Debs' work for peace activism, or economic socialism, or the labor union movement — or sometimes all three.

For Mark Alan Crouch, the longtime Debs Foundation board member, labor leader, and Professor of Labor Studies, it was clearly a passion for the union movement. Born in Sedalia Missouri on July 7, 1950, raised in Kansas, and having earned a master's degree from the University of Iowa, he accepted a labor studies professorship with the Indiana University program at IPFW in Northeast Indiana. He held the position until his retirement.

I got to know Professor Crouch when I accepted a job transfer in 1986 from General Motors in Janesville, Wisconsin, to a new truck assembly plant under construction in Fort Wayne, Indiana. The UAW was deeply involved with negotiating work rule changes at the plant, brought about by management economic pressures prompted by Japanese competition. I was very concerned about the direction some of those negotiations were taking. At the same time, I had enrolled in adult education labor courses taught by Mark. He told me to stop complaining—and instead encouraged me to run for UAW union office and make a difference. And so I did, and it led to four decades of elected and appointed leadership positions with UAW Local 2209 and allied political progressive organizations.

Throughout the rest of his life, he was always there to offer advice and became one of many personal and professional mentors. While ill at the time, he made a special trip to Terre Haute to hear me deliver a speech at the 2015 Debs Banquet, on the elimination of 44 years of municipal worker's collective bargaining rights in Fort Wayne—rights eliminated by a new Republican supermajority on the city's common council... those rights have yet to be reinstated.

Poor health made it difficult for Professor Crouch to continue his activism in his later years, and he passed away at the age of 74, on March 8, 2025. He will always be remembered by his friends on the Debs Foundation board as an inspiration to those living a life dedicated to progressive ideals.

From the Executive Vice-President Continued from Page 2

ed it but know it's there. It is a living testimonial to those who struggle for socialism, labor rights, prison reform, and peace.

We need your help! Last year we spent \$175,000 to repair the roof and other structural needs of the Debs Home and Museum. We are asking you to donate to help raise that amount to maintain our current level of staffing and program. If you have donated in the past or never donated before, please make a generous contribution today.

From the Secretary Continued from Page 2

"teach them out." We fought this at every turn. If fewer and fewer institutions grant degrees, there will simply be less space for working-class "kids"

to first get into a master's program and, second, to research topics they deem important. Ivy leaguers rarely see labor, unions, work, women, gender, race as central to their experience and worthy of study, and they're less likely to interrogate capitalism's faults.

I am working with my colleagues across the state through the American Association of University Professors American Federation of Teachers (AAUP-AFT) to reverse these policies. Nationally, the AAUP-AFT has filed over thirty lawsuits against the current administration.

As you all know, these fights become another job. Had this not been going on, I would have simply reported that I published a book chapter on Debs and prison abolition in March, yay, called "Cemeteries of the Living Dead," in David Scott and Emma

Bell's *Envisioning Abolition* published by Routledge in 2025.

If your donation-checks are slow to be deposited, if the newsletter is out later than you expected, know simply that there's a lot of good labor-related work going on (and we have, we think, a solution for the delays, thank you for your continued patience). At press time, we are still trying to save the master's program, we have been offered a sliver of hope!

2025 Eugene V. Debs Award Banquet

October 25TH

Terre Haute Convention Center
Terre Haute, Indiana

Tickets and information at:

debsfoundation.org

Workers Memorial Day: A Solemn Event
Continued from Page 1

It was the second year that a coalition of representatives from Building Trades, the Greater Terre Haute NAACP Branch 3068, and the Debs Foundation had organized an event called Workers Memorial Day, which is recognized all over the world to commemorate workers killed or injured on the job. This tribute was initiated by the American Federation of Labor Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) in 1989 to recognize the legislative victory in creating the Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA) on April 28, 1970, and to read the names of those who lost their lives in the course of contributing to the production and well-being of our country. It is also a way to praise unions and their supporters for their diligence in making sure that workplaces are safe and that preventable injuries do not occur. And further it is a time to raise awareness of the several hundred work-related deaths a day and of the many years when funding was drastically cut and the number of Agency's inspectors who are needed to keep up with their duties to identify potential risks was reduced.

The date of the Workers Memorial Day is linked to the passing of the bill creating OSHA in 1970—April 28. The event can be planned for that exact day or one close to it on the weekend. The Terre Haute Planning Committee has decided to keep this important tribute to labor on a Sunday afternoon, which in 2026 would be April 26 and to set the program for 2:00 – 3:00 pm.

Fall Board Meeting

October 26TH, 2025

1:00 pm Eastern Time
Terre Haute Convention Center
& via teleconference

“Revolted by Action on Home of Debs”

One of our supporters, Sarah Pawlicki, recently reminded us of the interesting and varied information contained in the assembled documentation from the National Historic Landmarks Program's original nomination process.

Among various letters of support and encouragement are also letters of opposition and concern.

Perhaps you will find interesting this letter to the editor, published in an Ohio paper in 1966:

To the Editor:

The Designation of the home of Eugene V. Debs as a national historic landmark by Interior Secretary Udall is revolting.

Debs, a socialist who was convicted under the sedition act of 1918 of using the World War I situation to destroy our economic system, certainly does not deserve to be so honored.

THIS IS but another example of the present administration telling us that perhaps socialism is an acceptable way of life.

It is in no way acceptable to me and it is long past time for true Americans to demand of their public servants a return to nationalism.

How many tax dollars will go to support this mockery of the American ideals? I think Americans deserve an answer.

F.L.R.
Columbus

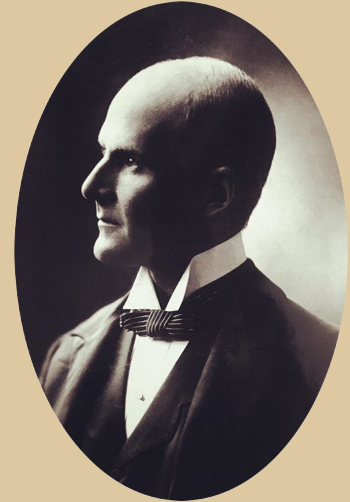
Still — here we are!

This Issue's Crossword Puzzle Solution

C	S	E		Y	S	S	A	B	M	E
I	R	U		T	N	O	M	R	E	V
M	E	D		R	E	P		O	G	E
O	D		P	I	L	X	O			
T	N	D	I	D		E	L	B	A	T
N	A	E	L			S	B	E	D	
E	S	E	R	U	M	F	O	E	B	I
				T	V	L	F	G		M
R	V	T		E	L	N		E	M	H
A	T	N	V	L	T	V		O	F	C
E	A	M	E	G	G	B	I	B	O	S

In Debs' Words

from his 1910 letter to the Socialist Party:



“The plea that certain races are to be excluded because of tactical expediency should have no place in a proletariat gathering under the auspices of an international movement calling on the oppressed and exploited workers of all the world to unite for their emancipation... Away with the ‘tactics’ which require the exclusion of the oppressed and suffering slaves who seek these shores with the hope of bettering their wretched condition...”

Eugene V. Debs

Eugene V. Debs Award Banquet Ticket Order Form

\$85 per ticket, Table of 10 for \$800 ■ Students K-College \$50

Purchase Tickets Online at: www.debsfoundation.org

Name _____

Total Amount Enclosed _____

SOLD OUT!

Please indicate your meal preference: Chicken _____ Number _____
Vegetarian _____ Number _____

Tickets must be paid in advance, checks payable to:
Eugene V. Debs Foundation ■ PO Box 9454 ■ Terre Haute, IN ■ 47808

Your reservation will be recorded and honored at the door.

Inquiries may be directed to Dave Rathke at (815) 762-0325, or
by email: banquet-information@debsfoundation.org

Personal Program Greeting

Name Only \$30 _____

Name and Greeting \$40 _____

Name(s) and Greeting:

Greetings will appear in the banquet program book, either including your name only or your name and a brief greeting (20 words max). Copies of the program book will be furnished upon request.

**Greetings must be received by
October 5th.**

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The Eugene V. Debs Foundation is a 501 (c)3 not-for-profit educational organization. Your contributions are tax-deductible. The Foundation owns and maintains the Eugene V. Debs Home and Museum and offers educational and cultural programs.

Your Continued Support Makes It Possible!