



Labor Letter

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News From the AFL-CIO

AFL-CIO reported its newly elected leadership team embarked on a post-convention tour Sept. 20 “to stand with working families to fight for jobs, health care and financial reform.” President Richard Trumka, Secretary-Treasurer Liz Shuler and Executive Vice President Arlene Holt Baker began their tour in Cleveland where they traveled across the state to meet with students, union members, community activists and public officials. They later went to Atlanta where they joined a rally outside Wachovia. Trumka condemned predatory financial practices, including foreclosures. Their last stop was in New York City where they participated in a news event outside Wall Street. Trumka called on Congress to pass strong financial reform legislation and control runaway executive pay.

Organizing and health care reform were the major focus of AFL-CIO convention delegates who also elected new officers to lead the nation's largest labor federation. Convention was held in Pittsburgh last month. New officers of the federation are President Richard Trumka, Secretary-Treasurer Liz Shuler and Executive Vice President Arlene Holt Baker. John Sweeney retired as president after serving 14 years. Shuler is the first convention-elected woman secretary-treasurer of the federation, which is considered the “Number 2” office. Delegates also approved 70 resolutions including a call for passage of the Employee Free Choice Act, labor unity, support for single-payer health care reform and a demand for a “national strategy” to create good jobs. Delegates called for a halt to new trade agreements “until we review the record of existing trade agreements and build a comprehensive new trade policy that will support the creation of good jobs at home.”

“We'll grow our middle class by building a strong labor movement,” said President Barack Obama in an electrifying speech Sept. 15 to AFL-CIO convention delegates. He praised organized labor while defending his economic policies and proposed health care reform plans. Among the pro-labor policies of his administration, Obama cited the selection of Hilda Solis as Secretary of Labor, his reversal of anti union-Executive Orders and his support for the Employee Free Choice Act. He reminded delegates “whether we're in good economic times or bad, labor is not the problem – labor is part of the solution.” But Obama focused mostly on the need for health care reform and called on labor to continued a strong role in the debate. “Few have fought for this cause harder, and few have championed it longer than you, our brothers and sisters in organized labor,” he said.

AFL-CIO reported per capita payments on 8,374, 000 members during 2008-09, compared to 12,976,000 million members in 2004-05. According to the Membership Report to the 26th AFL-CIO convention, “the totals do not include the membership numbers related to affiliates' associate members, for which the affiliates pay a reduced monthly per capita tax. Neither do they include the 3 million members of our community af-

affiliate Working America, or the 3.9 million retired union members represented by the Alliance for Retired Americans.” Among the top unions reporting membership on which they paid per capita were the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Workers, 1,378,000; American Federation of Teachers, 1,111,000; International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, 617,000.

Tens of thousands of union members, friends, family and support groups participated in Labor Day events around the nation last month. According to the AFL-CIO, there were more than 180 Labor Day weekend parades, picnics, rallies and public meetings. Pres. Obama attended the Cincinnati AFL-CIO’s 23rd Annual Labor Day picnic, one of the largest events of its kind in the country, while Vice President Joseph Biden joined Pittsburgh’s Labor Day parade, sponsored by the Allegheny County Labor Council. “Labor Day marks the beginning of the final push for Congress to consider key major working family issues, including health care and labor law reform. All hands are needed on deck to make sure Congress understands they must seize the moment to make real changes in both arenas,” said then-AFL-CIO Pres. John Sweeney

New AFL-CIO survey released Sept. 1 found that 24 percent of workers under age 35 make less than they need to pay their monthly bills, up 14 percentage points from one in 10 workers a decade ago. Report was unveiled by the AFL-CIO’s three top officers during the federation’s annual Labor Day briefing. “Young workers are significantly less likely to have health care or economic security than they were 10 years ago,” said then-AFL-CIO Secy.-Treas. Richard L. Trumka. “Unless we change it, their economic standards are going to define a new norm—a norm of lower job and living standards,” he added. According to Trumka, 10 years of opportunity have been lost as young workers are “struggling to keep their heads above water and often not succeeding. They’ve put off adulthood—put off having kids, put off education—and a full 34 percent of workers under 35 live with their parents for financial reasons,” he said.

In August, then-AFL-CIO President John Sweeney joined Rep. Judy Chu (D-Calif.), community leaders and hundreds of supporters in Los Angeles where they rallied in support of carwash workers who are fighting to join a union. Rally was organized by the LA County Federation of Labor, the CLEAN Carwash Campaign and the California Labor Federation. Event was scheduled to coincide with the opening of a new billboard near Vermont Hand Wash, urging carwash customers to “Wash Away Injustice: Support Carwash Workers.” But the sign was pulled at the last minute by CBS Outdoor Group due to pressure from carwash owners. “Our message to the owners of Vermont Hand Wash and every carwash owner in Los Angeles is clear,” said Sweeney. “Here in Los Angeles we will stand together, and fight together, until we have won together, and we have washed away injustice from the carwash industry.”

International Labor News

In a message delivered to leaders of the Group of 20 industrialized nations at their summit meeting in Pittsburgh Sept. 24-25, International Labor Organization Director-General Juan Somavia said measures taken by governments in response to the global economic crisis have created or preserved between seven million and 11 million jobs worldwide. These policies, he said, along with social protections will have reduced global unemployment among G-20 countries by an estimated 29 percent to 43 percent in the first half of 2009. Without these actions, ILO estimated that unemployment in G20 nations would have mushroomed to 32-36 million in the first half of this year, instead of the current 25 million job losses. He warned government leaders against pulling back too quickly on their stimulus actions. “If the special measures taken are unwound or withdrawn too early, the jobs crisis may worsen even further,” Somavia declared.

National and Political Events

Slowdown in wage growth for workers who kept their jobs during the current recession likely will continue for the next year, according to a report released Sept. 4 by the Economic Policy Institute. “The implosion of wage growth goes far beyond what we’ve seen in other recessions over the last 30 years or so,” EPI President Larry Mishel told news media. He predicted economic recovery will be “much longer and slower” than it was following previous recessions. With the unemployment rate expected to rise from 9.4 percent currently to more than 10 percent by early next year, downward pressure on wage growth will continue, EPI said. Wages and



Labor

October 2009

AGENDA

“This is Our Time. We Will Not be Denied.”

By Richard Trumka, President, AFL-CIO

(The following is excerpted from the acceptance speech by Richard Trumka on his election as president of the AFL-CIO.)

Our message to America is that just as unions built the middle-class once before, if you give us the chance, we can build it again!

Today our members work in every profession and every workplace imaginable.

But even though the face of the American labor movement has changed, one thing hasn't: It's that the surest, the fastest, most effective way to lift workers and our families into the middle-class is with the strength that can only come with a union contract.

What kind of labor movement do we need to become? A movement that's mobilized to create the jobs our members need, and that the future demands.

But we can only do it if we seize this moment. We can only do it if we act now. We can only do it if we provide the leadership working Americans are demanding.

Well, today I'm telling you that we will seize this moment.

But the cornerstone of any progressive economic agenda is health care reform.

And because, like (President Obama), we know that the way to make it happen is with health care reform that includes a public option! And, Mr. President, so long as you stand for a public op-

tion we are going to stand with you.

We are going to fight for the President's health care reform plan and, by God, we are going to win it.

What kind of labor movement do we need?

A younger labor movement. A greener labor movement.

A labor movement that can project its power to defend workers anywhere in the world. A labor movement that's organizing the unorganized.

A labor movement that's winning health care for every family and, yes, a labor movement that stands by its friends, punishes its enemies, and challenges those who can't decide whose side they're on.

Can we make it happen? I know we can. But I also know this: that to truly succeed we need an AFL-CIO that speaks for all union members, a movement that's both united in name and united in purpose.

From time to time a generation of trade unionists is called on to reshape organized labor to meet the needs of workers in a new economy.

Well, now it's our turn.

It's up to our generation, to those of us here in this hall, to build a newer, stronger labor movement. And a unionism that speaks as clearly and boldly to the needs of Americans today, as it

did to the men and women who stood up here in Pittsburgh so many years ago.

A unionism that understands that so long as there is pain borne of hardship and grief borne of greed our work will never be over.

George Bernard Shaw once wrote that poverty is “the greatest of our evils and the worst of our crimes.” Well, a movement that doesn't challenge that crime is complicit in it.

What's labor dream for America?

We dream of an America where men and women work at jobs where they're treated with respect and paid what they've truly earned.

We dream of an America where workers have jobs they look forward to going to every morning, not the kind they can't wait to leave every night.

We dream of an America where parents look down at that little boy or girl and know, in their hearts, that the America they'll leave to that child will be better and fairer than the America that was left to them.

What does labor want?

We want an America whose future will always, always be better than its past, where every voice is heard, and where every life matters.

Sisters and brothers, this is labor's moment.

This is our time!. And we will not be denied. God bless you and God bless the American labor movement.



“Our Values Are Timeless.”

By Liz Shuler, Secy.-Treas. AFL-CIO

(The following is excerpted from AFL-CIO Secy.-Treas. Liz Shuler’s speech to the AFL-CIO convention.)

It’s been quite a journey with the IBEW. Starting in Portland, and all throughout the United States and Canada, we have organized together, walked picket lines together, rallied together and lobbied together.

You will always be my union family.

I was fortunate to have Local 125 in my life even before I went to work there. My father Lance was a lineman working out of that Local and my late mother Joyce spearheaded a drive to organize office employees at the same utility. She was incredibly talented and supportive and, like so many hard-working American moms, made every sacrifice so her children could prosper.

My first priority is to manage the finances of the federation with complete accountability and transparency.

The federation has already made some difficult cuts. As the finance report will show, the budget will be back in the black this year, but the need for pru-



“Our Mission Remains Steadfast.”

By Arlene Holt Baker, EVP, AFL-CIO

(The following is excerpted from AFL-CIO EVP Arlene Holt Baker’s speech to the AFL-CIO convention.)

And on this historic day, when the diversity that is our goal at all levels of the Federation is exemplified in our highest offices, I’m humbled that you have elected me to continue serving as Executive Vice President. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.

To my family I want to say thank you for being there for me, supporting me in all that I do, but most of all, for loving this movement and the quest for social and economic justice as much as I do.

My family means everything to me. Like most Americans, I’m driven to protect and care for them. To me, that’s what our movement is really about. We’re not just concerned about labor’s family. Our fight is really about ensuring life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness for all families.

As we engage that pursuit, our themes may change, but our mission remains steadfast.

From Samuel Gompers to Richard Trumka, the mission of our movement has been to improve the economic conditions for workers – and by doing so we



dent measures remains great. We will do what is necessary to maintain fiscal responsibility, but we will not dilute our mission or sacrifice our principles.

Financial responsibility is critical, but the job demands more, namely, to help establish priorities for our movement.

We need to revitalize and unify labor at every level. We need to reach out to unorganized workers, especially those under 35 who, for whatever reason, don’t see us as the answer to the economic problems they face. Our message needs to resonate across generational lines.

For the first time in history, we have four generations in our movement as active and retired workers, ranging from those whose lives were shaped by the Great Depression and World War II, to the well-documented Baby Boomers, to Generation X, and to the Millennials, those born in the 1980s and later.

Our values are timeless: social justice, the dignity of work and job opportunities for all. But we need to rethink how we present them to the world.

Our task is nothing less than renewing the labor movement in the wealthiest nation in the history of the world. Four generations look to us to provide the hope, the progress and the justice they deserve.

Together we can advance those timeless values. And together we will.

strengthen our communities, our nation and our world. As Gompers once said, “our movement is of the working people, for the working people, by the working people”.

The challenges that we face today are not unlike the challenges our movement faced in the past. They struggled as we do against corporate greed and reckless profiteering. Their self-serving corporate model stands in stark contrast to our commitment to shared prosperity.

I believe with every fiber in my body that our movement must keep on ensuring that millions of workers in this country have the dignity and respect they deserve. That means good wages, decent pensions, affordable health care and continuous job training.

If we don’t fight for these securities, who will?

The power is in our hands. Our army may not be as large as it once was but our fighting spirit is stronger than ever. Because the needs of workers are as great as they’ve ever been.

This is our time, time for the labor movement to renew the promise of a better life for millions in our nation: men, women, immigrants, people of color, the disabled, gay and straight.

Let’s make the hopes and dreams of millions of them a reality. Let’s renew the American dream for working people.

salaries of private sector workers rose 1.3 percent at an annual rate in the first half of 2009, less than half the 3.4 percent rate of wage growth in the first six months of last year

Labor mourned death of Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-Mass) of a brain tumor Aug. 26. “Ted Kennedy was not just a senator for Massachusetts; he was our senator—a senator for working people, for poor people, for the old and the vulnerable. For all those who needed a champion, he was our champion,” said then-AFL-CIO President John Sweeney. Considered one of the greatest U.S. Senators in history, Kennedy helped co-write and introduced the Employee Free Choice Act. He was noted for having friends across the political spectrum, despite being vilified by right-wing fund-raisers as a “liberal.”

If current trends continue unchanged, average premium for family coverage would increase from \$12,298 in 2008 to \$23,842 by 2020, said the Commonwealth Fund. Despite cost increases paid by both employers and employees from 2000 to 2008, health care premiums also bought fewer benefits, the report also found. Report, “Paying the Price: How Health Insurance Premiums Are Eating Up Middle-Class Incomes,” predicted trends will continue unless health care legislation brings significant changes. Employer-sponsored health insurance premiums increased 119 percent between 1999 and 2008 and are projected to nearly double again by 2020, the report said. “We hope the report focuses the attention of people across the country in every state ... on making insurance markets work more in the public interest,” said Cathy Schoen, senior vice president for research and evaluation at the Commonwealth Fund and lead author of the report.

Employers routinely deny proper overtime and often pay less than the minimum wage to low-wage workers, reported a new study based on a comprehensive review of wage-law violations. In surveying 4,387 workers in various low-wage industries, including apparel manufacturing, child care and discount retailing, researchers found that 68 percent of those interviewed had experienced at least one pay-related violation in the previous work week. “We were all surprised by the high prevalence rate,” said Ruth Milkman, one of the study’s authors and a sociology professor at the University of California, Los Angeles, and the City University of New York. Study found that 26 percent of the workers had been paid less than the minimum wage the week before being surveyed and that one in seven had worked off the clock the previous week.

News From Around the Labor Movement

Change to Win federation and the All-China Federation of Trade Unions signed an agreement Aug. 26 in Beijing, China, to develop an on-going dialogue about issues of common concern, improved communications between leadership and continuation of top leadership exchanges. The agreement was signed by CTW Chairwoman Anna Burger and ACFTU Vice President Sun Chunlan. Pact reaffirms “both parties’ commitment to further exchanges, cooperation, and communication in the changing global economy” and “build[s] a new generation of solidarity that lifts labor standards, supports workers’ interests, and holds corporations accountable,” said CTW statement. “This historic visit brings together two great union federations that share a common vision of advancing workers’ interests in China and around the world,” said Burger said.

Washington-based Federal Reserve Board of Governors renamed New York State Federation of Labor President Denis Hughes as chairman of the New York Federal Reserve Bank’s board of directors in 2010. Regional Fed banks’ boards of directors offer anecdotal information on business trends and recommendations on Fed policy, but have no policy-making powers. New York Fed named AFL-CIO’s Hughes as chair of its board of directors in August for the remainder of 2009, filling a vacancy created when the previous chairman, Stephen Friedman, stepped down amid questions about his holdings of Goldman Sachs shares. Regional Fed bank chairmen are designated annually. The Fed, U.S. central bank, is comprised of a seven-member Board of Governors and 12 regional Fed banks.

International Brotherhood of Teamsters members Sept. 13 ratified first contract with Amerijet International covering about 60 pilots, ending a two-week strike. Strike began Aug. 27 after a National Mediation Board-imposed 30-day cooling off period expired. Ft. Lauderdale, Fla.-based cargo airline and the Teamsters reached an impasse in negotiations this summer despite federal mediation during the past two years of talks, which had begun in 2004. “This contract is a major step forward for the pilots, who first voted for Teamster representation more than five years ago,” IBT President James Hoffa said. According to Hoffa, pact improves

wages, benefits, and working conditions and protects workers against unilateral wage and benefit cuts.

Real-life “Norma Rae,” Crystal Lee Sutton died Sept. 11 of a brain tumor in Burlington, N.C., according to her family. She was 68. The 1980 movie character Norma Rae was based on her life as a union organizer in 1973 at a J.P. Stevens textile plant in North Carolina. “The fact that Crystal was a woman in the ’70s, leading a struggle of thousands of other textile workers against very powerful, virulently anti-union mill companies, inspired a whole generation of people...,” said Bruce Raynor, now president of Workers United and executive vice president of the Service Employees International Union, who organized with Sutton.

Writers Guild of America, West elected John Wells as President. Wells, who served as president of the union from 1999-2001, defeated Elias Davis by a 53-to-47 percent margin. Davis, formerly secretary-treasurer, was endorsed by outgoing President Patric M. Verrone, who led the union during a 100-day strike that ended last year. Wells, considered a powerful figure in the television industry who is described as a “moderate” in the union, was executive producer of the hit TV shows “ER” and “The West Wing.” Tom Schulman was elected vice president and David Weiss was elected secretary-treasurer, both of whom ran with Davis.

Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen ratified five-year collective bargaining agreement covering some 5,000 locomotive engineers at CSX Transportation Inc., union announced Sept. 11. Contract, which is a continuation of an agreement ratified in April 2007, covers years 2010-2014. General wage increases will total 16 percent. “This agreement represents an acknowledgment by [CSX] of the contributions of locomotive engineers to [CSX]’s shippers, as well as a recognition of the carrier’s profitability in these difficult economic times,” BLET President Ed Rodziewicz said.

California Nurses Association/National Nurses Organizing Committee convention delegates voted unanimously to endorse and join a new 150,000-member union of registered nurses, union announced Sept. 10. New union, National Nurses United, will merge the memberships of the CNA/NNOC, which represents 80,000 RNs; the United American Nurses, which represents 45,000 RNs; and the Massachusetts Nurses Association, which represents 23,000 RNs. MNA is expected to approve the merger Oct. 1 at its convention while UAN will vote at its National Labor Assembly Nov. 2-3. Founding convention is scheduled for Dec. 7-8 in Scottsdale, Ariz. “Let it be known this was a unanimous vote by the House of Delegates. This is truly a historic moment and I hope it sends chills down the backs of those employers who would want to keep us down,” said CNA/NNOC Co-President Deborah Burger.

In the Public Sector

American Postal Workers Union and the National Postal Mail Handlers Union Aug. 25 agreed with the U.S. Postal Service to near-identical \$15,000 deals to offer buyout incentives for up to 30,000 workers who retire or resign by Nov. 30. USPS said similar offers were not extended to National Association of Letter Carriers and the National Rural Letter Carriers’ Association because letter carriers’ work continues to grow as the number of addresses increases by 1.5 million each year. According to APWU President William Burrus, Postal Service’s statutory obligation to pre-fund retiree health insurance “has caused tremendous deficits” forcing the agency to apply disproportionate budget cuts to bargaining unit employees. If the maximum 30,000 postal workers accept the buyout offer, the Postal Service could save as much as \$500 million next year.

NLRB Rulings and Significant Court Decisions

Two-member National Labor Relations Board upheld Aug. 27 administrative law judge’s finding that Fremont Medical Center & Rideout Memorial Hospital in Yuba City and Marysville, Calif., illegally withdrew recognition from the California Nurses Association for about 450 registered nurses. Members Schaumber and Chairman Liebman further adopted the judge’s order to the hospital to bargain with the union. NLRB found that CNA still retained majority support among bargaining unit members and the company unlawfully made unilateral changes to wages, benefits and past practice of providing union access to the facilities. Case arose when the hospital delayed bargaining on a first contract for nearly 10 months before receiving a decertification petition signed by a majority of workers. The ALJ later upheld the union’s claim it retained majority status because several employees had revoked their signatures.