



WHITE COLLAR

OFFICE AND PROFESSIONAL EMPLOYEES INTERNATIONAL UNION, AFL-CIO, CLC

No. 503

Issue 3, Fall 2008

OPEIU Endorses Obama for President

The OPEIU Executive Board, at its meeting held during the week of October 6, 2008 in Annapolis, Maryland, has voted to formally endorse Senator Barack Obama for President of the United States. This action follows an earlier endorsement by the national AFL-CIO Executive Council in which both President Michael Goodwin and Secretary-Treasurer Nancy Wohlforth voted affirmatively.

Many Local Unions have been supporting Senator Obama for several months and have implemented their own member mobilization programs. The International Union has accelerated member mobilization in Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Florida, Washington State and others. State coordinators have been appointed to work on the effort with Local 494

member Denise Brooks (MI), Senior International Representative Gary Nuber (OH), Local 153 Business Representative Seth Goldstein (PA), Florida Regional Director Ed Darcy Sr. (FL) and Local 8 Business Manager Suzanne Mode (WA).

It is critical for Senator Obama to win the majority of these states in order to be elected. Michigan State AFL-CIO President Mark Gaffney has stated that "Michigan in 2008 is the Florida of 2000." On September 9, 2008, President Gaffney convened a meeting of the representatives of OPEIU Local Unions in Michigan, representing more than 7,000 members, which President Goodwin and Political Director Kevin Kistler attended. He described the unprecedented training and education program planned for the coming weeks at loca-



Senator Barack Obama

tions throughout the state. The effort will include phone banks, labor-to-labor walks, work place flyers, letters to members from principal officers of Local Unions, work site visits and door to door get-out-the-vote efforts.

(Continued on page 12)

Members Mobilize to Support Obama

OPEIU Political Director Kevin Kistler has announced an intensive member mobilization plan in support of Senator Barack Obama for President of the United States.

The plan includes member mobilization efforts in Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Florida, Washington State and others with each effort under the direction of a state coordinator. These states are key for the election of Senator

Obama. The OPEIU member mobilization program was extremely active in the Democratic primary elections earlier in the year, and it is expected that the general election effort will generate even more member support. "Members are feeling the need to get involved this time because so much is at stake," said Kistler. "The OPEIU will use all of the energy of its members, and all available resources, to win this election. We cannot afford four more

years of the Bush administration, which is what we'll get with McCain," he said.

Members in Local Unions in the targeted states will be asked to join in a wide range of union activities including phone banks, labor-to-labor walks, work place flyers, work site visits, rallies and door to door get-out-the-vote efforts. They will work to make sure that members fully understand the issues and

(Continued on page 10)

INSIDE

ORGANIZING

F O R

CHANGE

3

OPEIU Delegates to DNC Convention

5

Local 30 Elects Officers

4

McCain-Palin Revealed!

6

AFL-CIO Voter Protection Program

Editorial



This is Our Moment—This is Our Time

By Michael Goodwin, International President

This is our moment — this is our time. We have all heard this phrase spoken by Senator Barack Obama many times during the campaign. In every sense of the word, he couldn't be more right.

For the first time in history, Americans will have the privilege of electing an African American as President of the United States. At no other time would such an opportunity have been possible. Many union members attended the historic march on Washington, DC on August 28, 1963, where Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. delivered his immortal “I Have a Dream” speech. He referenced the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation 100 years earlier by President Abraham Lincoln. He stated that the “momentous decree came as a great beacon light of hope to millions of Negro slaves who had been seared in the flames of withering injustice.”

He pointed out that since the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation, “the Negro is still not free... sadly crippled by the manacles of segregation and the chains of discrimination... languished in the corners of American society, and finds himself exiled in his own land.” He noted that America has defaulted on its promissory note to guarantee all Americans “unalienable rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.”

Dr. King said that “now is the time to make real the promises of democracy and to rise from the dark desolate valley of segregation to the sunlit path of racial justice.” He stated that “1963 is not an end,” but a beginning for “the Negro to be granted his citizenship rights.” He further stated that “the Negro will never be satisfied as long as he is the victim of unspeakable horrors of police brutality” and “cannot gain lodging in the motels of the highways and cities. We cannot be satisfied as long as our children are stripped of their selfhood and robbed of their dignity by a sign stating: ‘For Whites Only.’” And we cannot be satisfied until “justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream.”

He said that “I have a dream that my four little children will live one day in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character.”

Who would have believed that forty years later, so much of what Dr. King dreamed about in 1963 would become a reality? The nomination of Senator Barack Obama, an African American, sets in high gear the drive to complete the dreams of Dr. King.

I was fortunate to have had the opportunity to attend the

Democratic National Convention in Denver, Colorado in August 2008 and observe the pride of so many African Americans in attendance, as they witnessed Senator Obama accepting the Democratic Party nomination. Many were in disbelief that the country has come so far in such a short period of time. I was so taken by Senator Obama's speech and proclamation of this is our moment—this is our time, that I felt the need to hug Vice President Green P. Lewis, a proud African-American man, who was standing nearby. I wanted to be part of his joy on that historic night.

It is now up to all of us to close the sale and make sure that Senator Barack Obama is elected President of the United States. In his visit with us at the AFL-CIO Executive Council meeting in June 2008, he made it clear that he stands with working families on all of their issues—no doubt about it! As president, he will sign the Employee Free Choice Act, which will be the beginning of liberating workers in the same way that Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Senator Barack Obama have liberated African Americans. We hope that it doesn't take forty more years, but we also look forward with pride to when workers experience their own Emancipation Proclamation. That's how important EFCA is to working families. It is absolutely essential that we elect a president who will sign this important legislation.

Throughout this issue of *White Collar*, we have tried to present the pros and cons of each candidate, and how the election of either candidate would affect you as a worker. We hope that you will reach the same conclusion that we have, which clearly demonstrates that Senator Barack Obama is the workers' candidate. Please review the information contained in this issue carefully, and we hope that you will make the right choice on November 4, 2008.

If we all make the right choice, history will once again be made. This is our moment—this is our time!

“I have a dream that my four little children will live one day in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character.”

—Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.
August 28, 1963

OPEIU Delegates Attend DNC Convention in Denver

Obama Offers Change We Can Believe In!



More than 76,000 people gathered at Denver's INVESCO Field at Mile High Stadium to hear Senator Barack Obama accept the Democratic nomination for President of the United States. Among those present at the 45th Democratic National Convention were OPEIU President Michael Goodwin and Secretary-Treasurer Nancy Wohlforth, as well as five OPEIU members who served as delegates—Denise Brooks, Sue Ann Buchanan, Judy Sugnet, Sylvia Woods and Tony Vanderbloemen. The convention was held August 25-28 and featured a range of speakers, including Senator Hillary Clinton, former President Bill Clinton, and vice presidential nominee Senator Joe Biden. In his acceptance speech, Senator Obama told the nation “this election has never been about me. It’s been about you...at defining moments like this one, the change we need doesn’t come from Washington. Change comes to Washington. Change happens because the American people demand it—because they rise up and insist on new ideas and new leadership, and new politics for a new time. America, this is one of those moments.”



Delegates and attendees to the 45th Democratic National Convention. Pictured are (left to right) Vice Presidents Becky Turner and Green P. Lewis, Tony Vanderbloemen, Denise Brooks (Local 494), President Michael Goodwin, Judy Sugnet (Local 153), Vice President Walter Allen Jr., Sue Ann Buchanan (Local 13) and Secretary-Treasurer Nancy Wohlforth.



OPEIU delegate Denise Brooks, Local 494, with Senator Barack Obama.

McCain and Palin Revealed!

Why Working Families Oppose John McCain

Where to begin?

Senator John McCain has one of the most anti-worker voting records in Washington, DC.

For 26 years he has sided with the rich and powerful, while beating down efforts to help working people.

When he starts every speech “my friends,” he certainly doesn’t mean any of us.

The current economic meltdown that threatens our savings and retirement plans came about through de-regulatory “favors” McCain bestowed on the bankers and investment brokers who fund his campaign. He voted repeatedly for the same policies that brought us the current financial catastrophe.

McCain continues to insist “the fundamentals of our economy are strong” even as trillions of taxpayer dollars go down the drain.

As working families worry about losing their jobs and struggle with high energy and food prices, McCain supports tax breaks for big oil corporations. And his answer to the health care crisis is to tax worker health benefits.

If that doesn’t motivate you to phone bank and leaflet for Barack Obama, maybe this will:

Things have been bad under Bush-Cheney, but they can be even worse with McCain-Palin.

McCain likes to claim he’s a “maverick” but the record shows he has voted with the Bush administration 90 percent of the time.

In his “maverick” mode while not a candidate for president, he voted against the Bush tax cuts, saying they were “tilted to the wealthy” and that it was “inappropriate to cut taxes in war time.”

Well, those tax cuts still target the richest one percent of our population and our country is still very much at war, but McCain the presidential candidate now wants to make those tax cuts permanent!

McCain has voted repeatedly for harm-

ful trade deals and against repealing tax breaks for companies that send jobs overseas. When workers complain about unfair economic policies, McCain’s top economic adviser calls them “whiners.”

Just how “out of touch” is John McCain with ordinary people?

Here is a classic example:

Earlier this year at one of his “town-hall” meetings, McCain railed against one of the most admired programs in America: Social Security. He termed it “an absolute disgrace.” He said “we have got to understand that we are paying present-day retirees with the taxes paid by young workers in America today.”

Huh?

As just about everyone with the exception of John McCain is aware, that’s how the system was designed to operate. And since FDR, it has served as a financial bedrock of retirement security for generations of Americans.

After that clunker, McCain’s anti-worker position on other issues continues to hurt, but come as no surprise. Here are just a few that seriously undermine the American dream:

- He voted 19 times against minimum wage increases.
- He blocked a bill to protect overtime rights.
- He voted to gut the Family and Medical Leave Act.
- He opposed extending Federal Unemployment Insurance Benefits for jobless workers.
- He voted against funding for after-school programs.
- He voted against funding for Head Start.
- He voted to block the Employee Free Choice Act.
- He voted against bargaining rights for federal employees.
- He supports replacing Social Security with privatized accounts.
- He opposes the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act.

Hillary Voters to Gov. Sarah Palin: “We know Hillary Clinton, and you’re no Hillary Clinton”

Putting party ahead of country, Republican presidential candidate John McCain made the stunning choice of Alaska Governor Sarah Palin as his running mate.

Who is she? What are her qualifications?

Local TV sports announcer, four years on the city council, six years as part-time mayor of a town of 7,000, and 20 months as the governor of a state with 650,000 people. Married to the “first dude” with five kids, including Willow, Trig and Track.

It is scary to think that the self-described “hockey mom” with a Barney Fife resume could be a “heart-beat away from the presidency.”

What was McCain thinking?

Manipulating voters to win an election. The religious right that often calls the shots in the Republican party never did like McCain. Neither did the Rush Limbaughs or Ann Coulters.

But they love Sarah Palin. As a Pentecostal who supports teaching creationism in the schools, Palin is from the farthest fringe of the fundamentalist wing of the GOP.

The cynical McCain not only expects Gov. Palin to rouse evangelicals, but to attract “disenchanted” Hillary Clinton supporters.

Striving for a better, fairer America and appealing to the best that is in us, Hillary voters made history when they put 18 million cracks in the glass ceiling. And those voters who know and fought for Hillary, know that Sarah Palin is no Hillary.

Palin is dead wrong on every issue important to Hillary supporters, such as equal pay, health care, worker rights, reproductive choice, judicial

(Continued on next page)

Hillary Voters to Gov. Sarah Palin: “We know Hillary Clinton, and you’re no Hillary Clinton”

(Continued from previous page)

appointments, stem-cell research, ending the Iraq War and protecting the environment, to mention a few.

Palin is against sex education, birth control, alternate energy development and freedom of speech (as mayor she tried to ban books and attempted to fire the librarian who stood up to her).

Palin tried to throw a cloak of silence over “Troopergate,” an investigation by Alaska lawmakers into whether she abused her power in trying to remove a state trooper who divorced her sister.

Although she campaigns against “earmarks,” as mayor she hired lobbyists to bring millions of federal dollars for her little town, and while running for governor championed the “bridge to nowhere.”

Her record on national issues is almost nonexistent. Her husband, “first Dude” Todd Palin, is a member of the United Steelworkers. That means he earns a good wage and has good health insurance.

But Gov. Palin won’t say where she stands on the Employee Free Choice Act that would make it easier for other Americans to join unions and earn better money and benefits.

Where does she stand on privatization of Social Security? What is her position on job-killing free trade?

Voters have to assume she’s with McCain, and against workers, on these issues.

McCain boasts that Palin has “balanced budgets.” Sure, unlike governors in the lower 48 states, where the collapsing Bush economy has forced them to make painful cuts in needed public services, balancing a budget in resources-rich Alaska means sending every resident a dividend check.

Palin charmed the media with her moose-shooting gun exploits. Guns probably make for a rollicking good time in sleepy Wasilla, Alaska, where they don’t have too many street gangs or concern over assault weapons and drive-by shootings that mayors must deal with in places like New York and Philadelphia and Los Angeles.

A new organization, Women Against Sarah Palin, issued a call to action. “It is presumed that the inclusion of a woman on the Republican ticket could win over women voters. We want to disagree, publicly. We believe that this terrible decision has surpassed mere partisanship, and that it is a dangerous farce on the part of a pandering and rudderless presidential candidate...”

On their web site, <http://womenagainstsarahpalin.blogspot.com>, the group declares: “Ms. Palin’s political views are in every way a slap in the face to the accomplishments that our mothers and grandmothers and great-grandmothers so fiercely fought for, and that we’ve so demonstrably benefited from.”

Hillary supporters agree: “No way, no how, no McCain, no Palin!”

Local 30 Members Choose Allen/Giordano Team

The ballots are in and the members of Local 30 have once again chosen to support their incumbent leaders. Executive Director Walter Allen, Jr. and President Marianne Giordano were overwhelmingly re-elected to lead the Southern California/Arizona Local Union. Re-elected by margins of more than 70 percent of the votes cast, Allen and Giordano were pleased with the results.

“Our Local has come a very long way since our trusteeship in 2000-2001, and it is clear that our members know and appreciate the hard work and the solid leadership we have provided,” said Giordano. “It is always gratifying to receive such thanks and support for the work you do. I look forward to these next three years and all the new opportunities to add value to membership in Local 30.”

“With so many challenges ahead, contracts to negotiate, health care benefits to protect, more workers to organize, and political campaigns to support, the work never ends,” said Allen. “As the landscape continues to change economically and politi-

cally, we must also change in order to provide effective leadership. I am very grateful to the members of our great union for their vote of confidence, and their ongoing commitment to our continued success.”

Also winning re-election to new three-year terms at Local 30 were Executive Board Members Carmen Corral, Sue Smith, Hector Peralta, and Larry Petrea. Vice President Cathy Young, Recording Secretary Diane Nunez, Los Angeles Executive Board member Ruth Porchas, and Senior Trustee Katie Doyle ran unopposed.

“We have a great team of leaders who support each other and work well together,” said Young. “I have been a member of this union for more than 30 years and an officer for most of that time, and I can tell you that the union is the strongest, most effective, and best managed that we have ever been. We deliver on the promise to our members every day and this is the reward for that commitment.”

“I am always proud to receive the support of our members, and I never take it for granted,” said Corral. “In my more than 30



Walter Allen Jr.
Local 30, Executive Director

years in Local 30, I have worked with some good leaders, but Walter has done more for our members than anyone we have had lead our union. Marianne is the true voice of our members and has done more in her role than anyone has before. I am very proud of them and proud to be a part of their team.”

AFL-CIO Launches Voter Protection Program

The AFL-CIO Executive Council Committee on Civil and Human Rights recently convened to discuss the AFL-CIO's voter protection program, "My Vote, My Right." The initiative is designed to avoid the voting rights violations and voter suppression encountered in both the 2000 and 2004 elections.

OPEIU President Michael Goodwin, who serves as co-chair of the committee, and OPEIU Secretary-Treasurer Nancy Wohlforth attended the meeting. "The type of voter sup-

pression and voting rights violations we saw in the last two elections had a direct bearing on the outcome of those elections," said Goodwin. "We can't allow this to happen again in November—the outcome of this election is just too important to the working families of this country. We have to do everything possible to ensure that all votes are counted and that everyone's voices are heard. This includes using all the resources available to the AFL-CIO nationwide, including using the state and local central labor coun-

cils, as well as establishing coalitions with religious and community-based institutions to carry out voter protection programs."

Secretary-Treasurer Nancy Wohlforth noted that Pride at Work, of which she is co-president, was engaged with progressive organizations such as MoveOn.org to expand awareness of the need for voter protection.

"The OPEIU recognizes the importance of this program and is providing support both financially and with resources on the ground," Wohlforth said.

Local 8 Makes Political Action a Top Priority

Local 8 in Seattle, Washington is making grassroots political action and get-out-the-vote activities a top priority with their Labor Neighbor program. The program is a grassroots member-to-member political education program,

where union members talk to other union members and provide information about issues that are imperative for working families, and the candidates who support those issues.

"Our Political Action Committee (PAC) is growing and contributions through payroll deductions keep increasing," said Local 8 Business Manager Suzanne Mode. "As of September 1, we reached 325 volunteer hours, more than three quarters of the way toward meeting our goal of 400 hours by Election Day."

The union established their PAC more than 15 years ago, but as the number of public employees, homecare and health-related workers increased within the union, they realized the best way to help their members was to get to work on a strong legislative agenda. During the last five years, they have reinvigorated their PAC and rallied their members. The members understand that

their wages, benefits and working conditions are paid for by the support and votes of elected officials, and they are turning out in high numbers to elect those candidates who will fight for social justice.



Local 8 Executive Board member Kathi Scott phone banking for Labor Neighbor.



Local 8 members Rebecca Johnson and Angela Boehlke visit fellow union members to talk about the upcoming election.

Executive Order Could Derail Current Organizing Efforts

Continuing its assault on working Americans, the Bush administration is considering an executive order that would eliminate the card-check system of organizing at large government contractors.

The card-check system allows workers to form a union if a majority of them sign a union-authorization card. Employers usually prefer a secret-ballot election as it makes it more difficult for the union to secure a majority vote.

According to *The Wall Street Journal*, "the issue has become a factor in some Senate races and the presidential campaign.

Sen. Barack Obama, the Democratic presidential nominee, supports legislation favoring the card-check approach. Sen. John McCain, opposes such legislation.

"The executive order would require large government contractors to use secret ballot elections for union organizing or risk losing government contracts, say people familiar with the order," continues *The Wall Street Journal*. "Though companies typically prefer secret ballots, some are willing to accept card checks to avoid a fight."

It isn't clear if the order would apply to a company's entire operations or only those

operations serving the government. According to a person familiar with the draft of the order, "it would exclude companies with small government contracts."

"This is politics at its worse," said Bill Samuel, the AFL-CIO's director of government affairs. He called the order a gift to the business community "from the most anti-union administration that we've seen."

The Wall Street Journal reports that "Sen. Obama has declared his support for a proposed federal Employee Free Choice Act that would let unions use card checks anytime they wished."

Washington State Nurses Win NLRB Victory

The Washington State Nurses Association has won a victory as the National Labor Relations Board overturned its earlier decision that the employer's ban on union buttons did not constitute an unfair labor practice.

The Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals held

that the ban constituted unfair labor practices and that the nurses should be allowed to wear their union buttons. The Court relied heavily on the Sixth Circuit's decision in Mt. Clemens General Hospital in ruling that the nurses at Sacred Heart Hospital in Spokane are entitled to wear buttons stating:

RNS Demand Safe Staffing, as well as similar precedent setting cases.

"The Board has long recognized that under Section 7, union members have a protected right to wear union insignia in the workplace," reads the decision.

OPEIU is pleased with the decision.

Local 107 Renews Contract at Air Logistics

Bargaining began on May 27, 2008 for a 30-month renewal agreement between OPEIU Local 107 and Air Logistics, Inc., and was completed on September 9, 2008. The renewal agreement provides for industry leading annual base pay salary increases that establish a new gold standard for OPEIU represented hel-

icopter pilots in the Gulf of Mexico.

The Local Union is currently presenting the agreement to the membership for review. Pilots will cast their ballots electronically through Allied Union Services before the end of October 2008.

The Local Union negotiating team consisted of President Kenneth Bruner, Chair of

the Strategic Bargaining Committee (SBC), Local 107 Kent Bollaert, Trustee Erica Green, and OPEIU Senior International Representative Paul Bohelski.

OPEIU Local 107 represents some 348 pilots employed by Air Logistics, Inc.

A full report will be published in the next edition of *White Collar*.

Local 102 Signs Agreement with Lear Siegler Services

Local 102 in Daleville, Alabama signed a three-year agreement with Lear Siegler Services Inc. on September 12, 2008. The members of Local 102 are responsible for training US Army, Air Force and Allied helicopter pilots.

Local 102 became affiliated with the OPEIU in 2000 after many years of going it alone at the bargaining table. With the expertise of the International Union, Local 102 negotiated a labor contract in 2002 that yielded a 15.8 percent increase in starting salaries, a 10.4 percent raise for the senior pilots and an increase in vacation days across the board.

The CBA negotiations in 2005 were

tough, but Local 102 succeeded in securing a 12.5 percent increase over three years, no increase in health care costs and another increase in vacation days.

The newly ratified CBA is effective October 1, 2008 and has an increase in the starting pay of 20.3 percent, a 4 percent hike for the senior pilots, plus a retention bonus. Additionally, there is a one-week vacation for first-year pilots and only a slight increase in the cost of health care, with no erosion of benefits.

The pilots and members of Local 102 say, "Thank you, OPEIU, for the tremendous help you and your staff have been and especially to Senior International



Pictured left to right are Local 102 Trustee J.T. Miller, Consultant Dave Oltmans, Secretary-Treasurer Richard White, President Steven Rush, Vice President Jim Sickler and Recording Secretary Ron Arsenault.

Representative Paul Bohelski for being there when we needed him," said Local 102 President Steven Rush.

WHITE COLLAR

Official Organ of
OFFICE AND PROFESSIONAL EMPLOYEES
INTERNATIONAL UNION
affiliated with the AFL-CIO, CLC
http: www.opeiui.org

MICHAEL GOODWIN
President

NANCY WOHLFORTH
Secretary-Treasurer



CALM
ACPS

WHITE COLLAR (ISSN 0043-4876) is published quarterly by Office and Professional Employees International Union, 1660 L St., N.W., Suite 801, Washington, D.C. 20036. Periodical postage paid at Washington, D.C. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Office and Professional Employees International Union, 1660 L St., N.W., Suite 801, Washington, D.C. 20036.

Reproduction by the Labor Press of any or all material herein contained is not only permitted, but wholly desirable in the interest of workers' education.

Subscription Price \$1 a Year

Union Plus—working for you, even when you're not working.

Facing Hardships

Your OPEIU Union Plus benefits provide a lifeline.

When financial hardship strikes, you can count on the OPEIU Union Plus benefits to stand behind you with special help and support. Our unique Safety Net programs protect your financial security and help see you through unexpected emergencies and hard times. We keep working for you—even when you're not working.

When you're on strike or laid off...

- We stand ready to help:
- **Make your Union Plus Mortgage payments.** Call 1-800-848-6466.
 - **Skip payments on your Union Plus Credit Card.** Call 1-800-551-2873.
 - **Skip payments on your Union Plus insurance.** Life/Accident call 1-800-393-0864. Auto call 1-800-294-9496.
 - **Get discount prescriptions and vision care.** Call 1-877-570-4845.

When you suffer a disaster or disability...

- and have a significant loss of income, your Union Plus Credit Card offers additional aid:
- **Lifeline Trust** provides one-time grants and payments to cardholders facing long-term disability and illness. Call 1-877-761-5028.
 - **Disaster Relief Fund** helps you weather the storms of a natural calamity. (We provided \$400,000 to union cardholders hit hard by Hurricane Katrina.) Call 1-877-761-5028.

Always at your side.

- Whatever difficulty you face, Union Plus is here to help you. We'll make sure you get the most from your union benefits, including:
- **Free credit counseling and budget advice.** Call 1-877-833-1745.
 - **Free legal consultation** up to 30 minutes. Call 1-888-993-8886.
 - **Save My Home Hotline** provides free confidential consultation with expert housing counselors. Call 1-866-490-5361.



Hope Health Care Arbitration Victory for Local 459

An arbitrator has ruled that Hope Network Behavioral Health Services had no right to make a change in health care coverage for the 227 employees represented by Local 459 who work in Kent, Kalamazoo and Muskegon Counties.

Hope Behavioral is wholly owned by Hope Corporate, a much bigger organization based in Kent County. In October 2007, Hope Corporate moved all of its employees to Aetna health insurance. Local 459 members at Hope Behavioral had enjoyed much better health care plans. Hope Corporate had the right to change coverage for its 1,800 non-union employees, but the union contract protected the unionized employees. Hope corporate decided to ignore the contract and made the change anyway. An arbitrator has ruled that they had no right to do so.

Hope Behavioral has been under a union contract since 2000. In the first contract with Hope Behavioral, the health care was specifically spelled out. The group there has been flexible about health insurance and, in 2003, the members agreed to take out the specific language, so that each year they could shop for the best



Pictured are Local 459 members Judy Miller, Lamar Crump, Frank Remas and Ruth Hunter.

health care at the best price. But it was agreed that no change would be made unless Hope Behavioral and Local 459 agreed. This was followed in 2004, 2005 and 2006. The system actually worked well and Hope Behavioral employees ended up with much better health care in 2006.

Local 11 Member Reinstated with Full Back Pay, Benefits

Local 11 member Doug Luse sees himself as the “poster boy” for organized labor. A 20-year veteran of the Vancouver, Washington Police Department, Lt. Luse was suspended July 9, 2006, and fired March 28, 2007, for alleged insubordination in the field and for making false statements during an internal affairs investigation.

He and his union—OPEIU Local 11—fought the discharge, and last month arbitrator Michael H. Beck of Seattle reinstated Luse with full back pay and benefits. The union’s collective bargaining agreement with the employer stipulates that the losing party pays for all arbitrator fees and expenses. In this case, it was almost \$25,000! Luse returned to work July 7, 2008.

“It was a hugely expensive fight, but it clearly was the right thing to do,” said Mike Richards, Executive Secretary of Local 11. “We prevailed because we were right.”

Luse, 44, has lived in Vancouver most of his life. Married with three daughters, he holds a bachelor’s degree in law and justice from Central Washington College. He joined the Vancouver Police Department as a street cop in 1987 and has worked his way up the chain of command — from corporal to sergeant and finally to lieutenant.

He has served as president of the

Vancouver Police Officers Guild and is active at Local 11.

During his career he has received numerous letters of recognition and praise. He was reprimanded once—for taking part in the investigation in the theft of his own checkbook, when he was told not to.

Luse didn’t want to point any fingers in his firing, but arbitrator Beck in his findings released June 21, 2008, noted that “the investigation (of Luse) suffered from bias, particularly that of Assistant Chief (Mitch) Barker.”

Barker was appointed acting chief in August 2006 following the resignation of Police Chief Brian Martinek. Luse was fired while Barker was in command.

In exonerating Luse of all charges, Beck stated in his 53-page opinion that the Vancouver Police Department did not conduct a timely investigation (from start to finish it took nine months) and that the Department did not meet the standard of “clear and convincing evidence” to fire him.

Beck also noted that the investigation “was neither full nor fair, as witnesses with relevant information were not interviewed, police reports with relevant information were not reviewed, and bias permeated the investigation.”

Lt. Luse says he will go back to work “with a clean slate” and he doesn’t antici-

pate any problems. “It was a convincing win for me. I just want to go back to work and do my job.”

A new police chief (Cliff Cook) was hired in April 2007. Barker is back at his post as assistant chief.

(Editor’s Note: A recent assessment of the City of Vancouver’s budget projects a deficit of more than \$6 million for the 2009-10 biennium. Approximately 76 percent of the City’s budget is comprised of salary and benefit costs for police officers and civilian support staff. Unless steps are taken to remedy the anticipated shortfall, the Vancouver Police Department will have to reduce its operating budget by \$2.3 million.)

Excerpted from an article by Mike Gutwig, Editor of the NW Labor Press, July 18, 2008.



Local 11 Executive Secretary Mike Richards and Lt. Doug Luse.

Lobbyist Corner

Working Families: November 4 Can Be a New Day

Submitted by OPEIU Lobbyist Robert McGlotten of McGlotten & Jarvis

In the last eight years, working families have seen their world turned upside down. The United States' economy has 3.2 million fewer jobs today than it did when President George W. Bush took office, including 2.5 million fewer manufacturing jobs. Bush appears headed for the dubious distinction of being the first president since Herbert Hoover to preside over a decline in total employment during his term in office.

It's not just that unemployment is so high (6.1 percent) or that the economy is in such critical condition, as it is that everything seems to be falling apart. Mortgages are in default, our financial institutions go hat in hand to foreign banks for desperately needed cash, and the cost of filling a gas tank has tripled.

It is not the present circumstances that have working families panicked, but it's the threat that there is no end to this dire situation in sight. We will have a choice this November, to vote for a president who will begin to address many of the problems that face this nation, and give that person a Senate and a House of Representatives to achieve meaningful legislative goals.

Working families must go to the polls this November in large numbers like never before. We will have to demand of our elected officials that they pursue an agenda that includes the following:

- Domestic Marshall Plan, which would address our nation's infrastructure, repair roads and bridges, schools, hospitals, and other public buildings;
- Protect Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid programs;
- Provide workers and the unemployed with a health care program;
- Trade laws that will protect American workers;
- Immigration reform;
- Address climate change with a program that looks at clean coal technologies, nuclear, carbon capture and storage, energy efficiency and conservation, plug-in hybrid electric vehicles, and provides for jobs in the industry;
- New FDA regulations that protect our food supply;
- Retirement plans protection; and
- Pass and sign into law the Employee Free Choice Act; it is time to give workers who want to join a union the protections that would ensure that right.

As members of OPEIU, we are aware of the need for Congress to act today on these and many others issues. We hope that 2009 will be a better year for all working families.

It requires YOUR VOTE on Election Day to TURN THIS COUNTRY IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION!

Take Action — Your Involvement is More Important Than Ever!

Contact your local representatives. Every letter counts. Every phone call can make a difference. If you prefer to make written contact, OPEIU advises you to either mail or e-mail all correspondence.

If you don't know who your House representative is, the Clerk of the House maintains addresses and phone numbers of all members and committees: Clerk of the House, US Capitol, Room H154, Washington, DC 20515; phone (202) 225-7000; hours 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. (EST), Monday through Friday. The following websites also contain links to congressional directories: <http://www.house.gov/writerep> and <http://www.senate.gov>.

Please direct your questions about communication with your Senators to the specific office(s) in question, using the following format: Office of Senator (Name), United States Senate, Washington, DC 20510. You may also phone the U.S. Capitol's switchboard at (202) 224-3121. An operator will connect you directly with the House or Senate office you request.

You can also access this information at your local library, or call the International Union's Washington, DC office at 202-393-4464 ext. 13 for a booklet listing of congressional representatives.

**Your action is needed now. Do your part to help yourself and your family.
Start writing and calling today!**

Work and Health

Defensive Medicine – What is it Costing You?

Submitted by Jeffrey S. Freed, M.D.

**Associate Professor of Surgery, The Mount Sinai School of Medicine, NYC
OPEIU Local 153 Health Fund Medical Director**

Recently, my medical assistant informed me that I was going to see a patient with abdominal pain. Just three days before, he had been released from the hospital with instructions to see a doctor. That turned out to be me.

He was new to my practice. The hospital admission had been for gastroenteritis, stomach flu. The patient had told my assistant on the phone that all the tests at the hospital were negative, but did so with a particularly hostile edge. “I wonder what he’s going to say about us,” my assistant said to me.

An exam of the patient revealed some general soreness in the abdomen. I ordered a CT scan.

I wasn’t all that worried about an internal problem. Still, the small chance of missing something on a dissatisfied patient was too big a risk for my professional comfort. His scan came back normal, as I expected. But doctors learn early to play defense, especially with patients who are already unhappy with their care.

The average physician has a malpractice suit instituted against him or her several times in their career, sometimes appropriately. However, I’ve seen doctors accused of malpractice when there is a bad outcome, regardless of whether they have done anything wrong or not.

There is an expectation after a patient does badly that the doctor should have ordered another test or done something else. But sometimes things go wrong no matter what you do—or don’t do.

Defensive medicine is part of the cost of health care, and also, unfortunately, a large part of the unnecessary expense of health care. It is estimated to account up to 10 percent of the waste of health care dollars, your dollars. And waste is reflected in the cost of your health insurance.

Unlike defensive driving where slowing down and being less aggressive saves lives, defensive medicine means doing more tests, ordering more consults from specialists and exposing patients to the risks of radiation, invasive tests and treatments.

Some physicians feel compelled to do these things. One thing that doctors hate almost as much as a faulty diagnosis is winding up in court to defend their decisions. Once a doctor has had his/her judgment questioned in a lawsuit, his/her other documentation and test ordering will never be the same. A typical line of legal attack is that you didn’t order a test or refer a patient to a specialist fast enough.

Patients are defensive, too. They look up their symptoms on the Internet and then insist on testing and consultations for

symptoms that can be safely observed and frequently go away on their own.

What can we do? Building better relationships between doctors and patients would help, though that’s a tall order given the brief visits that have become the norm.

If you are going into the hospital or to a doctor’s office, think about leaving your most confrontational family member at home. When the family questions every detail of care to an unreasonable degree or has expectations that there is a guarantee that everything will be perfect, you’re going to get more testing, more specialists poking you and more cost. If that type of evaluation and treatment is what you are after, most doctors will oblige. Just make sure to factor in the extra doses of radiation from scans, the extra medication you might be allergic to, and the extra procedures the specialist is likely to recommend.

Speak up if you suspect a test is just being ordered to protect the doctor from liability, not help you. Defensive physicians will document your informed refusal and your lack of compliance. However, most would probably agree with you that avoiding unnecessary, costly, potentially dangerous tests is really in your best interest.

Jeffrey S. Freed, M.D., P.C. specializes in general surgery/proctology. He can be reached via email at jsfmd@aol.com.

Members Mobilize to Support Obama

(Continued from page 1)

will distribute important voter information. It is anticipated that the state coordinators will have an initial staff of volunteers, which will grow exponentially into the hundreds.

The volunteers will point out that the country is in recession because of a leadership failure in Washington, DC—where George Bush handed out billions of dollars in tax cuts to the wealthiest few and Senator McCain promises to make those same tax cuts permanent. McCain’s position is absurd

given the struggles of working families with two million foreclosures and national unemployment at 6.1 percent.

Volunteers will also point out that the crisis on Wall Street afflicting the nation is the result of the failure of the government to regulate. McCain is the ultimate deregulator and sees no need for government to regulate Wall Street activities.

As this issue of *White Collar* went to press, the administration in Washington, DC was proposing that Congress adopt a

\$700 billion bailout of Wall Street that flies in the face of their long held beliefs of free markets. Their latest stance is that we should have “free market profits” and “socialized losses.” But due to public pressure, the bailout was defeated on its first try in the House of Representatives on Sept. 29, 2008.

For more information, please call Political Director Kevin Kistler at 212-675-3210 or email him at frontdesk@opeiu.org to volunteer for the member mobilization program.



WASHINGTON WINDOW

The Financial Crisis: A Political History

As the executive branch and Congress deal with the financial crisis that has hit Wall Street for the last month—and that threatens Main Street—it is useful to recount a little political history of how we got where we are.

That's because while the speculators, hedge funds, brokerage houses and big fish of the financial markets have produced this ruin, they were aided and abetted by politicians of both parties. And some of those pols are playing active roles in this year's political campaigns. Here are some of the details:

From the time of the Great Depression until the advent of the GOP Reagan administration, the nation's financial institutions and their markets were relatively tightly regulated and also relatively simple.

The New Deal set up Fannie Mae to encourage homeownership by providing an underpinning to the mortgage market, but it was barred from wild speculation in securities, as was Freddie Mac, which was established later.

The New Deal also established the Securities and Exchange Commission, to regulate stock markets and—more importantly—make them transparent so that the big boys couldn't deal behind closed doors to the detriment of average investors.

At the same time, Congress passed the Glass-Steagall Act, drawing very bright lines between banks, insurance companies and brokerages. In so many words, they were barred from getting in each other's business.

Lawmakers did not want a repeat of the tangled interrelationships among the "malefactors of great wealth" that intensified the Great Depression, when the whole Wall Street house of cards came tumbling down and practically took the country's economy—and that of the world—with it.

Fast forward to the late 1970s, under Democratic President Jimmy Carter, when the deregulation mania began with airlines and trucks. "The markets shall rule all!" was the demand. Under Reagan and President Bill Clinton (D), too, that spread to the financial markets. Here's just some of what happened (It's hardly the whole story):

- The SEC was not given any new powers to regulate all the myriad financial instruments Wall Street dreamed up. The agency could not keep up with the paper piled upon paper of stock swaps, reinsurance schemes, derivative contracts and the like. Corporate lobbying blocked any attempts to widen the agency's reach. Democrats and Republicans alike were complicit in listening to the corporate interests, not to those who favored more—and sensible—regulation.

- Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac got into speculation in a big way, led by former Fannie Mae CEO Franklin Raines, a Democratic big wheel. The two big companies got away from just backing mortgages to heavy investment, without oversight or regulation, in the sub-prime mortgage market and other fancy financial "instruments."

Fannie and Freddie were angling for big returns, rather than conservative money management. Efforts to rein them in—even a proposal by the GOP Bush regime—were blocked by a bipartisan alliance of Senate Banking Committee leaders: Richard Shelby (R-Alabama) and Chris Dodd (D-Connecticut). And in back of it all was the implicit guarantee that if those "government-sponsored enterprises" hit the financial rocks, Washington would step in to bail them out, using taxpayer dollars. Which is what's happened.

- The banks, insurers and mortgage companies were let loose to play in each other's fields and speculate to their hearts' content, thanks to repeal of Glass-Steagall. That repeal was pushed through by three Republicans, one of whom will have a very familiar name: Sen. Phil Gramm (R-Texas). He's now the U.S. representative of a top Swiss "investment bank," UBS Warburg—and an economic advisor to GOP presidential nominee John McCain. But Clinton, a Democrat, signed Gramm's repeal.

(Gramm is also the guy who brought you the taxpayer-funded S&L bailout, after the S&Ls in his home state of Texas, were the main cause of that crash. But that's another story.)

The other two congressional crafters of repeal of the old tighter banking laws were former Reps. Thomas Bliley (R-Virginia), then chairman of the House Commerce Committee, and James Leach (R-Iowa), then a leading member of the House Banking Committee. Leach is now a top spokesman for Republicans for Obama.

Do you see a pattern here? The bankers and Wall Street denizens must shoulder most of the blame for the financial mess. But the mess is due to a systematic structure that broke down due to the so-called "deregulation" and let the financiers run amok. Politicians, most but not all Republicans, aided and abetted the breakdown.

So remember that when you listen to campaign rhetoric. If a pol denounces Wall Street for the present financial chaos, ask: "Where were you since 1980? On our side, or on their side?" By their votes and by receptivity to influence-peddling and lobbying, the answer for most politicians—McCain, Gramm and Dodd included—is "their side!"

OPEIU Endorses Obama for President

(Continued from page 1)

President Gaffney gave a very informative PowerPoint presentation identifying the major issues as right-to-work, health care, and the economy. He pointed out that Senator McCain favors a national right-to-work law and taxing employee health care benefits. He also noted that Senator McCain has conceded that he doesn't know much about the economy, and recently stated that "the fundamentals of the economy are strong," proving his point.

Senator McCain also opposes the all important Employee Free Choice Act (EFCA), which Senator Obama supports, granting workers majority card check recognition of the union and arbitration of disputes. EFCA also provides for civil penalties in the amount of \$20,000 against any employer for each unfair labor practice committed.

These messages need to be communicated on a one-to-one basis with members, family and community through the mail, at work and in the neighborhood. As frightening as it may be, many people are still unaware of McCain's position on these issues.

President Gaffney stated that the unemployment rate in Michigan is 8.3 percent compared to 6.1 percent nationally – both recession level highs. He stated that the two million foreclosures on family homes was far too many and unacceptable.

Forty percent of the electorate in Michigan are union members and, with the candidates' positions on the issues known to the voters, the vote for Senator Obama will be increased substantially. In the 2000 election, 44 percent of all votes cast in Michigan for Senator Al Gore came from union households. We can do better this year based on the unemployment rate, the condition of the economy, millions of Americans without health care and the McCain threat to weaken working families. To increase the vote, the Michigan State AFL-CIO is leading a massive voter registration drive.

The Michigan program is being duplicated in all of the states, and we urge members to contact their local central labor council or state federation of labor to find out how you can help. For more information, please call Political Director Kevin Kistler at 212-675-3210 or email him at frontdesk@opeiu.org.

PerksCard

As an OPEIU member, you should have received your PerksCard in the mail! This membership benefit enables members to save hundreds of dollars annually on items you buy every day, such as movie tickets, video rentals, dining out, health care, car repairs, home improvements and much more! Plus, you will receive discounts on all of your special occasion purchases including gifts, travel and entertainment.

Ways you can save with the OPEIU PerksCard!

- Dining: Gift Cards and Dining Certificates
- Vacation: Theme Parks, Hotels, Car Rentals
- Home Improvement: Gift Cards, Furniture, Flooring
- Entertainment: Video Rentals, Movie Tickets, Golf
- Automotive: Repairs, Purchases, Oil Changes
- Home and Living: Internet, Flowers and Gifts, Home Security

To begin using your OPEIU PerksCard, please go to www.perkscard.com and follow the registration instructions in the "New Card Member" section. Registration will give you access to discounts and promotions. We encourage you to register as soon as possible and log-on frequently to maximize your savings!

If you haven't received your PerksCard or need further assistance, please call OPEIU at 1-877-737-1086.



AFL-CIO-CLC

Printed in USA